THE LONG SPACE

Transnationalism and Postcolonial Form

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The Long Space

Time has more than one writing system.
—Henri Lefebvre

In a poignant sequence in *Jalan Raya Pos* (*The Great Post Road*, 1996), a documentary about Pramoedya Ananta Toer, the writer lights a *kretek* cigarette and takes out the trash. It is refuse that contains sheets of manuscript, testimony to the scourge of writer’s block. Pramoedya goes into his backyard and over to a pile of rubbish. He empties out the bin, then delicately arranges the papers before setting light to them. It is another day in the life of Indonesia’s most celebrated writer, then under a form of urban arrest—a time and place seemingly outside the busy intensity of interpretation and yet a chronotope deeply inscribed in the contemporary world (of letters, of globalization, of intellectual engagement, of postcoloniality as an open parenthesis on decolonization). For what is this scene if not one that passes by while what has passed by has an obtuse purchase on the present, one that allows this tableau to drift while hermeneutics remains secure in its operative logic, concrete or abstract, anglophone or at least European, translating time into space when the former fosters someone else’s agency? The author watches the manuscript burn in the knowledge that he too has been part of this delenda, but survived.

Such living on (*sur-vivre* in the Derridean sense) offers a vital polemic: it is a measure of persistence, determination, endurance, and the meaning of a specific time/space in transnational literature. It is out of place and time, perhaps, to invoke time as significant for postcolonial writing within globalization. Yet however we choose to ground transnational cultural relations, it remains the arena in which one hails writers,
including Pramoedya, within the reach of circulation on “this Earth of mankind” (or what Erich Auerbach once provocatively termed irdischen Welt).\footnote{Asserting that Pramoedya and three other writers—Wilson Harris, Nuruddin Farah, and Assia Djebar, the focus of this study—are largely out of step with a postmodern global episteme is not the point, for they are equally if not more discontinuous with each other, and deliberately so from my perspective. The persistence relates to an alternative understanding of narration, a logic of form not simply outside world literature, the world republic of letters, global comparatism, or normative transnationalism. If this argument partakes of a current time of crisis, it is through a crisis in time, material contradictions embedded in the unfinished business of ending empire. Writing takes time, but in transnational trilogies and tetralogies, duration in dynamic place is a crucial chronotope of decolonization, one that must claim time differently to narrate the fraught space between more obvious signposts like Bretton Woods and Bandung. Reading takes time too, and these extended narratives accentuate time’s purchase on their comprehension. All extended narrative does this, but the long space is bound to the concrete predicaments of postcolonial narration as transnational critique.}

I locate the long space in the extended novel of postcoloniality beside itself. A relatively narrow approach—and one that often relies on theoretically inspired close reading—it will, however, substantiate some broad materialist claims. If they are not a horizon of the literary and the social, or culture and society, these claims yet form an almacantar by which their current constellation may be judged. The polemic is occasioned primarily by the event of reading inspiring fiction, but also by the manner in which they speak to several key issues of cultural debate: world literature and how it may be determined; the links and breaks between the terms postcolonialism, transnationalism, and globalism; the noncoincidence between literary institutions and the literary; the meaning of form for postcolonialism; the at-once vexed relationship of the novel to nation formation in postcolonial states; postcolonialism as other than the luxury of Western or Westernized cultural elites; critical transnationalism as an interruption of the logic of information retrieval in global circuits of knowledge and power; and the event of colonialism as not historically settled. This is not just a list but an itinerary, and one that cannot rest easy with the mantra that culture is the preeminent form of politics in our time and that when we feel global we participate ineluctably in wrestling freedom from the crushing realm of necessity. One cannot negotiate these challenges as if yet another Western critic, by checking off a list, is freed from the privileges of power that produce that subject position. The measure of the itinerary is the polemic it fosters that will deploy the long space as the organizing trope for disputes among them. Indeed, the complex register of the long space is the means to argue beyond the realm of propositional faith that Wilson Harris extravagantly terms “numinous inexactitudes.” I cannot leave the long space there, although Harris is most at home in shamanic indeterminacy.

Extended novels are coterminous with the history of the novel, and merely to note extension would require an analysis no less voluminous, a critique that would include the novelization of epic, the consonance of seriality with the commodification of the publishing industry, the related phenomenon of the emergence of the leisure reading class, and an irrepressible will to universalism requiring a dedication to expanded capacity in order to scale its desire. No formula can capture the difference of Remembrance of Things Past, The Lord of the Rings, The Pallisers, Cities of Salt, USA, Journey to the West, Don Quixote, Clarissa, and so on and so forth, although a few formulas, such as the one which says that narration might cheat the brutish brevity of being human, are as unsurprising as they are insufficient. That the philosophy of the novel so often suspends engagement with the extended narrative form acknowledges such pervasiveness only to underline that elemental persistence is as everyday as it is a bar on substantive theorization.

Because this argument is about a logic of form for which the long space is a shorthand, I wish the following to refract the nature of the extended transnational narration to be discussed later. Provisionally, I offer three propositions gathered by a fourth. These concern institution, world literature, nation, and chronotope. I will explain each one briefly in terms of the itinerary, then in more detail around the meaning of the long space for the project as a whole. While accepting Jameson’s admonition to always historicize, that historicity now must face the prospect—also marked by Jameson—of an end to temporality, one that would truncate the continuing work of decolonization. Fortunately, at the macropolitical level the supposed inevitabilities of globalization are being sharply rethought, and important questions are challenging the forms of socialization on offer in the neoliberal world beyond Cold War inertia. None of these oppositional
discourses carry guarantees or deadlines, and in that spirit the
long in my
title refers also to future persistence, a mode of engagement more exten-
sive than the exigencies of the present and a level of commitment conso-
nant with the task of facing the enduring facility for exploitation in global
integration. The formation of form is that which is most protracted and
conjures all kinds of mixed temporalities, aesthetic registers, sharp con-
tradictions, and poignant revisions like this comment by Jameson: “the
momentous event of decolonization . . . is a fundamental determinant of
postmodernity.” To fathom the time of form I offer the following.

First, if we can accept Mikhail Bakhtin’s sense that chronotope is
the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied, is this specific
to postcolonial writing and how? Chronotope is not any old coordinate
of time and space but that figural semantic process allowing narration to
proceed to form. In every space of postcoloniality, marked by nation or
locale, movement or embeddedness, inscription or orality, culture refracts
duration: not just that colonialism was endured, but that its figures of
time did not absolutely displace or dismantle local forms of temporality.
The transnational chronotope does not contend that time’s arrow, a du-
bious chronologism of “post” as “after” in postcolonialism, confirms the
end of colonialism, but rather accentuates the distillation of specific coor-
dinates in its moment (or a process of moments for which I use the term
eventness). The transnational aspect is a level of interdependency, and
indeed in correlating colonialism and postcolonialism the long space is
interdependency as extension. Since there is little uniformity in colonial-
ism or decolonization, one should mark this difference by writing chrono-
topes, a multiplicity more accurately reflecting the contrasts between
say, the decolonizing expressions of Somalia and Guyana, Algeria and In-
donesia, and indeed between writers and the nations by which they are
“tagged” (Farah currently lives in South Africa, Harris in England, Dje-
bar in France and the United States; Pramoedya lived most of his life in
Indonesia). Yet it is possible to acknowledge the uniqueness of event that
specifies the break from colonial dominium in each instance, while posi-
ing a logic of chronotope for all. The weakness of Bakhtin’s formulation
emerges from the tendency to read “knots” as content markers sui generis
rather than as abstractions on the means of time/space at stake. The lure
of content is unavoidable and I succumb to it without apology. The aim,
however, is something more ambitious, which is to take chronotope as a
constitutive problem of transnational narration, a knot that is a key to
the ways through which postcoloniality can be expressed. While the long
space is not exactly a writing system of time in Lefebvre’s sense, it never-
theless takes time seriously enough to elaborate its purchase on being in
the world. One must be able to imagine history in order to change it.

Second, because this study draws on transnational literature from
Guyana, Somalia, Indonesia, and Algeria, I am attempting to ask some
questions of the resurgent category of “world literature.” The paradigm of
the long space indicates unfinished business in decolonization that con-
stitutes a problem in resuscitating Goethe’s original declaration to Eckermann in 1827: “National literature is no longer of importance, it is the time
for world literature, and all must aid in bringing it about.” What concept
of time is at stake in world literature’s effulgence and, indeed, what sense
of “world” that accompanies it? Does not world literature return on the
wings of globalization and is it freely interpreted at the very moment when
temporality is drained from its inclusive magnanimity? “World” offers the
imprimatur of transnationalism as that which is beyond nation and its
suffocating prescriptions. It is the passport with copious stamps and extra
pages; the ward of book covers with exotic names and palm fronds; the
impress of a massive translation machine sufficient to convert there to here
in hardback, paperback, or digital download; the substantive component
that, once grasped, relieves one from the agony of parochial discernment.
And, most important, the world in world literature is studiously neutral
and requires no further qualification: it is the twenty-first-century ghost of
nineteenth-century aestheticism that at once announces the best that has
been thought and said. Indeed, for all the assumed neutrality, world lit-
erature has the drab hierarchization of petty-bourgeois desire. At the very
least it allows one to consume postcolonialism without that nasty taste of
social struggle in which a reader’s own cosmopolitanism may be at stake.
If all of Goethe’s pronouncements were mysteriously lost, the term world
literature would still have to be invented for it is dialectically bound to the
inevitabilities of commodification in which all that is solid not only melts
into air but is globally circulated.

Franco Moretti has rightly emphasized that “world literature is not
an object, it’s a problem” and one that he has approached, somewhat con-
tradictively, through world systems analysis, geometric design, and sta-

tistical chunking. He favors a notion of long as distance (as in distant
reading) rather than as duration, a novel solution to the forbidding difficulty, and quantity, of worlds of difference that tends to suspend the issue of strife in accumulation on a world scale for, well, accumulation on a world scale. This is a simplification of the nuance Moretti provides, although perhaps no more reductive than the tabulations of *Graphs, Maps, and Trees*. The long space is not just "a thorn in the side, a permanent intellectual challenge to national literatures" in the manner of Moretti’s world literature, but a specific world of time that does not exclude the strategic value of nation in global endeavors, negatively in nationalism’s role in territorial expansion and positively in national delinking from a world of imperial inclusivity. World literature is set as a task not as a statistical formula, a thorn that is the onerous function of the long space in a transnationalism otherwise eliding postcoloniality.

Our third keyword and corresponding thesis concerns nation. Nation seems like the anachronism of anarchonisms: it parades its habitual out-of-timeness by raising flags in the face of transnationalism, regionalism, economic and political blocs, and continental integrity. But it does this in both senses of the phrase "raising flags": it celebrates its longevity in the ritual of nationalistic display while also serving as a warning to all those who believe its fictive assemblage somehow negates the material substance of its collectivity. It is ironic that Renan’s 1882 lecture “What Is a Nation?” carries a pointed admonition on the necessity of forgetting to achieve national polity when this amnesia is artfully produced by postnational arguments. Assia Djebar, while wary of any nation idea, particularly as it writes Algerian woman, uses anamnesis to rethink nation rather than fold it back into its prechoate possibility in colonialism. The ambivalence of nation trembles in postcolonial writing, a flag of evenness that must be studied for its unique process and not simply as the failed-state syndrome ideologically serving state dependency or neocolonialism. Rather than jettison the nation idea, it is more useful to consider its ideologies and strategic interests on a case-by-case basis, particularly when specific nation formations have clearly stood for liberation from colonial subjugation. The fictive corollary in Benedict Anderson’s “imagined community” thesis is not a measure of truth versus falsehood but imagination’s claims on collectivity, whose fungibility is understood from Anderson’s readings of Asian politics and literature, through the Philippines and José Rizal, and Indonesia and Pramoedya. In the conceptual oscillation between Anderson’s insights on the nation/colonial nexus and the “spectral comparison,” a paradigm of transnationalism can be articulated, one whose coordinates trace nation narration as possibility in the trilogies and tetralogies I consider. Literary criticism’s major flaw in reading Anderson is to offer him as a literary critic and thereby freely indulge in constructing literary homologies from his grammar of nations. Anderson’s facility in languages certainly informs a literariness, but the criticism itself concerns nations and formations of state however deft his choice of literary examples. The result has been an aestheticizing of government structures and histories at some distance from the politics of reading Anderson employs. No doubt I am guilty of this “translation,” but on the whole my invocation of nation begins from its fully material manifestation in decolonization and its determinate facility for the long space. The long space says that nations need time (“generations” says Balibar), and even if the novel, or the seriality of novels, cannot tell time in quite the same way, extended postcolonial fiction comes closest to figuring the nation’s abstract expression: it is coextensive with nation ontology as an abstraction.

Both world literature and nation are unthinkable outside a logic of institution, a complex matrix of legitimizing mechanisms—from governmental infrastructure, schools, media industries, or “departments” of various kinds, to ideological reflexes that bind worldviews from moment to moment in a manner just cohesive enough to appear a material second nature. David Damrosch signals this institutional aura in world literature by asking “Which literature, whose world?”—questions that consider his own positioning while opening the door to other relations of legitimation. Franco Moretti, however, understands that the febrile connections of institution and legitimation require a declarative reduction in scale that neatly specifies the force of his intervention: "the way we imagine comparative literature is a mirror of how we see the world." It is an answer to Damrosch’s questions (even if, chronologically, the questions are an answer to Moretti), but let us think of it briefly as a statement on institution. It is true the way we imagine comparative literature is a mirror of how we see the world, but then how we imagine is a mirror of how we see the world and the reason for comparative literature’s necessity is at best qualified. Skepticism traverses the logic from historical contradiction, not opinion. The mirror of comparative literature has not been shattered by declaration but by the social and political upheavals of at least the last fifty
years. This is not to announce the eclipse of Comparative Literature (or English) departments but to note that interdependence on a world scale may require imagining that possibility. That which coordinates national literature in the imaginary schema of nation is not trumped by world literature; rather, this institutional logic produces world literature as its reflex. It follows that the extant conditions of institutions as national legitimation are intrinsic to world literature, and should a world literature develop beyond that legitimizing matrix it will, perhaps, be called literature.

These theses or positions are not in parallel and are as oddly arranged as my literary examples. The galvanizing trope is the chronotope, for it accentuates the coordinates of space and time in the otherwise problematic constellation of the other three. Bakhtin only hints that the chronotope could do more work than its prominence in Goethe, Dostoevsky, or Rabelais, but it must do so here for at least two related reasons. First, it is a conduit between the sensuous particularity of the text and philosophical abstraction, a time for world in both cases that is not anathema to an understanding of institution, institutions of literature, and national institutions of literature. It facilitates a scale of comparative outsideness. One thread that connects the writers and the critical paradigm is, to borrow from Edward Said, a "precarious exilic realm," a condition that does not entail actual exile to fathom its logic but a notion of outsideness, or exotopy, a sometimes literal but more insistently figural border sensibility. Said reads this as an intellectual vocation, a committed engagement in the public sphere; for me this signals a responsibility in scale. If the exilic and exotopic keep coming back in this text, it is to confirm that the intimacy of reading has an efficacious effect beyond it.

Second, if I push chronotope to transnationalism it is to further discussion on time's claim on that which is presented as its superadequacy. The idea that nations require time must be supplemented since this can be deployed to blunt transnationalism's history, one much longer than the term itself. I use postcolonialism within transnationalism to problematize this elision by introducing time/space coordinates into the latter's otherwise slick immediacy. The effect is not just one of catechism but of slowing down, of marking duration with duration, of saving time by using it. Chronotopic critique, however, is not a means to fight speed and space: its strategy is to insinuate time/space coordinates in transnationalism, the better to specify what is living and dead in their conjunction. In this man-

ner one can read, as Djebar puts it, "the cries of just one second stretched blue as far as the horizon."18

We know that colonialism offered a world to be inscribed. Gayatri Spivak calls this process "worlding," whereby Europe, for instance, projects an aura of blankness onto the world, specifically the Third or developing world, to produce a space for subsequent inscription.19 A complex process of presenting and othering is implied in worlding, and it did not expire with the declarations of independence often interpreted to herald postcoloniality. The problem requires first, a fairly precise elaboration of the concepts of space and time involved, and second, the ramifications of the introduction of literary form onto this terrain. The long space is an abstraction on how the literary concretizes the social as a counter to the historical inscription of the colonial and its attendant meanings. The production of space regulates a logic of state that deludes itself into believing it is the quintessence of development and the pinnacle of civilization. If space as a concept is contaminated by production as projection (the space of worlding), how can the long space resist the worlding of this episteme? The postcolonial writer must continually struggle to de-scribe space as the Other of colonialism. Consciously or not the space of postcolonial writing brings alternative histories to bear on the processes of anticolonial narration. The long in long space is the irruption of local history into the truncated temporalities of globalization and transnationalism in their hegemonic formations. Critiques of postcolonial literature as cultural transnationalism are not possible unless the local comes sharply into view—not simply as content, but as a structural articulation of cultural difference within the narrative. This does not provide a blueprint applicable to every element of postcolonial cultural expression. Yet how irruptions of the local are formulated must be registered within postcolonial criticism, especially to head off repositioning all postcolonial texts as native information.

The long space considers the production of narrative against the destructive effects of the colonial moment, but is not limited to that valence. Just as Fanon attacks Sartre's preface to an anthology edited by Senghor (because Sartre enlists nègritude for a class struggle defined by Western history), so the long space must problematize the notion that transnational cultural form is reactive to what the West has bequeathed.20 What the novel, for instance, formalizes can be displaced by the space in which it is engaged. Writers who entertain this challenge may be heralded by
primarily Western cosmopolitan literati, yet a different field emerges if one begins with the form and content of the long space as agonistically dialogic. The long space stares Janus-faced into the detritus of colonial aesthetics while glaring wide-eyed at the paradoxes of the postcolonial. Cultural transnationalism does not exclude the contaminated conditions of my time/space, as if that does not contribute to the historical contradictions of cultural “exchange” at this juncture. If Arif Dirlik's point that postcolonialism begins when diasporic “Third World” intellectuals make their way in the West contains a grain of truth, then this is no less true of Western "discoveries" of "Third World" fiction. Nevertheless, the aesthetic may still be used to investigate what remains unassimilable outside that devoutly wished embrace. And this is also why the challenges of the long space are not simply relevant to a distrust of colonial episteme.

Spatial concepts are common in contemporary cultural critique because the metaphors and materialities of space have become more creatively enmeshed. Space is often enjoined theoretically to do the work of time. The long space, however, invokes time as an aesthetic apparatus for the production of space. This can be elaborated in a number of ways. There are modes of postcolonial writing that challenge the dominance of abstract space over material space within discourses of modernity. It is the latter's concept of the production of space that Lefebvre explicitly challenges in Hegel, enough to construe him dialectically. Interestingly, Lefebvre characterizes his own intervention as "the long history of space" and, while one must remain wary of the speculative and aesthetic reach of Lefebvre's history, it provides a theoretical and political correlative in the current work. Indeed, the significance of transnational trilogies and tetralogies lies in their articulation of the conceived and lived spaces (the representation of space and spaces of representation) of postcoloniality, a critique prompted by Lefebvre's transgression of conventional narratives of space. That histoire longue in French oscillates between history and story continues to provide its own provocation.

Another register for the long space as transnational chronotope derives from concepts of culture themselves. The long in long space also finds inspiration in Raymond Williams's The Long Revolution. This is not an unproblematic association, given the generally Angloecentric and organiciest predilections ascribed to Williams's work. Yet in the opening pages to Orientalism, Edward Said commends Williams (alongside Gramsci and Foucault) for demonstrating a central approach in his own work: "We can better understand the persistence and the durability of saturating hegemonic systems like culture when we realize that their internal constraints upon writers and thinkers were productive, not unilaterally inhibiting." Said highlights Williams's readings of nineteenth-century colonialists and imperialists, and he mentions The Long Revolution in this regard. Yet this same contrapuntal reading can now be applied to Williams himself.

The genesis for Williams's concept of the long revolution lies in the conclusion to Culture and Society: "The forces which have changed and are still changing our world are indeed industry and democracy. Understanding this change, this long revolution, lies at a level of meaning which it is not easy to reach." Williams's approach explores culture as a source of such understanding, as multiple expressions of "a whole way of life." Culture is, paradoxically, profoundly ordinary in that its generality and fecundity dialectically inflect and affect the revolution in industry and democracy. This is one reason why Pramoedya's daily routine should not pass by. Culture thus emerges as the third term in the idea of the long revolution:

Yet there remains a third revolution, perhaps the most difficult of all to interpret. We speak of a cultural revolution, and we must certainly see the aspiration to extend the active process of learning, with the skills of literacy and other advanced communication, to all people rather than to limited groups, as comparable in importance to the growth of democracy and the rise of scientific industry. . . . Of course, this revolution is at a very early stage. . . . This deeper cultural revolution is a large part of our most significant living experience, and is being interpreted and indeed fought out, in very complex ways, in the world of art and ideas. (The Long Revolution, 11–12)
the culture and history at stake in such crises. Their structure of feeling, to borrow from Williams again, seeks to articulate not just the promise of the postcolony, but the long and complex sinew of industry, democracy, and culture in which it is precipitate. Although I am less sanguine than Williams that critics and criticism can enjoin this effort, writers are not outside the revolution Williams invokes and such a process, however we might rethink its terms, continues.

The long in Williams’s *The Long Revolution* usefully posits a project rather than a historical description. Indeed, Williams’s procedures require a nuanced imaginative and somatic grasp (a structure of feeling?) not always associated with history or sociology. Significantly, one understands what constitutes a methodology in Williams not just by reading the trilogy of works that established his reputation (*Culture and Society, The Long Revolution, and Communications*), but through his trilogy of novels: *Border Country, Second Generation*, and *The Fight for Manad*.

The abstraction of the “long revolution” is given aesthetic reach by Williams’s deeply personal if emotionally edgy fictional exploration of the “knowable communities” and “complex seeing” of his creative fiction. Without laboring the point, the trilogy evolves through the chronotopes articulating a community in Williams’s vision. It is long precisely because the nature of that deep structure requires it. The crux is whether the form betrayed a level of unknowability in the communities portrayed. For his part, Williams believes that such knowledge depends on duration and the intensity of experience. In the third novel, Robert Lane asks Matthew Price (the central figure) whether his book took a long time to write. Price replies, “It took a long time because it had to be lived” (*Fight, 38*). In effect, the long in the long space considers duration and length in fiction by questioning whether the levels of mediation in experience are merely the substance of knowledge and windows on the real of community existence. The long works of fiction at issue are embroiled in similar yet specific historical conditions that do not lend themselves easily to the categories of experience Williams elucidates. I want to draw from the theoretical stimuli of his works without flattening out important changes on the aesthetic terrain. At the very least this means taking account of Gauri Viswanathan’s point that even when Williams acknowledges a link between English social formations and matrices of imperialism, his narration of nation typically suppresses the conduit between national and imperial structures.

What is transnational about postcolonial fiction often explores the tension in that relationship precisely to figure what is and is not possible under conditions of postcolonial nationhood. From this perspective, the long space interrogates the long revolution, particularly since the industrial, democratic, and cultural progress the latter describes have often proceeded through colonial subjection. That Said, a friend and admirer of Williams, would write *Culture and Imperialism* is a more obvious answer to the significant lacunae in Williams’s culturalist mode.

Said examines how culture narrates the imperialist project. Said’s basic premise, not unique but uniquely nuanced, is that the English novel of the nineteenth century (one of Williams’s key interests) contributes to and solidifies continuity in the English imperialist project, at once confirming its reality while projecting a fantasy of its logical consistency in terms of culture and civilization. This “regulatory social presence” (*Culture and Imperialism, 73*) is not just a symptom of the novel’s ideological work, but is a subtext of the entire narrative of progress redolent in Eurocentrism and Orientalism. Just as cartography maps out a space for the projection of Western meanings, so the novel can distill this territorial desire as a quintessence of aesthetic practice. Said’s readings of the novel, particularly those of Kipling, Forster, and Conrad, foreground European dominion as appropriate to a cultural tradition that, because of the ideological trajectories of imperialist consciousness, still resounds today. Said is at his best in *Culture and Imperialism* when he unpacks the regulatory norms of empire in the great tradition of the English novel as institution. He is on less certain ground, however, when he tracks the ways in which decolonizing and postcolonial writers disturb, destabilize, and attempt to transform imperialist cultural discourses. Said’s comments on Achebe and Ngũgĩ, for instance, are always insightful, but do not evince the level of engagement he has extended to Forster or Conrad. This is not to wish that Said had been more of a critic of postcolonial fiction—like Aijaz Ahmad in *In Theory* wanting Said to have been more of a Marxist—because this would miss the actual substance of his intellectual contribution.

Said’s intervention provides a theoretical link between the massive rethinking of the tradition of the novel in the West and *what could be done* in the formal analysis of the novel of decolonization. Two strategies in particular recommend themselves.

First, Said accentuates the novel’s participation in the aesthetic, ideological, and political struggles over space: “The appropriation of history,
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the historicization of the past, the narrativization of society, all of which give the novel its force, include the differentiation of social space, space to be used for social purposes” (Culture and Imperialism, 78). In The Long Space specific trilogies and tetralogies deconstruct this space of appropriation. I argue that transnational culture entails a broader, egalitarian, and conflictual novelistic space of negotiation than the hegemonic “worlding” currently imagined. While transnational space can be discussed in a myriad of other cultural forms, the contestable terrain of the novel is particularly acute because of its role in the differentiation of social space to which Said alludes. A significant number of problems emerge from this emphasis, including: the role of the novel in bourgeois social relations, the function of the novel for cosmopolitanism and transnational commerce, and the extent to which what Bakhtin calls “the novelization of discourse” now exceeds the perquisites of what we identify as the novel itself. This is only to acknowledge that cultural comparatism is highly contestable in the social differentiation of space on a world scale. The long space appropriates the imaginative terrain by literally lengthening the form, but it simultaneously questions the nature of transnational inclusion by elaborating that cultures take time. Here again, Said provides a pertinent provocation through contrapuntal reading.

Briefly, this draws on Said’s considerable acumen in comparatism in which he attempts “to think through and interpret together experiences that are discrepant, each with its particular agenda and pace of development, its own internal formations, its internal coherence and system of external relationships” (Culture and Imperialism, 32). The contrapuntal analysis reads the imperial archive against the grain by articulating its sharp disjunctions with and elisions of social space according to other discourses and by exploring how its legitimizing narratives, the novel included, problematize the identitarian modes of, for example, Englishness or Frenchness. Such “new knowledges” are vital and constitute a struggle over structures of feeling in comparative critique. Yet the real challenge for cultural transnationalism is contrapuntal writing—the ways in which the artist makes the form her own. The long space refers to a critical mode of engaging transnational fiction and the writing out of postcolonial difference. Contrapuntal writing can, then, be joined to other terms, “de-scribing empire,” “un-thinking Eurocentrism,” and “decolonizing the mind,” to borrow from the titles of works in the field of postcolonial critique. It is a primary mode through which the space of the transnational can be dialogized, rather than recolonized by avatars of West/Rest dichotomies.

Another opening onto persistence is a resolution on the daunting tasks of intellectual engagement hinted by “a precarious exilic realm.” Said, in his introduction to a new edition of Auerbach’s Mimesis, outlines this enduring heritage common among philologists. He suggests even Auerbach’s admittedly Eurocentric view emphasized “the possibility of understanding inimical and perhaps even hostile others despite the bellicosities of modern cultures and nationalism, and the optimism with which one could enter into the inner life of a distant author or historical epoch even with a healthy awareness of one’s limitations of perspective and insufficiency of knowledge.” This was a comparatism hewed by Said himself “whose underlying and perhaps unrealizable rationale was this vast synthesis of the world’s literary production transcending borders and languages but not in any way effacing their individuality and historical concreteness.” The drawbacks of such comparatism, however, are legion not least because its tradition (like that of Williams) is so intimately enwined with the great age of European imperialism that shared its desire to transcend borders but tended to efface a good deal more in the process. Philologists were not the well-versed foot soldiers for European expansionism, despite pertinent evidence of collusion in the project. The problem was more infrastructural, in the way institutions of learning were conceived according to national and regional prerogatives, a manner that gave the capacity of the West a logical consistency. In addition, the prodigious expertise required of philologists (consider, for instance, the range of reference in Mimesis and the languages invoked) seemed to exceed the capacity to teach it. As Said points out, Comparative Literature departments sought to develop such expertise but, with a few notable exceptions, the epistemological frisson primarily took place in academies and departments of a different order in France and Germany before the Second World War, for which Comparative Literature has been a vibrant specter. The lesson of persistence, then, with its coordinate in time, speaks to duration in a new temporality with decolonization as a conditional limit. That Said turns in this direction (particularly in Culture and Imperialism) deepens his prescience, and in time he may also be read not just as a philologist but as a transitional figure of cultural transnationalism, an interlocutor in a global dialogic more worthy of the term.
I say "transitional" because Said neither completes the project of the European philological tradition nor does he codify or elaborate what a Weltliteratur cognizant of a decolonizing caesura might look like. Nevertheless, in addition to his thoughts on space and the contrapuntal, Said offers other elements of a pertinent critical framework. While they must necessarily reconfigure the conditions of Goethe's formulation on Weltliteratur, they retain something of its utopian spirit. They are first and foremost conceived within secular humanism of a kind bound to social responsibility unafraid to challenge the creeping fundamentalisms even within its own tradition. This nonconformism (or autodidacticism, a term Said applies to Auerbach) also reminds one of Raymond Williams. 31

If contrapuntal reading is central to Said's textual practice, the complement to secular humanism is "worldliness." This does not mean the substitution of world for nation but an understanding of specific conditions of their interaction. Postcolonialism is connected to transnationalism in order to emphasize what is exorbitant to each term individually (Said, for his part, will use "extraterritorial," by which he means a specific challenge to the territorial provenance of English). 32 Said's worldliness stands against the homogenizing tendencies of globalization, a lesson learned from reading and translating Auerbach's classic "Philologie die Weltliteratur" in which global standardization shrinks the possibility of Weltliteratur in inverse proportion. It also opposes closed interpretation as if a text might exist without its being in the world. Worldliness is a condition of possibility, one that demarcates the world of the text in several senses including: the world it constructs, the world in which it is, the world in which it finds a reader, and the world in which the critic attends to it. Said's point is a very basic one about the text's materiality, a "worldliness that does not come and go" (World, 34) even if the principle of worldliness itself is suspended—by the text, by the critic, by circumstantial fiat. Such worldliness, while material, is demonstrably abstract in contrast to the material force of the world as ordinarily construed: a world of nations, peoples, languages, cultures, economic relations. Part of the challenge of cultural transnationalism is to scale up the world of the text while scaling down the eponymous world out there, not in the interest of homology (or simply inflated culturalism), but to bring difference sharply into view. Being in the world means something else again if the text's substantality is made coterminous with it. Said was never that moved by a sociology of literature (except Auerbach's)—unlike his friend, Williams, who managed to wrest it from Goldmann—but Said does not settle for what Neil Larsen has termed the "textualist fallacy" either and this is a postcolonial critique beside itself. 33 Instead, using the inspiration of an eleventh-century group of Andalusian linguists, the Zahirites, Said argues for a "double perspective" in literary analysis that does not leave the text alone to its devices or indeed to those of the critic:

[Worldliness, circumstantiality, the text's status as an event having sensuous particularity as well as historical contingency, are considered as being incorporated in the text, an infrangible part of its capacity for conveying and producing meaning. This means that the text has a specific situation, placing restraints upon the interpreter and his interpretation not because the situation is hidden within the text as a mystery, but rather because the situation exists at the same level of surface particularity as the textual object itself. . . . Here is an ambition (which the Zahirites have to an intense degree) on the part of readers and writers to grasp texts as objects whose interpretation—by virtue of the exactness of their situation in the world—has already commenced and are objects already constrained by, and constraining their interpretation. Such texts can thereafter be construed as having need at most of complementary, as opposed to supplementary, readings. (World, 39)

While the Welt in Goethe's Weltliteratur tended to mark a schism between German nationalism and the world order in the nineteenth century, Said's worldliness is much conditioned by the event of his text: he invokes the world to give the text and the critic a more expansive vocation. That situation must be respected, but it leads to several qualifications in the concept for which I use the term eventness, rather than event. Why? It is possible to understand that the text has a specific situation and that interpretation has already commenced, but this is not always accessible, at least not as readily as "surface particularity" might indicate. The specificity of the textual event may be lost even though we may assume its conditional worldliness and the pre-history of interpretation. We can adjudicate the event of the text but there the fulcrum of interpretation moves toward the critic and is not simply given in what the text represents. Put another way, Said's use of circumstantiality reminds us of the pitfalls of circumstantial evidence that may not reveal the truth of the event except perhaps in the eye of the beholder. Thus, Said is right to point to the text's being in the world as worldliness, but the line between that event's constraining
possibility and the projection of the same by the critic is notoriously thin. Eventlessness, on the other hand, stresses a logic of event rather than only an assumption about the content of the event. It proffers the paradox that the text has a unique event—and many of them. It also finds the structure of event continually displacing the dialogic interactions of text and critic. In my readings eventness will take several turns to explain hermeneutical necessity as simultaneously a conditional limit on postcoloniality.

The focus on event should not close it to process, one that might outdistance the critic’s role in it. The reason for this is also redolent in Said’s example. Said finds a model for worldliness among medieval Arab linguists that is then applied to Hopkins, Wilde, and Conrad: he tracks modernity without assuming a European signature. Said’s training was primarily in the European tradition; but worldliness is radically inclusive and displacing in its own way. To this we could add that Said challenges the textual fetishism of the literary in the opening of his essay with a discussion of Glenn Gould, whose own event of performance depends on more than Said’s ear and expertise in classical music. Yet in both cases what is innovative in Said’s approach—Zahirié circumstantiality, a Gould record as a parody of performance—does not interrupt the actual critical exegesis, where the fact that “texts do not speak in the ordinary sense of the word” (World, 33) finds them speaking rather well in that mode. The counter-Orientalism disappears in the analysis, as does the text as more than literary. The issue is not to emphasize the provocation over the explication since they are of a piece; but if we take worldliness in all seriousness then it would assess this marked disjunction as itself materially determined and not something in need of correction.

This is an unusual position to take on postcoloniality, which is often read as reclamation of all that colonialism sundered. The heuristic function of postcolonial criticism has been its ability to unsettle the colonial archive by accentuating the real in what has been suppressed: the actual lives and experiences deeply inscribed in the day-to-day processes of colonial adventures, a real that often and critically spoke truth to power against imperialism, and won. Yet it is just as true that postcolonial criticism has been characterized by a discursive overload, one read to be so consonant with high theory that it can be dismissed as ahistorical, textualist in the extreme, and as a careerism far removed from the public intellectual admired in Said. Similarly, while writers who narrate decolonization among other concerns have been justly revered, some are questioned regarding their representative status, as if their very inclusion in the “world republic of letters” is symptomatic of their conspiratorial desire to garner cultural capital above all else. If such worldliness takes on a different name than postcolonialism then so be it, but I do want to relate its prospect as a future conditional to its interest in the long past. The reticular terms of nation, institution, and world literature catch something of the expanse of the long space by linking extended narratives of transnationalism across different scales of apprehension. The long space as chronotope mediates these interpretive levels but is itself the name for a problem: how can one indicate the time/space of decolonization in a form that is appropriate to its extent? This is a figura at some remove from Auerbach’s meticulous critique of Christian texts and their influences and styles and, because I interpret it through noncoincidence, it is also at odds with the teleological impulses of Mimesis. Yet for all the timeless in his appreciation of Dante, Auerbach elaborates figura as “timeful” in its movements, which I take not just as spirit but as an instance of human agency. In an everyday event in Pramodita’s garden such praxis can only be appreciated by connecting destroyed text to that which gloriously survives. How many times was the Buru Quartet spoken and written before time found the form of full expression? And how much, indeed, is this form still open, as if the ghost of its substantiation, its figura, also lies before it? The long space is a process of figuration whose chronotope is not bound only to what has been.

I have begun to interrelate duration with extension in narrative, and I have characterized it as a transnational chronotope of postcolonial writing. Several key issues remain including obvious questions about why these writers, why trilogies and tetralogies, and the thematic links between the terms I have invoked and their importance for the case studies. Some of this polemic is presented in the chapters that follow; here, we consider the conceptual specificity of the long space and its organizational substance. This requires returning to nation and invoking a critical dialogue between Benedict Anderson and Etienne Balibar where nation itself takes shape in an imaginary logic, an “other scene” in Balibar’s terms, of novelists who are otherwise “undocumented.” We have noted Anderson’s work is influential in literary criticism because it builds many of its lessons around literary examples. This is often taken to mean that the imaginary of both literature
and nation are synonymous and that writers such as Rizal and Pramoedya are exemplary in narrating nation because they are always coincident with its expression. Anderson does not make this assumption because language first figures the authors' possible expressivity; thus, it is through language that the imagined characteristic of nation can be glimpsed, whether in Pramoedya's "national language," bahasa Indonesia, or Rizal's Spanish as anticolonial discourse. The identification of authors is always a shortcut where nation is concerned, and the interest is whether they exceed or resist the identity given in its contours. Nation is not the fixed point against which the writer's affiliation can be measured but rather, like language, is a living substance of identification that moves unevenly with the writer's own dynamism. The state must work very hard to make these points meet because it needs both the cultural imprimatur of writers and the principle of storytelling to nurture being from moment to moment. Anderson, then, seizes on particular writers in order to defamiliarize the language of states in formation and especially those negotiated in the arduous processes of decolonization.

Balibar, by contrast, is a philosopher of political structures. This necessitates splitting the nation from the nation form: the former can be read as extant nations and nationalities that produce an identification through reproduction or repetition; the latter, however, is a mode of combination, a social formation whose hegemony is unevenly developed among other formations, dominant or otherwise. Nations can be studied as discrete entities with their own manner of identification and historicity. Nation form, however, is "the concept of a structure capable of producing determinate 'community effects'" (W6, 20–21) but "is not itself a community." It is a principle that moves across nations and structurally is their absent cause, the constraining concept that paradoxically enables the form to appear. In another essay, more or less contemporaneous with "Homo Nationalis" where this idea is introduced, Balibar spells out the difference with Anderson's model:

Is there, properly speaking, a mode of constitution of individual and collective identity that is specifically national?

We must, I think, study this question at the deepest level: not at the level of the mere discourses of the community (mythical, historical or literary grand narratives), nor even at the level of collective symbols or representations, but at the level of the production of individuality itself.35

The nation or national form is linked to the production of "homo nationalis" as a belonging among individuals. In a footnote, Balibar acknowledges Anderson's contribution to the second level, but it is a separate project from the analysis of self to self as a logic of production, a critique even further removed from "mere" discourses like "literary grand narratives." Balibar offers a provocative formulation on individuality as always more than the individual—the "transindividual"—and I interpret this in the same manner I explicate transnational as indicating dynamism "across" rather than "beyond." However problematic the association of the writers I discuss with nations, it is not because they have flown the coop of national identification but because they understand it in ways that constitute a transnational perspective on national possibilities. From the notion of transindividual, Balibar then posits three theses. First, there is no given identity only identification (a formulation very close to the methodology at work in the case studies), an idea that respects individuality but only by emphasizing its transindividual process. This places special emphasis on institutions because these are precisely regulative of identification: they attempt to negotiate two impossibilities, the prospect of a single identity and that of its infinite dispersal. If we say that the "we" of nation is only ever given, it is in the interstices of these impossibilities: never only one, never only every one. This will have consequences for the understanding of world literature as an institution. Institutions constrain identification but in a typically contradictory manner: identification oscillates in a "state of unstable equilibrium" (Politics, 67), not just between one and every one, but in culture as customary and as belief. In the interests of the former, institutions may cultivate a "fictive ethnicity"; toward the latter, they may promote patriotism as a "common destiny" (Politics, 68). In a footnote Balibar suggests the thrust of Imagined Communities does not separate these elements. Indeed, Anderson argues in practice they are virtually inseparable because together they guarantee one another. Yet by viewing them as poles, as a kind of excessive singularity, one may be able to track how nations move between them. The third thesis states there is no identity as such, just particular hegemonic formations of identification, the most powerful of which are religion and nationalism. Such distinctions help to differentiate aspects of the ideological work of nations. We should, however, emphasize a further oscillation in reading them, which is that even at this "deepest level" a concept of culture is invoked that cannot
exclude "mythical, historical or literary grand narratives." Now Balibar's point is to assert the structural significance of the formation; yet perhaps the analysis is itself oscillatory in that culture is never a question of principle alone. Here again we have a framework where three theses are in fact four in which the last, on oscillation, cancels through the first three. It is not the addition of a metalevel that is crucial but an understanding of the structural logic among the components elucidated. Balibar will provide a supplementary concept germane to our study: "historicity itself has a history." In the case of the nation form it underlines, the nation becomes unrecognizable from the point of view of a defining profile. This helps both to differentiate the postcolony from its imperial constellation and to specify one postcolonial state from another. Balibar agrees that "all historical communities are primarily 'imagined communities'" (We, 130) but will discuss neither history nor imagination in that formula.

Balibar's structuralism has almost no resonance in Anderson's critique even though he is clearly interested in elaborating the state, institutions, cultures, and languages of nation. Within cultural theory the reasons for this are as obvious as they are troubling. It is at once a staging of a familiar opposition of empirical study and speculative theory, one that Anderson himself addresses but nevertheless reproduces in the polemical frame of Imagined Communities, Specters of Comparison, and Language and Power.36 Anderson's concept of nation depends on symbolic practices, not just those associated with specific cultural objects, like the newspaper or print culture in general, but those that imply the workings of consciousness and the unconscious. Having positively invoked the contributions of Williams and Said to the analysis of cultural modes, Anderson's particular acuity is comparable and complementary, especially because he combines a philological interest in intertextuality with a concern for political history. That said, however, not only are there key historical elisions in Anderson's approach to Southeast Asia (as Harry Harootunian has pointed out, the meaning of the Bandung Conference does not register in his reading of nation states), but Anderson's comparatism tends to privilege Western models of the nation state forged through print capitalism.37 Yet the issue here is a constellation of methodological implications and a politics of reading that seeks not to jettison the literary apprehension of nation as hopelessly contaminated, but instead builds its importance around a formal insistence discrepant with the West as a posited norm.

Anderson's silence on the deep structure of nation form is not produced by beginning from the novel or literary lives as cultural evidence of nation or nationalism, but by his belief that he has discovered this logic in the symbolic. Anderson and Balibar approach the same problem, the nation and exigencies of nationness, through related metaphors: for Balibar, ambiguity, ambivalence, and oscillation; for Anderson, spectral nonequivalence. This permits a dialogue on their institutional critiques: Balibar's from a position that sees hegemony in a fluctuating logic of constraint and multiplicity, Anderson's from an ambivalence about the authentic at either end of his methodological "telescope."

By eschewing structural analysis of the nation form for phenomenological content, however, Anderson misses an opportunity to reveal the shortfalls of the imagined community of nation as serial structure within the artful homogenous time of the now, crossed between Benjamin's Jetztzeit and Auerbach's "meanwhile." The solution is not to reconnect the nation form and nation in the silent exchanges of Balibar and Anderson but to understand the logic of separation itself, a critical mode that too often is at one with the institutional reproduction of nation as given. The tension between nation form and nation must be preserved in cultural analysis, and especially postcolonial critique, to register the ambivalence in both as enabling of a seriality that unbinds nation in transnationalism.

Serialization is indeed time's writing system of nation. Anderson permits an understanding of nation formation as a process that is at once institutionally repetitive and inscribed—however we characterize its deep structure. If Balibar's intervention reminds us that the nation form is not itself a community (We, 20), then Anderson's thoughts on seriality attend to community practices that are not themselves a form, yet appear to be. Pheng Cheah refers to this as "part of the grammar of every nation" and it "may be the absent cause in the process of its narration."38 In The Spectre of Comparisons Anderson argues "the origin of nationalism...lives by making comparisons," a brilliant formulation given the spectral aura in which this "living" takes place.39 Using Rizal's experience of double consciousness as a foil, Anderson argues place asserts a ghostly presence in diaspora, migration, and exile that allows Rizal to understand its meaning as national identification. Because it is a specter, literally a national spirit, it problematizes appeals to origin but also the question of comparison. Cheah has turned spectral nationality into a comparative method by combining
Anderson's ghostly metaphor with philosophical exposition. He also finds an appropriate analogy for Anderson's concept in Pramoedya's Footsteps in the phrase "dissatisfied restlessness in the world of comparison" ("gelisah dalam alam perbandingan").<ref> As Cheah points out, comparison here is the cause of restlessness but is not just the ward of metropolitan elites or cosmopolitan exiles: it is itself determined by the peripatetic flux of capitalist social relations that, if it sounds like Althusser's absent cause, does not carry the precise structural imperative of causality.

Anderson supplements his thesis on the importance of homogenous, empty time, or calendrical time, for imagining nation with two types of seriality: bound and unbound. The latter maintains the now-time of the newspaper but adds to this the newspaper's condition of worldliness—that its time assumes a world with which it is coterminous—and a degree of standardization in journalistic language. Together these give the impression that the newspaper governs the terms of expression for simultaneity and that their seriality is symptomatic of "new serial thinking" in general that could run "diachronically up and down homogenous, empty time, as well as synchronically, on the newspaper page." Thus: "It was from within this logic of the series that a new grammar of representation came into being, which was also a precondition for imagining the nation" (Spectres, 34). In addressing seriality Anderson assumes another precondition in print capitalism that is suppressed here but remains problematic as a form of technological determinism. The other manifestation of seriality is bound because it depends on the categorical assertions and data accumulation processes of the census. The census binds the series by giving an impression of totality grided by the acceptable practice of anonymous counting (while what counts, of course, confirms the self-image of the state). To prove unbound seriality in motion Anderson returns to Pramoedya and translates a passage from his short story "She Who Gave Up," in which the character Is (or Ies) achieves a revolutionary simultaneity through becoming conscious of her serial individuality in modernity.<ref> I would want to say, positively, that Anderson's theorization of the imagined community of nation would be impossible without Pramoedya (and Rizal), and more controversially, that it is hard to imagine the extant Buru Quartet without Anderson's concept in play. Here the use of a literary example to underline unbound seriality pushes the political economy and history redolent in Anderson's introduction further into the background. The attention to elections as expressions of the will to bound seriality plunges us back into the more familiar territories of political discourse and their institutions, but the reader might be forgiven for thinking that all of the fun in discerning nation accrues to the unbound seriality of fiction. Anderson makes the case that seriality is the complement of simultaneity in national belonging, but it is never clear the logic of seriality is the only or even a primary precondition of nation. One can accept the premise of imaginary identification but still doubt the degree of its force and the shared nature of its categories. Would the logic of seriality be more persuasive in another register, one that did not claim causality so insistently but was imbued with the same ambivalence as its object?

This is the terrain and time of the serial novel. The serial novel is dependent on the historicity of history, so much so that its logic of time/space, the chronotope, cannot be adequately apprehended outside the institutions, literary categories, and imagined communities in which it is conceived. It bears this burden of embeddedness with all of the optimism that socialization infers but this can only problematize its identity, even when it is reedited for a rather different "bound" seriality in the novel between two covers. The topic of the serial novel and its logic of history—forms of time that differ considerably between, let us say, Charles Dickens's Oliver Twist and Kou Fumizuki's Aoi Yori Aoshi, or the work of Henry James and Stephen King—is one that exceeds the current project. A few characteristics are relevant to the mode of extended fiction that interrogates the seriality of nation, including its connection to print capitalism. In Britain this would find serial fiction filling pages of extra space opened up by newspapers going to a large sheet format intent on avoiding a tax levied on smaller sheets. Newspaper publication inevitably changed the kind of storytelling deployed and the readership. If Anderson is right that the newspaper facilitates an experience of unbound seriality in nation discourse, serial fiction participates in this expansive simultaneity, but this does not secure identification in the name of nation. If fiction projects a community or communities, one task in analyzing serial novels is to understand if this is overdetermined by the exigencies of serialization itself. The main link here is not the newspaper as such (although it is not a coincidence that Pramoedya's Buru Quartet is based around the life of Tirto Adi Suryo, a journalist/activist in Indonesia's early nationalist movement) but serial engagement, the process by which narration frames a readership and a desire to involve oneself in its story over an extended period of time.
In the newspaper correlative there are at least two forms of contractual obligation that the writer faces: the more obvious financial bond to the publisher and the expectation that the next installment will be delivered to the reader as scheduled. Yet the fact of serialization does not do justice to the function of time, which considers extension as a determinate link to the experience of time in the narrative. This is the link between serial novels and the novel in series, those that constitute the case studies to follow. The obligation to the regulative interval of publication is minimal but this tends only to intensify the obligation to time and its conflictual modalities. These extend in a variety of ways that redefine seriality and its relation to nation: the historical parameters that identify space as meaningful for the novel; the lived experience of place and distance, a movement we associate with migration, exile, and errantry of various kinds but here are a direct consequence of a specific identification with place (that Anderson characterizes as a "specter of comparison"); the time of writing as shot through not just with Benjaminian memory in a moment of danger but with extant conditions changing in time—shortening, lengthening, causing text to appear and disappear—not simply as a function of editing but by the creative and destructive forces that attend decolonization as lived in different spaces and compositions; and the quandary of closure, how best to unfold narrative when its series is unbound by a logic of time that overreaches it, which for Bakhtin is expressed as novelization but here is more narrowly defined as the open seriality of decolonization. In reading Rizal, Anderson suggests "the novel as literary genre . . . permitted the imagining of 'Las Filipinas' as a bounded sociological reality" (Spectre, 237) yet in its extended form what is bound in its collocation of different social markers, of dress, speech, location, everyday practices in profusion is serially undone by elaborating time's process as duration and disjunction. Just as Anderson elucidates the nation at the expense of the structural logic of the nation form so, in his otherwise coruscating critiques of Rizal and Pramoedya, he proffers "bounded sociological reality" without considering seriality as a formal logic of narration (either in Rizal's two novels of Philippine nationalism or Pramoedya's quartet). All of his other themes obtain—translation, circulation, a worldly simultaneity—but time is also the specter in comparison and its role in chronotope may be something other than comparative: it is the temporal imperative of persistence against persistence, the struggle to write when that which curtails expression quietly lives on (and can include the nation itself as a condition of subjugation). On this level, the novel in series may find itself in other modes of seriality (re-readings, re-translations, adaptations, canon formations, posthumous additions, and so forth), none of which need provide the content of nation yet may permit it a patina of consistency. This is not the difference between describing a nation and participating in it; seriality is a narrative mode of specific time: first, in the move from the novel's struggle with other forms to the novel's struggle with itself; second, in the elaboration of extended transnational fiction as postcolonial chronotopes. In writing through the moment of decolonization their evenness entails wrestling the form from itself. It is not just a question of reclaiming that which the novel has been in its long history, but of articulating what it could not have been until the great struggles of national independence and anticolonial revolution in the second half of the twentieth century.

Partha Chatterjee's response to Anderson underlines both the problems of boundedness versus unboundedness in seriality (particularly the diminution of ethnic identity that attends Anderson's critique of the census) and the limits of liberation in the concept of empty, homogenous time. To the extent that we can find generalizing tendencies in the divisions Anderson makes, the introduction of a specific national experience mitigates the political if not the methodological force of the distinctions. But the Eurocentric cynicism that attends the mode of nationalism ("ethics for us, economics for them") is a caricature of Anderson's concern, as if ratio only passes through the eye of Hegelian idealism. The more serious issue Chatterjee raises is the "time of capital," which forges its own calendar and abstruse simultaneity. What Benjamin sees as a contradictory chronos, one which provides for messianic moments that break the plodding continuum of capital as stasis, Chatterjee chides as "utopian" because "empty homogeneous time is not located anywhere in real space" (131). Exactly. We can historicize capitalism and one of its complex symptoms, the nation-state, precisely because time's abstraction cannot absolutely suture capital relations from moment to moment. Narratives of progress and linearity might appear as the healing balm for time's abstraction in the now, but this is only ever a monologic alibi for what is actually a real contradiction. Capital cannot revolutionize in timelessness but it cannot revolutionize without timelessness. It is in capital's will to universality that the substance of its history appears.
Setting aside the problematic binaries of bound and unbound seriality, of classical nationalism and ethnic nationalism that Chatterjee reads into Anderson's methodology, he nevertheless draws attention to the central difficulty in the imagined community: the difference between the simultaneity that enables nationness as lived, the fictive affiliation of the real, and the rather more messy temporal vicissitudes of relative time, where subjective difference may be no less fictive and just as much communicable. The imagined community of nation measures the time of postcoloniality but it can also be its burden, a seriality that permits the logical extension of dismissing nation and postcoloniality itself as the lived time-space of difference in decolonization. There is good reason to acknowledge Chatterjee’s troubling of the national axis in empty, homogenous time, but can that concept be displaced while holding to a utopian function? Antonio Negri offers an answer here that I will read back into the transnational/postcolonial nexus of chronotope. Unlike Benjamin, Negri casts a jaundiced eye on the revolutionary possibilities of Jetztzeit or now-time.

Well, this conception is ruinous. Far from being the destruction of historicism and its perversely political results, the conception of the messianic now-time (Jetzeit) represents the utmost modernization of reactionary thought: it is the conversion of historical, plural, punctual, multiversal materials into the anaesthetical illusion of empty innovation. The conception of the messianic now-time (Jetzeit) reduces the tautology of real subsumption to mysticism, and mysticism always stinks of the boss.43

Mysticism is all over Benjamin’s writing and it is hardly novel to find it in Jetztzeit (the same is true of reading Spinoza but, like Benjamin, this has not made him any less of a materialist). What Negri is trying to break is a theological reliance on conceptions of the new, for which Jetztzeit is a modernist mantra. The classic formula of time’s innovation is for him stridently formulaic and a displacement of revolutionary time into a time of unreality—this is in Chatterjee’s critique, although the politics is of a different order—where a beleaguered angel stares back into the detritus that modernity hath wrought. Just as Anne McClintock has problematized this dubious chronology in postcolonial theory,44 so Negri seeks to wrest radical thought from a negation of real time to “the conceptual possible more real than the real,” a time of revolution. The path from one to the other need not detain us here, but the proposition requires further comment because it implies that no significant social transformation is possible that pivots on now-time, a simultaneity that Anderson claims is indissoluble from nation. In part, Negri is trying to explain how the contaminated logics of modernity hamstring a qualitatively different newness of the new. Yet to recall our discussion of Balibar, this might more easily be brokered through a concept of unevenness, one in which a strategic now-time neither precludes nation nor assumes that it is the quintessence of revolutionary zeal. Thus, geopolitics and transnationalism both, in the manner of catastrophes, offer agonistic creativity in a space where hegemony believes there is none. Now-time is not something one chooses but is a determinate instance where a space of agency may be engaged. The nation attempts to regulate this space, but for every time that we can show the prohibitions on what it holds for “community” we can also point to the linchpin in its ultimate ambivalence: that it is also imagined and, as Negri reminds us, “the imagination is the most concrete of temporal powers” (Time, 21). Writers often engage the nation’s imaginative reach and interrogate its hold on affiliation, on identification, on a community’s ability to see itself as a community. The chronotope of postcoloniality must take time critically because spatial privilege underestimates time’s role in decolonization, the Jetztzeit of emergency in emergence (to borrow from Homi Bhabha), a space not just between but across, “trans” as a resource of hope materially inscribed.45

Transnationalism of this kind seeks to link writers beyond a spatial and epistemological divide not because their histories are the same but because they speak to a logic of time that remains dissatisfied with “posts” or “eras” or linearity or representing at best through sociological/anthropological content. Anderson is right to see a ghost in this comparison, and it is not always the white man despite Chatterjee’s acute concerns. It is a measure of the shift in the “grounds of comparison” that an absent presence stalks the logic of time in that configuration. Cheah notes that one of Anderson’s achievements has been to interrogate what constitutes the basis of area studies not simply by posing some revision in light of the geopolitical shifts of the last fifty years but by offering a powerful comparative methodology that explodes many of its assumptions. If this is more difficult to gauge in the field of literary study, it is because the philological basis for the approach cannot carry the full weight of re-invention against a backdrop of globalization. One lesson for the literary from Anderson is seriality but I have read this back in terms of the novel
in series. Jonathan Culler usefully suggests two other provocative implications from Anderson’s literary focus that will take us to world literature and untranslatability.46

First, the tension between Anderson’s analogic claims for the novel and nation and the readings of novels he provides is symptomatic of an impasse in the approach, one where the logic of scale remains undertheorized between these two levels to the point of incommensurability. If the novel is nation-making, or potentially so, one needs another coordinate besides simultaneity to make the case. Anderson does invoke an imperial knowledge system in the novel’s founding mythologies deeply inscribed in its function for nation, but this is a matter of historical record, not the process of material constitution itself. The works I discuss, even Pramoedya’s, are not national novels because, even when they explicitly address the critical form of nationhood, the primary axis of narration favors a chronotope irreconcilable with the nation that is its putative object. This role for the novel is at once more modest yet decisive. World literature hypostatizes the novel and nationness in one fell swoop; a transnational chronotope defamiliarizes this conjunction by politicizing and not just aestheticizing the time/space of form.

A second substantial problem in the novel’s affinity for nation is pursued by Culler with reference to Moretti’s argument for the novel as the symbolic form for the nation state.47 In both Anderson and Moretti the more one reveals the imagined worlds of nation in the novels they choose, the less one can substantiate the particular claim about the novel’s organization of time as at one with nation formation. The individual case study shines but the general theory of the novel recedes in direct proportion. This is why, as Culler underlines, it is easier for interpreters of Anderson—if not Anderson himself—to move from the general claim, which is actually about the form of time/space in the novel, to the defining features of subgenres, the sentimental novel or the historical novel. Culler urges the maintenance of a critical “distinction between the novel as a condition of possibility of imagining the nation and the novel as a force in shaping or legitimating the nation” (37), yet this preserves the general principle while de-emphasizing the politics of Anderson’s examples. Neither Moretti’s claims in *Atlas of the European Novel* nor Anderson’s arguments in *Imagined Communities* and *The Specter of Comparisons* hold for the nation-building proclivities of the novel qua novel because there is no reason the novel as form-giving can-

not just as easily cancel the connection as affirm it. The importance of the correlation is the concretization of possibility not a law of inevitability. The politics of history in Anderson’s examples are pertinently directed at the ideological construction of canons and the grounds of comparison themselves.

Does the wording of empty homogenous time in nation formation also guarantee the effulgence of world literature? Does the specter of comparison that Anderson reads as a formative axis in Rizal’s novel narration as nation conjure the ghost of a more general interdependence in global comparatism for which world literature or the world republic of letters have become a shorthand? Pramoedya, Farah, Harris, and Djebar are not outside globality, nor is the current tome immune from a veneration of them within privileged circuits of publication to the detriment of those for whom Heinemann, Penguin, and Albin Michel do not come knocking. From this perspective world literature is even more dubious in its assumptions than national literature, and both maintain an inflated and conspiratorial exclusivity. If the former seems to render obsolete the categorical imperatives of the latter, they yet feed on each other’s presence with separate bookshelves in bookstores or distinct courses in literature departments. The business of distinction—in Bourdieu’s sense—is very much at work, and cultural capital gives another more questionable dimension to “simultaneity.”48

Whatever “problem” world literature is seen to represent, the temporality that attends its possibility should not be submerged. The “time for world literature” requires clarification as a relation at once insinuated in the renewed timeliness of Goethe’s original formulation. If world literature underlines the force of comparatism in contemporary literary theory, it also reveals some of its complex elisions and displacements. Damrosch has been the most sensitive to the conceptual play in world literature and has offered a keen polemic on how it might usefully be reinscribed in critical practices while holding Goethe’s “time” in suspension. First, he reads world literature as a “subset of the plenum of literature” and more specifically “to encompass all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translations or in their original language” (*World*, 4). Damrosch then qualifies the category: “a work only has an effective life as world literature whenever, and wherever, it is actively present within a literary system beyond that of its original culture” (*World*, 4). Aware of the criticism that world literature has a penchant for projecting the gaze of
Western desire, Damrosch counters that it can be "properly understood" not as "an infinite, ungraspable canon of works but rather [as] a mode of circulation and of reading, a mode that is as applicable to individual works as to bodies of material, available for reading established classics and new discoveries alike" (World, 5). World, as we know, is infamously vague in its assignation and can mean everything from one's most immediate context, puffing on a kretek as your papers burn, to an IMF loan through which Indonesia is stapled to a structure of indemnity. Damrosch does not exclude this element of scale (he uses world in several senses and deliberately so) but then much falls on "mode" and a methodology adequate to its apprehension.

The value of Damrosch's approach is that, rather than an impermeable edifice of world literature and an equally resolute critical practice, he emphasizes dynamism in the category that permits an investigation of its variability. The anthropological imperative attempts to stabilize such flux, and Damrosch has much to say about standardization and standard works, but ultimately once this massive variability is "graspable" then the stabilizing element returns to criticism and the critic. The "mode of circulation, and of reading" places the "available" texts on the same plane ("established classics and new discoveries alike"), and the critic's participation in or production of circulation through reading is a relatively innocuous technique interested only in the common name of world literature. (In Marx and Engels's famous pronouncement in the Communist Manifesto, the point of world literature was its "common property," Gemeingut, a position earlier taken by Goethe in his conversations with Eckermann.) Damrosch's modal logic is generous and suggestive, and no other work features Menciu, Pavic, Wodehouse, Ngal, Eckermann, and the Epic of Gilgamesh arrayed side by side. Indeed, the uniqueness of the event of reading is in part Damrosch's answer to the question in his title and at that level What Is World Literature? is an exemplary statement on the category. The stabilizing element, however, is not the reading necessarily but the eventness of reading so the critical position can be problematized without affecting the deep structure of the engagement.

As we triangulate between our own present situation and the enormous variety of other cultures around and before us, we won't see works of world literature so fully enshrined within their cultural context as we do when reading those works within their own traditions, but a degree of distance from the home tradition can help us to appreciate the ways in which a literary work reaches out and away from its point of origin. If we then observe ourselves seeing the work's abstraction from its origins, we gain a new vantage point on our own moment. (World, 300)

As Damrosch well knows, students of literature are trained to dance all over this "we," but often the politics of positioning engaged is gestural and would miss that here Damrosch is deeply concerned to identify a position of adjudication: that criticism as much as world literature emerges from a "somehow." The use of triangulation and distance in the formulation is indicative of world literature as mapping, and a cartographic desire conjured from a similar epistemological and imaginative substance. The scopic reflection, to see oneself seeing, obviously requires a category of the other to which What Is World Literature? attends but again: just as the literary necessitates a notion of eventness to fathom the processes of identification, so a spatial acknowledgment of the other requires an understanding of outsideness or exotopy, a logic that permits the other to "appear" on the map of theorization or critical appreciation. These two processes, eventness and outsideness, interrupt each other in such complex formations that even when we believe that the "mode of circulation and of reading" is graspable, the triangulation in fact occurs impossibly at a receding horizon (the almanac once more) rendering world and world literature an effect of reading premised on the suppression of the axis that would interrogate its ground. Better to preserve the precariousness of outsideness as being in process, than the prevarication that marks world literature as being in place. Perhaps this is merely to reiterate Moretti's point that "world literature" is the name for a problem, but his solution often seems to regard critical exegesis as a statistical error in need of refined tabulation.

If Anderson remains fixed by his modular nationalism or the awkward magnification of his reversed telescope, as Chatterjee suggests, Moretti is situated by the distance of comparatism as science and mirror. Just as globalization always tests the politics of relational thinking, so world literature requires categorical largesse to capture its abstruse phenomenological texture. To scale both, simultaneously, is part of what Williams means by cultural revolution, although it is something of a leap of faith to imagine the task inexorably falls to Comparative Literature. Moretti understands the basis of Goethe's claims for Weltschau as an injunction for order, a systematicity that would permit the scaling from nation to world and vice
versa. The conversation of cultures that Goethe surveyed does not obtain under contemporary global capitalism, so Moretti uses the world systems theory of Immanuel Wallerstein, with its intricate dynamic of core and periphery, and the diminution of textual reading. Damrosch’s deploys close reading to substantiate detached engagement; Moretti marshals systems theory to bolster distant reading.

Distant reading, where distance . . . is a condition of knowledge, it allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes—or genres and systems. And if, between the very small and the very large, the text itself disappears, well, it is one of those cases when one can justifiably say, Less is more. ("Conjectures," 57–58)

Distance is a condition of knowledge, but it is radically particularized by duration; hence my emphasis on the long space. The components of distant reading—devices, themes, tropes, genres, systems—might seem logical companions, conceptual interests bent on analyzing narrative frames. Certainly form is at stake: how best to inscribe the time/space of decolonization? But that may be rather too particular for Moretti, as if Vico with his "new science" or Vico’s great admirer Auerbach did not get a little close to text on occasion. The main difference is Moretti’s insistence on core/periphery literary relations constituting laws of development with world literature understood as the name for that evolutionary process. Wallerstein has good reason for reading distantly, but literary scholars? (There is plenty of evidence in Moretti’s other works that raise this “conjecture” too.) Prendergast, Arac, and Apter have all inveighed against Moretti’s formalism as comparatism in part because once one starts to analyze the contexts of concepts the substance of form requires a supplementary specificity. Arac also makes the point that the primum mobile of distant reading is really an adherence to the production of theory rather than criticism, but this I think gives too much credence to Moretti’s division between concepts and reality.

Distant reading is not formalism but an informationalism that takes the core/periphery nexus as a condition of circulation, then accumulates data as information about such circulation. Despite all the carping about treating books as titles rather than ontal texts Moretti’s approach yields interesting patterns and represents something of his desire for “falsifiable” critique. How much we can draw in the way of conclusions depends on variables well beyond the reader’s capacity for statistical rigor (Moretti knows that his primary audience does not feature statisticians, which is just as well, according to the statisticians) and would include whether the world of world literature is isomorphic with the world of world systems theory. Similarly, geographers might wonder whether the “atlas” in Moretti’s Atlas of the European Novel is a metaphor at some remove from, let us say, ordnance survey’s origin in George II’s desire to defend the Scottish Highlands from “local” rebellion. There are strategic interests in both, but the methodologies and corresponding histories are of a different order. Moretti alludes to the cultural history but not the difference in it, which is precisely what enables the analysis to proceed. "Conjectures," like Atlas, is about connections and takes lessons from the analysis of cultural space to make inroads on the reformulation of literary history.52 The fortunes of the novel are the key to the conceptual breadth of Moretti’s world literature, and the novel’s now massive quantities preclude the time to which Goethe alludes. Wallerstein’s focus on the inequalities of the world system are limned into the formation and comparative dominance of the Euro-literary canon that is simultaneous if not synonymous with its spread, especially but not only when the novel is considered “globally.”

There are three main issues that guide my approach in contradistinction to Moretti’s passionate embrace of world literature in “Conjectures.” First, the imaginary spaces of the literary are fractured by specific experiences of time, so that distance is never privileged over duration as a condition of knowledge. What renders the category of world literature impossible is not quantity per se but the time of its apprehension (the real time of its engagement multiplied by the abstract time of its constellation). Second, while Moretti admits that the complex relationship of novel and nation permits a logical extension to world that world literature might not be able to embrace in all of its permutations, he steps short of allowing that world literature itself is the scene of struggle among different modalities, not just genres, but different forms of time/space. The history of world literature is not a reduction of quality to quantity once more, but a contested terrain where the literary strives for worldliness, not world dominance. When we talk of laws of literary evolution we might ponder what modality, other than staggist, might allow their elaboration? Third, the permutations of “system” are vital, but some of the boldest statements on the world in world literature might actually be made by writers who are nominally if not consciously participants in
it. If the "world" then becomes less formulaic, it is an indication of the hubris that attends a formalism willing to hold at a distance the literary that confounds the category. (Moretti does read the literature he compiles, including Rizal, in order to test the hypothesis of core/periphery in the content of the novels he lists, but then this would require addressing the logic of seriality that influence flattens.) The idea that comparative literature, as institution and method, must be a thorn in the side of national literature is a rousing slogan but not much of a politics for something as conflictual as world literature. Scale at this level is also intensity and chronotope is significantly alive to its register.

Postcolonial writers paradoxically remap the unmappable and not in a way that would allow for methodical tabulation or illustration. Farah, for instance, may write of Somalia but Somalia is not the name for that world, at least not in the sense that he assumes Somalia is immediately scriptible as full and self-present identification. He has been accused, and with good reason, of representing Somalia, of speaking for the whole when the social milieu he narrates is but a part of that identification. Such criticism fails to address the logic of identification in Farah's position and how this fluctuates according to both personal exigencies (exile, assassination threats, relocation within Africa) and the often rapidly changing circumstances of what is extant as Somalia. If we hold to the importance of literature for nation, Farah may be deemed "representative," but Somalia has a more significant embeddedness in oral culture that may correspond to what is given "Somalia" in name (and Farah himself is well aware of this). As we will see, the fact that Farah's fiction prefigures the dissolution of the Somali state is not as important as his mode of engagement that questions whether world literature partakes of this problem.

Moretti's is doggedly spatial criticism, and to the extent that the long space invokes theories of space in its formulation, it is guilty of reproducing a certain obsessive spatiality in its practice—although chronotope is deployed to mitigate this reflex. Interestingly, when Bakhtin reads Goethe (who along with Dostoevsky and Rabelais constitute the flourish of novelization) he accentuates his "feeling for time" alongside an ability to "see" space. Bakhtin notes, "in Goethe's world there are no events, plots, or temporal motifs that are not related in an essential way to the particular spatial place of their occurrence, that could occur anywhere or nowhere ('eternal' plots and motifs). Everything in this world is a time-space, a true chronotope." We are back in the time of the modern, and for the most part the test of world literature is whether its time-space is so fused to modernity that it is its serial manifestation. Bakhtin suggests that the beauty of the modern is almost literally in the eye of Goethe as beholder because what he sees is not just the real before his vision, but history as a dynamic within it. This includes the forces of nature as a movement of time in space and the work of human creation in relation to such processes. Seeing for Goethe, says Bakhtin, was not the beginning of the artistic act but its climax, for "the visible was already enriched and saturated with all the complexity of thought and cognition" (Speech, 27). Goethe's is no ordinary eye, for it embodies both vision and the visionary in producing the "living figurative word" (Speech, 27).

Like chronotope for Bakhtin, Goethe's "living figurative word" is almost a metaphor but not quite. If Goethe's interest in optics and colors is generally well known, Bakhtin forwards the idea that what he sees is the distillation of time in space, a vision that grants simultaneous perspective on surface and substance. Goethe's Wilhelm Meister never quite bears this out because of the profound contradictions of its bourgeois subject, yet his transcription of the observable displaces an obeisance to the romantic idyll that mystifies the present by projecting it back onto a mythical past. The novel of becoming is about the socialization of an individual into the world as a whole that accentuates historicity and privileges the future as a material force. Bakhtin is correct to link this question of insight to Goethe's experiences in The Italian Journey rather than to the experience of writing Wilhelm Meister itself. More interesting, however, is whether Bakhtin is able to separate being-in-the-world as a process of becoming from the world as a problem for being. In his reading of Goethe, Bakhtin brazenly takes the principle of world literature as a condition of possibility and applies it to Goethe as an established norm: "One of the high points in the visualizing of time in world literature was achieved by Goethe." The process of being is suspended for evaluative typification. The slide from nation to world narration is relayered so that world literature becomes the height from which being-in-process is itself scaled (interestingly, if hardly surprisingly, Bakhtin articulates the same position for Rabelais). Rather than world literature as a site of struggle over the meaning of world for global difference, Bakhtin settles for a Goethe who stands in for that contradictory process of cognition. This is a moment of metalapsis, since the
more Bakhtin reads Goethe the more he affects the cause he is deemed to identify. This trope surfaces again most easily when literary theory invokes world literature without a constitutive and conditional outside.

The opposite is the case with Moretti’s system where world cancels the literary in world literature for an outside of graphs, maps, and trees. Scientific systems can be a lot more cheery and are often literary (the multidimensionality of string theory cannot help but be poetic), but for Moretti represent small experiments with large interpretations. Yet even by invoking Bakhtin’s renowned adversary, Shklovsky, Moretti manages to mimic Bakhtin’s metalepsis. Moretti begins “Graphs, Maps, Trees” by announcing “a transformation in the study of literature,” a transformation that is “delineated” initially by his three articles for New Left Review then later in a book that takes the same title, Graphs, Maps, Trees. The event of the articles is the transformation but the study of literature, being a rather large edifice, requires qualification, so the opening paragraph that begins with transformation ends with the more modest defense of an approach that “may change the way we work.” Like Bakhtin, then, Moretti assumes the object—despite calling it a problem—that his approach is attempting to produce or conjure. The relationship of the novel to world literature is more difficult to think in this way (the evolution of the novel is the effect of constituting world literature as an object), and yet this paradox of reverse engineering is highly appropriate because it disturbs the luxury of linearity on which so much literary history depends. If the process defies conventional orders of time, it is because that which enables the appearance of world literature has a troubled synchronicity far in excess of the novel’s temporarities. The novel has the “effect” of world and of literature, but it cannot do all of the work in their combination. Here I return the novel to its rather messy specificity not because Moretti’s pattern recognition fails to advance criticism—the example of his approach goes much further than graphs, maps, and trees—but because the form of abstraction in his model lets geopolitics off the hook and fails to account adequately for alternative modes of discontinuous cultural forms within its Braudel-esque cycles and waves of data. The longue durée remains a valuable conceptual tool because of its logic of time, not the “large mass of facts” (“literary facts” in Moretti’s parlance) that it works upon. Its rationale requires engagement that in turn entails supportive institutional structure, something Moretti recognizes through the Center for the Study of the Novel that he has set up at Stanford. A real transformation will have occurred when the novel is neither an extension of institution nor of the nation state and by itself cannot sustain the literary criticism that feeds on it. While it is not possible to imagine world literature without the novel, analysis of the novel can assist in understanding what would constitute its decline, literally its degeneration. The dominance of the novel may block a greater understanding of the “is” of world literature; it has certainly skewed what we think of postcolonial critique of which the present study is a symptom. Its persistence is also a measure of the politics in which it is caught, just as its expiration would not be the product of cultural fiat. This level of historicity, the life and death of form and genre, is undertheorized in conceptions of world literature.

How might the long space contribute to such debate? This chronotope registers both the abstraction of an emphasis on time in thinking space in contemporary criticism and the specific organization of time/space that writes decolonization. It does not say the seriality of the series unlocks the creative end to all that empire and the colony means, but that working space through time makes strange modernity’s purchase on seriality so that the simultaneity of fiction makes time interrogate the story of nations transnationally. By questioning the time/space of and in literature one can appreciate the scale of the local in the global as itself an historical logic. Duration in the long space is a question about a politics of scale that would leave the inequities of time in place. Balibar says Europe is postcolonial, a position that recognizes the vast redrawing of the map by the collapse of communism, the ends of empire, and the new regimes of labor migration, diaspora, and union (as in, European Union). Such recognition is vital, not least because the intimacy of the Other deconstructs any politics of the Same (Eurocentrism cannot hold against the centrifugal forces of globalization and the centrifugal conditions of postcoloniality). We should beware, however, of terminological inflation in contemporary critique that tends in its sweep to master contradiction by generalizing its reach. If I hold to a narrow definition of postcolonialism as that which continues the work of decolonization, it is to mark a time that has not been used up by the giddy intensities of circulation on a world scale.

Rather than assume that world literature subsumes the concerns of postcoloniality, the long space questions the possibility of world literature without an adequate account of its temporality. Thus, it is not the reality
of globalization that grates with the renewed attention to world literature but its politics of scale. Achilles Mbembe asks, "how does one get from the colony to ‘what comes after’?" His approach elaborates "time on the move" burdened by death as negation in colonization. Mbembe’s answer is to motivate Heideggerian time to undo Hegelian Aufhebung, to find a place of being to negate death as the prohibition on living from the time of the colony. Yet On the Postcolony theorizes so close to violence and death that its positive valence, to “exercise existence,” remains largely uncoordinated. The works of Djebar and Farah both thematize extremes of violence, but these never occlude the space of possibility in which existence is not only exercised but situated, however problematically, on borders that do not enclose negation. The mark of the series lies there, in the writing of process that gives to the process of writing a task, an enduring public vocation that the last volume does not outlast.

Capital time, or world time, also has a logic of extension and a will to endure although, like the long space, history is at its heels. So dominant is this regime that even its most ardent critics deride autonomy as a dream of authenticity that conspires with the logic of othering capital projects. But world time has not unified history and in that shortfall (how is a universal time unable to universalize a history based on it?) other times, and not simply subjective times, proliferate. That time is a material base of capitalism must be restated since there will be no transformation that does not take time from it. I do not read the long space as time’s resurgence or the eternal return but as time’s crisis when the differentiation of space cannot account for the passage from nation, across nation, among nations. Is the significance of postcolonial writing that it affects this passage as translation? Could this process obtain even if the text is otherwise untranslated and participates in what Jonathan Arac has described as the "Anglo-Global"?

Because translation simultaneously evokes both relation and institution it lies at the heart of all thought on the national, transnational, postcolonial, and world literature. One is reminded that Goethe’s thoughts on world literature were piqued by reading a French translation of a Chinese novel of manners from the Ming Era Yu jiao li [The Jade Tender Pear], an experience that, if it did not confirm the quality of Chinese writing (which extended well beyond the convention-ridden example of a genre) taught him that the quality of the everyday was not a German monopoly. For the most part Goethe urged that literature be read as best one could in the original language, a commitment that finds him learning Persian at sixty-five in order to read Hafiz. But the art of translation was not belittled. In fact, Goethe was convinced that every translator was a "prophet in the midst of his own people" because translation promotes intimacy among nations and a capacity for mutual correction. Translation is both a conditional limit and an extension: it is both a hierarchical and hegemonic cultural filter and a paradoxical mark of plenitude of that which translation has excluded. Far from the intricacies of translation technique, its politics is written into exclusion/inclusion and the institutions that facilitate both. It promises a world but can only hint at its extent. This is true even if one restricted one’s analysis to European literatures in European languages being included and excluded across Europe (the world of literature on which Goethe focused), with non-European texts as worldly supplements. Translation and circulation are of a different order today with a plethora of languages and literatures on the move within and between nations, but this only accentuates the institutional politics of inclusion/exclusion rather than solves or ameliorates the hegemonies at stake. If Auerbach was overly despondent that “European civilization is approaching the term of its existence,” that pall expresses a double bind in both world literature and the prospects of global comparatism. What Goethe viewed as world was often a European extension and what Auerbach saw as global was clearly a European contraction. In this regard, appeals to world literature seem to embody a constitutive oscillation between advancing global inclusion and defending European or Euramerican exceptionalism. Such a conjecture cannot be mediated by modeling, or abstract systems, or institutional enclaves: it is the untranslatable in global relations themselves. The politics of translation are deeply inscribed in the long space not just because it informs how, for instance, the work of Djebar comes to circulate transnationally but because time/space is an instantiation of what Emily Apter calls "translatio," the core of comparatism’s very possibility as a literary horizon.” This obtains even if the language of the text is of European provenance, Anglophone, Francophone, Lusophone, Hispanicophone, and so forth, since whether criticism calls itself “comparative” or “postcolonial” it necessarily reveals the extent to which the language is resituated by chronotopic coordinates, how the writer makes language signify place and time whatever its putative origins.
Where does the politics of postcolonialism stand in all of this? The answer pivots on scale. Why is it that we now believe we have the measure of time and space to rethink a materialist conception of form? The crisis of time hovers at the edge of Moretti’s formalism and is acknowledged as a major impetus in his endeavor. Ironically, it only becomes manifest in the theoretical procedures as content, so that when he quotes free indirect discourse from Vargas Llosa it is the meaning of content not the position of the speaking subject that interests him most: “From the abode of noise and impropriety, where nobody was in their right place, to the asshole gringos handing him bullshit about sovereignty, democracy, and human rights. This is what comparative literature could be, if it took itself seriously as world literature, on the one hand, and as comparative morphology, on the other.” (Graphs, 62). Yes, as simile, as world literature. All I offer here is a way to speak to that injunction without giving up on an alternative mode of specificity in difference it might require. If the long space is properly a logic of form that pins time to the space and place of postcolonial narration it is as a measure of extension and engagement not as a prescription for a novel as trilogy or a novel as quartet. The question of seriality with its link to the eventness of decolonization does not explain why some extended fictions are trilogies and others tetralogies. Extension betrays the logic of form; division, however, may be aesthetic, political, practical, or arbitrary. Extension is decisive; division is conjunctural. Even the writers I have chosen to illustrate such difference are subject to a further selection, and the promise of a supplement does not undo the modest scale on offer.58.

Pramoedya burned his trash out of habit and out of another formation of memory: the author who watched his books being burned while under arrest chooses to trump his inquisitors, real and imagined. One is never sure that the memory from which Pramoedya wrote the Burn Quartet permitted him to write in his later years or whether infirmity in time makes it easier to burn text than preserve it. What writing survives in the long space will never equal the narratives that make it. The open seriality of the long space as form-giving can of course be supplemented. This could, for instance, embrace the extraordinary work of Abdelrahmin Munif’s Cities of Salt “trilogy” (that, true to the notion of division as conjunctural, is at least a quintet) and Leïla Sebbar’s narrative of Beur migration, the Shérazade trilogy. Since in these tomes Munif wrote of oil and Sebbar of the experience of Africans in Paris, they might represent a topical turn, but it is their tropicality that is of primary interest, as these chrono-tropes are the indices, the imaginary coordinates, of a chronotope that continues the work of decolonization by transnationalizing the time/space of its possibility. When does such writing end? Certainly not with the announcement of a final volume or with the work of an individual author. But if these narratives always mean more than this they remain historical, and it is in that process where a specific mode of seriality may indeed meet closure. I see this as a temporal necessity rather than a teleological aim, an urgency that paradoxically requires attention to extension. It is to that logic of narrative time that this study is dedicated.