Modernism, Geopolitics, Globalization

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In the last hundred years the world has changed far more quickly and completely than in many preceding centuries . . . People in a hurry travel by aeroplane; you can fly to Paris for tea and be back in London in time for dinner. First the telegraph, then the telephone, and finally the discovery of wireless, have brought the remotest parts of the earth closer and closer together. . . . The United States are, in effect, nearer to London than Scotland was one hundred years ago. The developments of science . . . are welding the world into a whole, whether its people wish it or not.¹

So wrote Maxwell Garnett, Secretary of the League of Nations Union, in 1924.² Today, the clock may be running faster, but the discourse of globalization is surprisingly the same. Contemporary theories, it is true, focus on the compression of the world through internet connectivity, the rise of multinational corporations, and the homogenizing work of globally marketed music and film; today economics rather than science is “welding the world into a whole.” But it is doubtful whether we are much further in grasping the implications of Garnett’s title, “The World Becoming One.”

Globalization, although frequently hailed as a recent phenomenon, has been a long historical process. Political scientist David Held traces the development of globalization from the Roman and Mongol empires; sociologist Roland Robertson begins his schematization in the fifteenth century. Both identify a shift, in the eighteenth century, away from incipient global forms to the primacy of the nation-state; yet both mark the beginnings of a new global consciousness in the second half of the nineteenth century.
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540 century. Held designates globalization’s “modern” period as 1850–1945, noting the rise of transnational secular ideologies and discourses, such as liberalism, Marxism, and modern science; Robertson calls the 1870s to the mid-1920s globalization’s “Take-off Phase,” citing the sharp increase in global communications, the entry of non-European societies into “international” society, the increasing diffusion and implementation of ideas at the international level (the ecumenical movement, the Olympics, the Nobel Prizes, the Gregorian calendar, and the League of Nations), and the first world war. The modernist period merits attention for its significant role in the emerging global consciousness; moreover, investigating this role in its literature enables two important critical moves. First, it deflects the appropriation of “globalization” for a process driven and determined solely by economics, claiming cultural globalization as an equally important, if indeed not earlier, development. Second, it poses modernist literature’s engagement of perspectivism and pluralism as a generative site for an alternative discourse of globalization—one that at the very least complicates the specters of exploitation and homogeneity that are often assumed to be the inevitable consequences of a globalized world. Early work on modernism tended to connect its fascination with subjective perceptions to philosophical relativism or psychological impressionism, but other equally strong factors include the increase in world travel (particularly to and from Asia), the rise of translation, and the growing sense of crisis regarding global conflict. Did modernist perspectivism, applied in these situations, yield insights in global understanding? Or, to pose the reverse question, did increasing encounters with cultural others help to produce the multipersonal novel? Did an expanding awareness of inter-cultural connectivity inform the new intra-cultural discourse that was beginning, at that time, to emerge?

To pursue a cultural discourse of globalization, however, we need first to distinguish between “globalization” and “geopolitics.” Today geopolitics can be used broadly to refer to any locational approach to political issues, but historically the term was introduced with the specific connotation of location as territorially framed. Geopolitik was coined in 1899 by the Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellén, for whom it signified a Darwinian model of state power dependent on territorial growth: stronger organisms survive by displacing the weaker. Kjellén’s theories were a major influence in the developing ideology of Nazi Germany, but the geopolitical model is generally taken to be the dominant paradigm in the West until the end of the Cold War. As geographer Brian Blouet points out, geopolitics is a land-based ideology; it locates power in territorial magnitude and focuses on the carving up of earth’s space. In contrast, Blouet identifies globalization as originally a maritime-based ideology deriving in large part from the Dutch; it offers an open rather than closed space paradigm, locating power in movement rather than bounded territory. It is important to note that the contrast is not one of bad geopolitics versus good globalization; both paradigms can be subject to imperialist co-option. Territorial imperialism involves the annexing of space and/or of minds; globalized imperialism relies on movement—the ability of power to cross borders, to reconfigure itself, to maintain its exploitative role by shifting to the most vulnerable site for its goals. But in a further complexity, we should also not assume that
globalization works only in imperialist ways. Economic globalization may be predatory or productive; cultural globalization may be colonizing or cooperative. Both dystopian and utopian potentialities are within, and negotiate within, both economic and cultural forms.

Geopolitics shifts to globalization as crucial technologies become increasingly based on the circulation of capital, information, goods, and services, and as the operative model shifts from bounded space to multidirectional flows. On the economic side, globalization can be succinctly defined as “the progressive integration of national economies into a global market economy, as measured by the increasing flows of trade, investment, and skilled personnel across national boundaries.” Cultural globalization is a much less certain process; who can measure the flow of an idea, much less track its origin or gauge its effect? The very messiness and uncertainty surrounding the issue has led many either to reject globalization as an overused and now meaningless cliché or to identify it exclusively with economic imperialism, leaving, as the only alternative, the oppositional stance of anti-globalization. A third possibility is a broad and continuing historical investigation of global currents of thought, tracing the complexities and thus the choices that animate the multidirectional experience of living in an interdependent, interactive world.

The first half of the twentieth century offers an excellent point of entry, since the period both marked the demise of the British Empire and simultaneously saw the emergence of the field of international relations. When, at the outset of World War I, Leonard Woolf wrote his pioneering proposal for international government as a first step in the prevention of global destruction, he relied almost exclusively on primary sources. As he recalled, “You could not become an authority on international government in 1915 by reading books, because the books did not exist.” Yet Woolf discovered that the world was not lacking in examples of international cooperation. In the postal service, for example, he noted the remarkable handling, in 1906, of an international imbalance in which the Persian government was carrying internal delivery costs for foreign bibles being shipped to them from Great Britain and the U.S., with no corresponding recovery of postage costs for equivalent external shippings of the Koran. While Western Christians displayed “a passion for sending bibles to the Persian Muhammadans,” there was a notable absence of missionary zeal on the other side. Responding to the inequity, the Postal Congress authorized the Persians to impose an internal levy on all incoming foreign post. Another more amusing instance that Woolf cites involves an attempt, in Warsaw in 1913, to forge an international agreement among eighty-nine white slave traffickers; the meeting terminated with all participants being apprehended by the police. If international relations had not yet been theorized, there was nevertheless varied evidence of its emergence in practice (AA, 2: 135–6).

In larger terms, the increase in world travel, the broader dissemination of information through newspapers and broadcasting, and the openness at the time of both Russia and China all stimulated a growing awareness, on the part of the ordinary citizen, of living in global space. And, again in England, this ordinary citizen was being strenuously urged to develop a broader cooperative consciousness in relation to the world.
In their popularizing, educative role, supporters of the League of Nations disseminated the message that the League was dependent for success on the support of the general public. Whatever the political reality, the materials produced for schools and general audiences emphasized the democratic, grassroots nature of the League’s operation: if the League was shaped by its members, its members were in turn shaped by public opinion. In characteristically inclusive fashion, E. E. Reynolds explained, “That is where we come in; for we help, each of us, to form public opinion.” And the values stressed as the foundation of public support were, in the words of the essay by Garnett cited above, “mutual dependence,” “international co-operation,” and the rights of “minority populations.”

Garnett’s essay appeared in the journal of the Workers’ Education Association, and the responsiveness of at least some of the British public to these appeals is reflected in a student’s essay that appeared a few years later in the same periodical. Written by W. H. Drumm, a member of the Bradford Psychology Tutorial Class, “The Best Practical Way to Internationalism” proposed to make such theorized mutual dependence a reality: the “international ideal” could be achieved “by allocating to certain countries the job of supplying the world with those commodities for the manufacture of which each country is most suitable.” England would supply cloth; Germany, toys; Denmark, dairy products; and Greece, dried fruits. Competition would thus be eliminated in international markets and all countries would be bound together in interdependence and “friendly trust.” Drumm’s practical reality may not have been too practical, but he understood the ideological task. Advocating, in addition, foreign travel and the learning of foreign languages, Drumm concluded by urging the common goal of cultivating the cooperative spirit in individual minds.

That this cooperative ideal was constructed in opposition to the reigning imperial paradigm is clear in Leonard Woolf’s scathing critique, *Imperialism and Civilization*, published the following year. Placing the root problem firmly on an economic footing, Woolf asserted that the current global tensions were not attributable to differences in nationality, race, or religion but to the descent of a “new, commercialized industrialized civilization” upon civilizations organized primarily along traditional and agricultural lines. While acknowledging that the nineteenth century was not the beginning of imperial relations, he argued that it did produce an entirely new form: a “predatory” technological economy that demanded a constant diet of ever-expanding markets and raw materials (*IC*, 9), joined to a new nationalistic patriotism that sought not only to annex territory—as older imperialisms had done—but to force the subordinated civilization to adjust or conform to the civilization of the dominant. Forcing other peoples to change in ways that previous forms of imperialism had not attempted to do, nineteenth-century imperialism exerted the double power of “economic penetration accompanied by political control” (*IC*, 61). The resulting disparity in power relations, Woolf argued, *produced* racial and religious tensions where they had not existed before; in addition, the inevitable revolt against inequality caused new, and to some extent artificial, geopolitical coalitions to be fabricated out of previous diversity. Likening the rising fear of a “Pan-Islamic movement” to the earlier “Yellow Peril” that
haunted Kaiser Wilhelm II, Woolf claimed a certain poetic justice in the terror inflicted on the imperialists by “these international bogeys” of their own creation (IC, 26). For these seemingly united forces were both bogus and yet an identifiable sign:

There has been a notable revolt of Islam against the Christian States of the West, and a remarkable drawing together of Islamic peoples. But it is the revolt against imperialism, against the tyranny of the Western civilization and the hegemony of European States, which has effected this. [IC, 26]

Similarly, in Asia and Africa, Woolf continued, imperialism forced nationalisms to appear, uniting the oppressed peoples and “[teaching] them to use their new cohesion against their conquerors and rulers” (IC, 28).

There is much in this irascible and yet astonishingly prescient book that would be worth pausing over today, but what interests me here, in light of the issues I raised earlier, is the interaction in Woolf’s text between the global and the geopolitical. We can mark the incipient presence of a globalized economic imperialism in the process that Woolf is recording, but then trace the way it becomes subsumed under geopolitical aims, and produces geopolitical thinking in response. For not only does Woolf delineate the emergence of geopolitical identities as a reaction against exploitation; he himself turns ultimately to the geopolitical as the only immediately viable path. Convinced of the insurmountable impasse created when radical imbalances of power define relations between an alien enclave of one people situated within a larger population (whether that enclave is the African American in the United States or the white minority in South Africa), and seeing only in South America an ameliorative intermixing and intermarrying between the “invading Europeans” and the “native inhabitants,” Woolf resorts to the preservation of national purity as the only alternative to violence until an equality of peoples can be achieved.15 The thrust of his separatist argument, it is true, is to dissuade his own government from further white settlement in Kenya, and he gestures toward a future guided by the League’s alternative discourse: a “synthesis of civilizations” as interrelated parts of a vast international society, in which “[t]he forcible subjection of one people . . . by others . . . becomes an absurdity and an anachronism” (IC, 120). But he nevertheless concludes that, as long as “the whites are determined to preserve their political and economic supremacy,” as long as “Europe is to be for the Europeans, and America for the Americans, and Australia for the Australians,” then “Asia must be for the Asiatics, and Africa for the Africans” (IC, 103, 134–5).

Woolf’s indictment of the human being as economic animal is strong, but it is precisely at this point, at the point of retrenchment into separatist isolationism, that his model needs the complication of other dimensions. Economic circumstances produce cultural attitudes; however, the flow of influence can also run in the reciprocal direction. There can be more motivating factors, even in financial matters, than materialism and testosterone. And while it would be naïve to think that all cultural attitudes work for the good, the realm of human thoughts and emotions is nevertheless the place where better motivations must be sought. Cultural globalization offers not an exclusionary sphere but a different starting point. By turning from economic to cul-
What, then, is cultural globalization? The authors of *Global Transformations* take, as their definition of culture, “the social construction, articulation and reception of meaning,” which, in the processes of globalization, become subject to “the movement of objects, signs and people across regions and intercontinental space.” Yet such movement is meaningless for an understanding of cultural globalization without an account of its effect—without an examination of “the stretching and deepening of cultural relationships and practices.” Cultural globalization is found in “patterns of reciprocal interaction,” which include, but also expand far beyond, “the global spread of corporate symbols and pop culture.” The “modes of interaction” are diverse, flexible, varied—ranging through “homogenization, contestation, hybridization and indifference” (*GT*, 328–31).

The definitive quality of cultural globalization thus lies in interactivity and interdependency. The flows of influence are multidirectional; nothing is static or fixed. Arjun Appadurai defines the new form of “global cultural processes” as “an organized field of social practices, a form of work . . . and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility.” 16 Delineating the various areas in which such negotiation takes place (categorized as ideoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, ethnoscapes, and mediascapes), Appadurai shows, at the same time, how these “scapes” exist in interaction with each other. Approaching the world as “one large, interactive system, composed of many complex subsystems,” Appadurai’s recourse is to chaos theory and “complex, overlapping fractal shapes” to image the whole (*ML*, 41, 46). Fractals, as stochastic and unpredictable and yet with detectable repetitive patterns, serve well to represent the nature of “disjunctive global flows” (*ML*, 47).

Chaos, it should be noted, while unpredictable is not indescribable and, from what I have observed, globalization, in both economic and cultural forms, is marked by at least four characteristics. Disjunctive global flows are:

1. *kinetic* (Global processes are marked by movement, fluidity, and a continuous process of formation, deformation, and reformation.)
2. *interdependent* (No action occurs in isolation; whatever one country or person does affects other countries or people, and the meaning of a practice in one location is in part dependent on what others are doing elsewhere.)
3. *contextual* (The same action has different meaning in different places.)
4. *impure* (A globalized understanding involves a recognition of diversity with the self, within cultures, and within the globe. And, perhaps paradoxically, this acknowledgement of differences must ultimately incorporate the “pure,” according to the principle that, if conceptualizations of the globe are to be inclusive, they must also accommodate those who define their identities as homogeneous.)

Globalization thus does not exclude identity as conceived in terms of geopolitical boundaries; but it situates those constructs within a multidirectional, global space. The geopolitical and the global will always coexist; furthermore, within the global, there will always be both imperializing and liberating tendencies at play. In E. M.
Forster’s Passage to India, when pushed to respond to the question why he is in India filling a post that an Indian would otherwise have, Fielding answers, “I take up some other fellow’s air, don’t I, whenever I breathe?” —a remark that is both insensitively facetious and ruthless to the point.17 John Updike’s early poem “Trees Eat Sunshine” is another succinct reminder that our mutual inhabiting of the globe is always a consuming of someone else’s resources—a brutal reality that, once recognized, argues for the ethical realism of balancing our needs as inevitable consumers against our need—again a basic need for survival—to maintain, both cognitively and physically, an ecologically balanced world.18 And to do that, we must be self-reflexively aware of our cultural locations and understand these cultural locations not as autonomous countries but as regions of the world. For some cultures, that may involve thinking themselves out of positions of dominance and into mutually dependent forms. Critiquing the patriarchal and militaristic professor of literature, Sir Walter Raleigh, Virginia Woolf wrote, “He never pressed on over the ruins of his own culture to the discovery of something better.”19 It is that impetus or “pressing on” in modernist literature that I seek to trace.

In the next section of this paper, I turn to an analysis of various “modes of interaction” that constitute modernist global flows (GT, 330). My approach is to categorize different tropic structures, or “figures of thought,” in order to explain some of the ways in which global connectivity entered into literary, and hence public, discourse during the early twentieth century.20 Without suggesting a comprehensive schematic, I distinguish four strands of globalized thinking in modernist texts, which, for ease of discussion, I call critical, syncretic, cohabiting, and runaway modes. There is, of course, an extreme irony in logically separating identifiable units out of a fluid, chaotic, and kinetic process. These modes are not as distinct as rational division makes them appear. Nevertheless, by dipping into literary texts and scooping up particular narrative events, we can isolate some distinctive characteristics of cultural encounters before returning them to the flow.

My approach, it should be noted, in many ways echoes Susan Stanford Friedman’s delineation of five “tropic patterns”—which she names nation, borders, migration, “glocation,” and conjuncture.21 But I find it revelatory of the nature of globalization that the logical relation between our different categorizations is difficult if not impossible to fix: they overlap but are not collapsible; neither can be construed as subsets of the other. To some extent, Friedman’s tropic patterns are at a broader theoretical level; they refer perhaps to the materials of transcultural thinking whereas mine refer more to resulting effects. But our schematizations relate to each other—to borrow Friedman’s term—paratactically; I hope they will be read side by side.

What our projects have perhaps most in common is an attempt not to systematize but to use systematic understanding to open up the multiple possibilities in transcultural encounters. If Orientalism is the dominant formation of the geopolitical imagination, we need a corresponding understanding of the global imagination, even though it may be less amenable to a singular approach. In the following examples, I attempt to delineate the transformative possibilities arising when the self is resituated out in the world.
of global flows. Such reformation of the self constitutes merely one aspect of globalization, but an aspect, I submit, whose consideration could not be more pertinent to the global problems confronting us today.

I. Critical Globalization

Critical globalization uses knowledge of other regions or countries to disrupt habitual perceptions and practices, and to prompt a self-reflexive repositioning of the self in the global sphere. It resembles the typical learning experience of the traveler but the transformative experience arises, not through an encounter with the foreign, but through the imagined adoption of the other’s point of view. The trope for this perspectival shift is chiasmus, sometimes enacted in a literal shift to another’s eyes. In the following passage from *Heart of Darkness*, for example, Marlow’s reversing perspective, as he walks toward an approaching African, inverts the racial cliché: “He had a uniform jacket with one button off and seeing a white man on the path hoisted his weapon to his shoulder with alacrity. This was simple prudence, white men being so much alike at a distance that he could not tell who I might be.” The shift merely gestures to the African’s point of view, but it effects a change in the white intruder from seeing to being seen, from privileged individual to the unknown mass. The mirror of self-ethnography thus critically disrupts the complacency of self-location, as in this 1929 critique of the teaching of history in the British schools: “Many of us grow up knowing nothing of China but pigtails, and that the women’s feet were cruelly bound there (the teachers who told us were at the waist tightly corseted themselves).”

This reversing gaze is the foundational trope in *Letters from John Chinaman*, in which Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson adopts a Chinese persona to construct the English as the foreigners in the text. The genre is the Oriental Tale, in the tradition of Oliver Goldsmith’s *The Citizen of the World*, where the voice of an Asian observer is employed to distance and satirize English customs; but Dickinson goes further to inhabit the body of the other, locating himself within a different system of belief. According to Forster’s biography, Dickinson once told a group of students that “in a previous existence, [he] actually was a Chinaman!” The claim might appear to be fanciful teasing, except for its congruency with a line from one of Dickinson’s private letters: “It’s a curious thing to have a woman’s soul shut up in a man’s body, but that seems to be my case.” Dickinson’s ability to slide between gendered and cultural locations becomes a way of achieving critical globalization in his own imaginative space. Posing anonymously as John Chinaman, he enacts — on the analogy of cross-dressing — a cross-culturing that exhibits the multidirectionality characteristic of global flows.

The letters are forerunners to Leonard Woolf’s attacks on predatory imperialism and indeed to Dickinson’s formulation of the initial scheme for a League of Nations, in August 1914. In this earlier work, international tensions are evoked in the lightly sketched political background of the crisis that the British called the Boxer Rebellion, but which John Chinaman describes as “the recent attack of the Western Powers on China” (*LJC*, 52). But the focus shifts from immediate events to underlying causes,
mounting a disparaging critique of the primacy given in the West to the “cash-nexus” \((LJC, 7)\), the naïve belief in international trade as a stimulant to global relations \((LJC, 15)\), the violence and lawlessness of imperialist behavior in occupied lands \((LJC, 17, 52–3)\), and the correspondingly ironic “mission” to “civilize the world” \((LJC, 10)\). In contrast, Chinese society is shown to display the alternative values of a rational, humane, moral, and democratic approach. But cultural contrast on its own does not make the global imagination; the sense of multidirectional flows derives from the dialogic relation between writer and reader. The anonymous Chinese official encodes the voice of the other—meaning the English reader—in his text, considering and answering his reader’s objections, admitting imperfections in China, acknowledging the value of Western inventions, allowing for the possibility that long absence has caused him to idealize home. The writer presents a balanced, self-reflexive view, and he does so through an ongoing response to an encoded “you” in his text. As he admits, “I am too well aware of the complexity of all human affairs to deny that there may be something in your point of view” \((LJC, 59)\). While the situating of narrator and narratee inscribes the geopolitical idea of opposing cultures, the dialogic treatment breaks down oppositional relations. Even the title of the work is difficult to fix: as the phrase of an English writer, it inscribes Anglo-centrism; as a phrase from a Chinese pen, it parodies and critiques the colonizing English mind. Ultimately the one significant difference is between monocentric and global views: the writer attributes Christianity’s failure to produce an adequate social model to its origins in the “untravelled imagination” of a “mild Oriental enthusiast,” whose knowledge of other cultures and languages was not very great \((LJC, 26, 48)\). John Chinaman, by contrast, has a broader understanding, not simply because he is Chinese, but because he has also lived in England for some time. For it is the traveled imagination that grasps the chiasmic twist: “Learn to understand us, and in doing so learn better to understand yourselves” \((LJC, 63)\).

2. Syncretic Globalization

The traveled imagination perfectly describes Yoshio Markino, a Japanese artist who lived in London for well over forty years. Markino was well versed in ancient Chinese philosophy, history, and poetry, and in the literature and history of Japan; he read extensively in English, publishing an essay, for example, on “Chaucer and Chinese Odes.” He lived in Japan, America, and England, and he painted in England, Paris, and Rome. But in Markino’s work, the globalized imagination works syncretically rather than critically. Syncretic globalization refers to processes of accrual, expansion, or extension—but not merger: The American Heritage Dictionary defines syncretic as “a reconciliation or fusion . . . especially when success is partial or the result is heterogeneous.” In A Japanese Artist in London, Markino’s title is deliberate. His writing identity is not hyphenated Japanese-English, but “Japanese in England and in English,” indicating the self situated in global flows.

Yoshio Markino was born into a Samurai family at the time of the Meiji restoration and the advent of modernization in Japan. Like Dickinson, Markino fit uneasily into
his society's gender roles, being—though apparently heterosexual—as much like a girl as a boy. A sensitive child and close to his parents, he suffered the loss of his father's Samurai position, the death of his mother, and a somewhat unhappy adoption into a family of cousins. Avoiding an arranged marriage, he “ran away” to the West in the hope of becoming an English poet. Convinced by friends to shift to the study of painting, Markino spent an unpalatable four years in San Francisco, after which he moved to London (in 1897), where he lived on his painting and writing until his return to Japan in 1942. Whereas Dickinson lived as a Cambridge don under the adopted sign of a Chinese cap, Markino inhabited an adopted name. “Yoshio” was the name given to him after his mother's death, to avoid confusing him with a cousin; the spelling “Markino” altered the usual transliteration “Makino,” by adding an “r” to ensure an English pronunciation closer to the original. Forced in part to respond to a naming by others, Markino nevertheless used the floating sign to construct a Japanese self in global terms. Once signing an art gallery guest book, “Whole world is my home,” Markino turned dislocation from a sorrow into a freedom. At the same time, selective syncretism provided points of cultural contact through which he became a self-appointed cultural ambassador, negotiating friendship between East and West.

In his written English, Markino believed he was inventing a “new style”—an attempt “to express [his] emotion in the way of ancient Chinese rhetoric,” while simultaneously striking a corresponding “sympathetic emotion” in the English reader. The emotional connection depends, as he says, on both “sympathy” and “wisdom,” thus requiring from his readers an active response (RR, 123). For the writing is both delightfully simple and perceptually demanding. Markino presents himself with a humility, a childlike trust, a naïvete that, in its apparent lack of concern for self-preservation, is easy to misidentify—as English critics often did—as artlessness, as “charm,” as picturesquely quaint. Yet his writing is charged with a complexity that is at once disrupting and affiliating in effect. The title of one of his books, for example, My Idealed John Bullesses, plays with the English stereotype with even further twists than Dickinson's “John Chinaman.” At the same time, Markino recuperates the stereotype through his kindness and affection, presenting the Englishwomen as neither ideal nor idealized, but idealed. His courtesy denotes a highly sophisticated ethics requiring a shift in English positionality to understand its implications; it also functions as a mirror asking his audience to respond in kind. His words are formed for “friend making,” and designed to “win the hearts” (RR, 127, 125). His dream is to create global harmony and a better world, by advancing what I might term “the ethics of a circulating spiritual economy.”

An ordinary incident readily illustrates his approach. Although habitually poor, whenever he could afford to eat in a restaurant, he did so in order to study the people. On one occasion, leaving what he believed to be three pennies on the table, he mistakenly left a ten-shilling piece as well. When the waitress ran after him to correct his error, Markino—despite his poverty—immediately divided the amount into five shillings each. And he explains, “I was much appreciative with her faithfulness.” The unidiomatic words are semantically exacting: honesty appreciates in repeated giving,
for the waitress was literally faithful to the “sacred conscience” common to us all (JAL, 72). Money and generosity must be freely given into sacred circulation, but the functioning of the system depends on constant return. On another occasion, Markino credits a shopkeeper with displaying no racial discrimination in his welcoming greeting, “we ‘ave our colonies all hover the world, sir, white men, yellow men, brown men and black men are forming parts of the British nation” (JAL, 9). “What a broad mind he had!” writes Markino, both capturing the shopkeeper’s own variety of English and generously refraining from any comment on the imperialist phrasing or the ignorance of Britain’s relations with Japan. The challenge to the reader, however, is not to underestimate Markino’s implications. He “charms” by being grateful and appreciative, but he seeks to elicit a corresponding appreciation of his own generosity to the English, and to stimulate an ever-expanding generosity in return. And his syncretic writing, which Douglas Sladen describes as “a medium using the capabilities of both languages,” expertly articulates his combinatory cultural approach.

3. Cohabiting Globalization

Dickinson’s rational critique and Markino’s empathetic appeal work in different ways to pull the reader into the global dynamics of the text—one a Western text in disguise as an Eastern text, one an Eastern text in Western disguise. What they establish is reciprocal rather than oppositional relations (between East and West, between writer and reader), and a desire to move into the stream of cultural flows. But if critical and syncretic globalizations attempt in different ways to put cultures into relation with each other, the third mode involves a perception that understands them as separate and distinct. However, unlike Orientalism, this mode of globalized perception understands difference as operating from a different center; the other culture remains unpredictable, uncircumscribable, because it originates elsewhere. Cast as “cohabiting globalization,” this mode acknowledges the autonomous, independent being of the other. It treats the “unknown” in the foreign culture not as an inherently mysterious and exotic element but as a condition of the necessarily limited understanding of the viewer; and it resists the assimilation of difference into one “normative” language. As an apprehension of alterity that refrains from positing essence, it imagines a world of separate, complex individuals who inhabit and share mutual space.

My informing example here is a short story by Joyce Cary, first published in 1950, but most likely written in 1938–39, and originating still earlier, in Cary’s experience as a lieutenant in the Nigerian Regiment in World War I. Set in a temporary camp in the Cameroons, the story recounts a late-night conversation between an Irish-British subaltern, named Corner, and Umaru, a Hausa sergeant. The exchange is neither a sentimental sharing—which would appropriate Umaru into Corner’s world—nor an epiphany of mystic otherness—which would construct Umaru as an exoticized foreigner. Instead, Corner apprehends Umaru as another human being in the world.

Set within the cultural crisis of war, the subsidiary setting of an army camp internalizes a further “contact zone”—what Mary Louise Pratt defines as a “social space where
disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other. But whereas Pratt notes that such zones often display “radically asymmetrical relations of power,” the power dynamics in Cary’s story reveal multiple orderings at work. Army hierarchy subordinates the sergeant to the commissioned officer, but the ordinary soldiers, shy of both Corner and Umaru, isolate their superiors together on one side of the giant canvas that shelters their rest. But equitable relations among all the men are figured in the domestic imagery that converts the scene to “a vast family bed with one white and nineteen black faces sticking out all round a large patchwork quilt” (“U,” 20). The domestic analogy furthermore implies an alternative hierarchy—the precedence of age: “Sergeant Umaru, thirty-year veteran, called often Father Umaru by the men” is credited with clear seniority in experience (“U,” 19).

On this particular night, Corner lies awake grappling with the cataclysmic disruption of the war and troubled by existential angst. Unable to sleep, he attempts to engage Umaru in conversation, but every assumption he makes about Umaru’s thinking turns out rather comically to be wrong. A pattern emerges in which Corner advances a hypothesis which Umaru then disproves, or Corner invokes consensus only to encounter Umaru’s dissent. Corner assumes that Umaru’s second name—Bauchi—refers to his place of origin; Umaru dryly remarks that the name is simply an identifying tag in the Army. Corner, seeking sympathetic understanding, ventures that it isn’t good to be lonely; Umaru asserts his solitary independence. Corner, a Protestant, blunders in taking Umaru’s comment that it is good to live like a Haji to mean that Umaru, a Muslim, regards God familiarly as a friend; and finally Corner’s digressions on the beauty of the clouds are rejected in wondering contempt by the old sergeant who reads in the clouds a coming storm. But rather than plunging Corner further into troubled anxiety, the imperturbable stability of the older man brings the younger ecstatic relief. The reversing view of his own inexperience releases Corner from the burden of his attempts to understand—either Umaru or the world. Corner’s inability to “know” Umaru is cathartic, confirming that the universe is not coterminous with his own limited self, and relieving the burden of alienation through a non-appropriative or non-assimilated epiphany of another man.

The experience of cohabitation is then realized through the sense of touch. The conversation ends when Umaru leads in a traditional Hausa blessing for sleep and good health, and turns his back to go to sleep. But one tiny part of their bodies remains in contact. Lying still for another hour, Corner is aware of “the place where his elbow touched Umaru’s back” and that one tiny point generates a steady flow of affection and pleasure (“U,” 24). Corner experiences a moment of being in touch—figuratively and literally—but the experience is not one he requires his conscious mind to possess. The native “Other” in this narrative is still limited to a role in the British—or in this case, Irish—man’s experience, since Umaru’s own narrative is only lightly glimpsed from the outside. However, in this particular mode of global imagining, that is the very point. The autonomy of the other person is asserted by recognizing the real existence of other subjective worlds.
Cohabitating globalization fosters the construction of home identity not as a center but as a region of the world; it correspondingly promotes an understanding of the world as a pluralistic home of diverse individuals. I have referred elsewhere to “universal individualism” as a pivotal modernist concept, deriving the term from Leonard Woolf. As Woolf asserts, the democratic ideals of the French Revolution “only translate into social and political terms the consciousness of universal individuality and the right of everyone to be treated as an individual, a free fellow-human being” (emphasis added; AA, 2: 386). In perceiving the “I” of “the Other,” the traditional opposition between individualism and collectivity is diffused. Encounters with individual voices from elsewhere situate the self relationally and equally with others in the world.

5. Runaway Globalization

If cohabiting globalization signals the positive potential in modernist pluralism, a pluralistic vision nevertheless runs the risk of losing an effective interventionist stance. The posture of extreme tolerance can become an accommodating mode of passivity; more problematically, it begs the question of how far tolerance should be extended to the intolerant. Unlimited pluralism leads to the problem of runaway globalization, to use a term borrowed from Anthony Giddens’s Runaway World. For Giddens, the loss of control is closely associated with the vast destabilizing forces of electronic money; in cultural globalization, the loss posed by an excessive submersion in disjunctive flows is one of ethical and emotional commitment.

Runaway globalization is evocative of the Gatsby era and, perhaps even more strongly, of the rootless cosmopolitan society of Berlin in the years leading up to World War II. The fascination of this free-floating era is captured in Christopher Isherwood’s Berlin novels: Mr. Norris Changes Trains and Goodbye to Berlin. Set in the last days of the Weimer Republic, the novels present a world in which identities and desires are unbound, crossing both literal borders and socially constructed boundaries of gender, sexuality, politics, and the law. And for the narrator William Bradshaw (a fictional-autobiographical crosser, bearing Isherwood’s two middle names), one significant crossed border runs between England (where homosexuality was still criminalized) and Berlin (city, in the 1920s, of de-territorialized sexual expression). But this freedom, though liberating and even hypnotizing in Mr. Norris Changes Trains, is ultimately runaway. Sexual and political promiscuity become merely another capitalist coin—or electronic sign—in circulating exchange. The penultimate of the linked short stories that make up Goodbye to Berlin concerns the relation of the narrator (now named Christopher Isherwood)—an impoverished writer and language teacher with vaguely communist sympathies—and the Landauers—a wealthy capitalist Jewish family, and owners of a high-class department store. Both the Isherwood character and Bernhard Landauer, the nephew who manages the family business, inhabit a world of global flows: the narrator is an Englishman more psychologically at home in the sexually liberated and erotically charged underworld of Berlin, while Bernhard is a Jew who is at once the son of an English mother and a German father, a capitalist...
through family responsibility but a sculptor by desire, and a traveler throughout the Jewish diaspora who nevertheless feels that China is his psychological home. Although the territorialized oppositions of English/German, Aryan/Jew, Occidentalist/Orientalist, Communist/Capitalist threaten to divide the two men, a stronger and more compelling connection is implied through their common lack of fixity in any one position. But despite the positive implications of their fluid subjectivities, the disturbing weakness of this open world is exposed in their last conversation, in which Bernhard makes the sudden, and deliberately fantastic, proposition that the two of them leave (elope?) immediately that night for China. Despite their previous, intimate contacts of touch, in moments when Bernhard rests his hand on the narrator’s shoulder, Bernhard’s proposal is treated by both men with an ironic blend of politeness and mockery that exposes a fundamental self-mockery at its roots. The daring proposal is of course not taken up; detachment from the territorial, it seems, rests on a personal aloofness from commitment, a constant multiple performative that makes a serious pledge too dangerous a risk. But the unacted narrative disrupts the focalization for which this work is well known (“I am a camera”) with the alternative possibilities of what might have happened had the narrator come out from behind his lens. As it is, eighteen months later, the narrator learns of Bernhard’s mysterious disappearance and death; the Third Reich begins; and the narrator retreats to his English “home.” Despite the unspoken bond between Christopher and Bernhard (for by 1933, both Jews and homosexuals were victims of Nazi persecution), in the world of nomadic nonjudgmental detachment, tolerance has no ethical force. Runaway globalization is routed by the power of the returning geopolitical.

Future Directions

What I have outlined here is merely a beginning, but I hope it will be enough to suggest further worthwhile directions to pursue. There is, however, an obvious question that must be addressed. Will seeking a global consciousness in the modernist period ground our study once again in the perspectives of white, Western, and privileged groups? Consciousness of the whole needs to aim for inclusiveness of voice. The examples I discussed above are admittedly all by male writers, but the selection was deliberately made to represent various ethnicities and regions: Chinese, Japanese, Nigerian Muslim, and German Jew. In addition, these writers indicate a range of forms that globalized voices might take: cross-culturing and performative (Dickinson), autobiographical (Markino), and fictional (Cary and Isherwood). My earlier reference to an essay by a student in working-class education suggests a further way to extend our scope, and there is a rich field to explore in the prolific work of modernist translation, including the translation of little-known works into English and the translation of English modernist works into other languages.

In addition, cultural globalization, as I have defined it, involves not only the movement of people but also the movement of objects and signs. Literal travelers enact one form of global contact but objects and artifacts speak in a different way to the complex
imbrications of cultural ties. Willa Cather’s novels, for example, quite apart from their numerous immigrant journeys, abound in markers of embedded travel—the “traveling-in-dwelling” which James Clifford argues is always already encoded in any putatively fixed cultural site.\(^5^0\) Objects have traveling histories: witness the bell, in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, which has come to New Mexico from Mexico, but whose medieval Spanish inscription hearkens back to the time when it was reputedly cast from silver melted down from household objects, pledged by the Spanish during their war with the Moors. Furthermore, this seemingly monolinear lineage is complicated by the information that the ringing of the Angelus descended from a Moslem custom and that the Spaniards learned everything they knew about working silver from the Moors—a knowledge then passed on to the Mexicans, who in turn taught the Navajos their art.\(^5^1\) The path running back to past origins leaps the rails, so to speak, to become, in reverse, a trajectory of skills moving into the present. But what is important for my argument here is the way an ordinary artifact embodies the complexities and contradictions of cultural crossings, here encoding the paradoxical entanglements of hostilities and indebtedness that define our relations in the globe.

Additionally, global consciousness can be accessed not only through the life of common objects but also through a tie to the land. Cultural globalization is distinguished by a consciousness of dwelling in the world, and a conception of that world as a fluid, interconnected, conflicted, and dynamic whole. At its best, perhaps, it manifests itself as an ecological imagination, and in this form can be found in Native American writers like Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Bonnin). In her essay, “Why I am a Pagan,” Zitkala-Sa defines her “Paganism” not as belief in pagan gods, but as “a compassion for all echoes in human guise,” a compassion emanating from a conception of the globe as animated by the Great Spirit flowing through us all.\(^5^2\) Although critical of the white Christian culture that inserts its antithetical values into her world, she images the larger construct of human community as “a living mosaic of human beings” or as “the ivory keys of one instrument where each resembles all the rest, yet varies from them in pitch and quality of voice” (“WIP,” 802–3). If we take the global imagination as signifying the ability to conceive of one’s own identity as part of an interrelated and interdependent world space, and that space as multiform and contradictory, then imaginings such as Zitkala-Sa’s form part of the complex intersections that constitute modernist cultural globalization.\(^5^3\)

The critical challenge for this project may therefore lie not in the exclusivity of globalization but in the need to establish certain definitional parameters: not every cultural encounter should be taken as a form of cultural globalization. Fundamentally, what is at issue is not a prescribed feature of a text but a distinctive form of consciousness. And it is this peculiar consciousness that relates so strongly to the kinetic, heterogeneous fluidity that is a frequent characteristic of modernist texts. For, in all my examples above, the narrative focalization is subjected to a wobble—one that frustrates a fixed and exclusive identification between the self and a home location, and constructs a self that depends for its identity on being situated in the world. The result is epistemic instability, but the accompanying gesture is toward a “stability-of-process”—
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a continuously decomposing and recomposing equilibrium created through negotiations with views from other eyes. The paradigmatic shift traced in outline replaces the ideal of cognitive certainty with the broader value of cognitive mobility.

In thus bridging the aesthetic and the social, my analysis relates the modernist effects of destabilized focalization to a growing awareness of cultural heteroglossia. Equally crucial, and indeed deriving from modernism’s self-reflexive awareness of positionality, is a modernist engagement with the ethical implications of living in an interdependent, interactive world. For the question we continue to face is whether cognitive mobility will be passive, or predatory, or productive of a liberating, cooperating world. Today, calls for ethical commitment are part of globalized discourse; they inhere in the process that Richard Falk discusses as “globalization-from-below” (CG, 192), or that Richard Sandbrook more broadly names “civilizing” or “humanizing” globalization (CG, 2). But in economic globalization, ethical intervention is most often framed as reactive and oppositional; in the larger schematic, as Sandbrook indeed recognizes, we need to effect a change in the way the world thinks (CG, 10).

It is my argument here that humanists have a role in humanizing globalization, and that achieving a “culturally sensitive global economy” requires culturally sensitive thought (CG, 266). The extent to which ideas have the power to move economic and social realities is, of course, debatable, as is the question whether a way of thinking could ever be globally shared. The sobering effect of working in a historical area such as modernism is the constant realization of how little has changed. I have long been convinced of the Red Queen’s command to Alice, “here, you see, it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place.” Yet the battlefields of Europe in the modernist period have been replaced, as I write, by communal forums working to forge a Constitution of the European Union; and the Dutch, who in the seventeenth century denoted the globalizing imperialism of a seaborne empire, went on to provide a model, in the 1990s, for the mutually supportive structure of a cooperative welfare state. As for the power of ideas, I balance their frustrating ineffectuality with another view I encountered long ago—that the Industrial Revolution was “technically possible” long before it happened, and it required the presence of an enabling philosophical system to actualize its birth. By recognizing at least the potential for the cultural imagination to guide and direct economic forces, we open up a space beyond materialist determinants for the vitally enabling role of human thought.

I began this essay by quoting Maxwell Garnett’s words, in 1924, on the world becoming one. In 1932, at approximately the same time as the ending of Isherwood’s Goodbye to Berlin, Nowell Charles Smith, writing on the League in collaboration with Garnett, identified two aspects of the changing world: in addition to contraction or the shrinking of the globe, he named sensitization—the process of being affected by what is happening elsewhere in the world. Smith coined the latter term from the verb to sensitize in photography—the action of “render[ing] (a plate, film or paper) sensitive to the influence of light”—a meaning that he wanted to “transfer by metaphor to the human race.” We need to seek, in modernist literature, a history of that sensitization, charting its rapids, eddies, and flows. It is unlikely to be the utopian project hailed in...

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Smith’s title, “The Dawn of a World Order”61 but, if it can help us to understand the complexities, the variations, and even the failures of cultural globalization, it will contribute its share to the foundation of a sustainable world.

Notes
4. (GT, 341; GT, 59) For Held, the primary development following the modern period is the filtering down of transculturalism from the elite to the popular levels; for Robertson, the subsequent period replaces globalization with a return to the struggle for hegemony.
5. For a recent discussion making precisely such connections between modernist narrative and new imaginings of community based on “partial, non-national affiliations” (202), see Jessica Berman, Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Community (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
10. Garnett, World Becoming One, 26, 28. The League of Nations was the first major movement to recognize the issue of minority rights. See “The Protection of Minorities,” Geneva Special Studies (Geneva Research Information Committee) 2, no. 9 (September 1931). The franchise was really an issue of majority rights—those of the working class and women.
15. (IC, 47, 133–4) Woolf’s listing and then rejecting, on the grounds of impracticality, the alternative of “extermination” has to be read as a Swiftian outburst (IC, 100). As his autobiography makes clear, not only did Woolf identify slavery with the Jewish programs; he felt a profound sympathy with all victims of “senseless savagery,” and responded with emotions of “acute pain,” “disappointment,” “horror,” “discomfort,” and “disgust” (AA, 2: 200–1, 487–8). Sudden outbursts of satire or sarcasm are not uncommon in his writing and it is certainly debatable whether he was really the calm, rational “Other” in his marriage to Virginia Woolf.
22. I use “critical” here in the older sense of inviting comparison and judgment, implying not that all judgment will be negative, but rather that it is essential to judge from different views.
23. Jessica Berman connects such reversing perspectivism with Hannah Arendt’s “interactive universalism,” but Berman’s own approach—which abandons Arendt’s conversations between differing discrete individuals for the reimagining of fluctuating, multiply overlapping communities in Jean-Luc Nancy and Chantal Mouffe—has much in common with my description of the self resituated in global flows. See Berman, *Modernist Fiction*, 13–5.
26. [G. Lowes Dickinson], *Letters from John Chinaman* (London: Brimley Johnson, 1904); hereafter abbreviated LJC.
30. Although the letters are addressed to an English audience, the introduction to the American edition, by adding the further cultural comparison between Europe and the United States, indicates both the greater culpability of American culture in adopting standards “convertible into terms of money” and the greater responsibility of the American nation for the “fate of the Western world.” See [G. Lowes Dickinson], *Letters from a Chinese Official* (New York: McClure, Phillips, 1903), x, xi.
32. (emphasis added) online *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, s.v. “syncretism.”
33. In his later years, Dickinson was noted for wearing, instead of the customary mortarboard, a black silk mandarin cap—the first of which was a present from his friend C. H. Hsu. See Forster, *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson*, 128 and the photograph, 169.
36. Markino did work with an editor, for whom he read his chapters out loud, but she corrected them only when the sense was obscure. According to the writer and art collector Douglas Sladen, Markino’s style “is not pigeon-English; the Japanese do not use pigeon-English, they abhor it. It is the result of a deliberate intention to apply certain Japanese methods of expression (like the omission of
the article) to the writing of English, in order to produce a more direct medium, and the result has been a complete success.” Douglas Sladen, *Twenty Years of My Life* (New York: Dutton, 1913), 72.

37. Yoshio Markino, *My Idealised John Bullesses* (London: Constable, 1912). It is difficult to “translate” Markino’s title; it is both playful and loving and suggests both accepting the women as they are and treating them as ideal.


43. Alternatively, Corner’s apprehension of Umaru could be described through a distinction proposed by one of my graduate students, Kendall Shields: not “the other” but “another.”


45. “This is not—at least at the moment—a global order driven by collective human will. Instead, it is emerging in an anarchic, haphazard, fashion, carried along by a mixture of influences.” Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World: How Globalization is Reshaping Our Lives* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 37.

46. These novels are now published in a single volume as Christopher Isherwood, *The Berlin Novels* (London: Vintage, 1999).

47. This connection is made by Robert Casserio, who describes Mr. Norris as a “buyer and seller of ideological stocks and bonds.” See *The Novel in England, 1900–1950: History and Theory* (New York: Twayne, 1999), 318.


49. Many modernist works were translated into Chinese before the Cultural Revolution, including, in the 1930s, Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* and *Flush*. In the late 1930s and the 1940s, John Lehmann’s periodicals *New Writing* and *Folios of New Writing* featured translations of unknown young writers from a variety of countries, including France, Germany, Spain, Greece, Poland, Russia, and China.


53. The fact that Zitkala-Sa’s works were published in the broadly circulated journals *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper’s Magazine* raises the further questions of modernists as readers of texts from other cultures, and such texts as embedded influences in the larger circuit of modernist discourse. Amardeep Singh provocatively raised these issues in his discussion of prefaces written by Westerners to non-Western texts, in his paper delivered at the 2002 conference of the MSA.


55. By communal forums, I refer not only to the bodies comprising the heads and representatives of the participating States, but to the on-line open discussion forums established to provide at least the mechanisms for the participation of a broader community.

56. That this model appears to be now currently under threat, and for complex reasons combining liberal attitudes to homosexuality with reactionary economic and immigration policies, suggests to me first, that there is never any end to history and, second, that concentrated effort is indeed required even to keep in the same place.

58. Nowell Charles Smith and J. C. Maxwell Garnett, *The Dawn of World-Order: An Introduction to the Study of the League of Nations* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932). Expressing this same idea for our own time, Roland Robertson writes of globalization as a concept that “refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” (G, 8).


61. Another of my graduate students, Paul Campbell, coined the term “happy globalization” to instill a useful caution about utopian dreams. I would like to thank all the students in ENG5605, in 2001–2002, for the discussions that have contributed to the present work.