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Manuel R. Montoya Date

Making the Global Legible:
An Examination of World Polity as it Relates to World Literature

By

MJR Montoya
Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Institute of Liberal Arts

_____

Dr. Angelika Bammer
Advisor

_____

Dr. John Boli
Committee Member

_____

Dr. Ivan Karp
Committee Member

_____

Dr. Gary Hart
Committee Member

Accepted:

_____

Lisa A. Tedesco, Ph.D.
Dean of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies

_____

Date

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By

MJR Montoya
B.A., University of New Mexico, 1999
M.Litt., Oxford University, 2001
M.A., New York University, 2002

Advisor: Dr. Angelika Bammer

An Abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
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Abstract

Making the Global Legible:
An Examination of World Polity as It Relates to World Literature

This project explores how global structures become legible in the world system through text. I frame this analysis by studying how internationalism is conflated with globalism, which produces a series of disjunctive problems that I refer to as illegibility. I argue that in order to distinguish between international and global categories, one must understand how the global emerges as a meaningful part of our social realities. Given that world culture is its own distinct cultural category, and given that global structures have crystallized over the past two hundred years, I describe how certain literary figures appear with great consistency, and I describe how they resolve certain ambiguities between international and global structures. This analysis places studies on world literature in conversation with world polity theory. I evaluate world literature as a problem of global aesthetics, wherein literary analysis is a way of understanding the aesthetic distinctiveness of globality. I apply world polity theory as a way of identifying what stakeholders are imagined as purely global actors, and how authority is conferred upon them in the world system. These studies are applicable across a broad array of scholarly fields, including foreign relations, international law, and international finance. By learning how we imagine global landscapes, I argue that we can learn how to address how nations obstruct or conceal effective solutions to major global issues.

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CONTENTS

Chapter

Appendix

Introduction: Making the World Legible

What is at stake when a person sees the world as the defining feature of his or her community? What does it matter that a judge chooses one case over another in the International Criminal Court? And what is the fuss being made about global money, particularly in light of the recent "global" economic downturn? Conventional wisdom tells us to" think before we act," and yet, there remains so much confusion about what kind of thinking influences the way that we solve global problems. Do we think as national actors or do we think in accord with some sense of global belonging? What is the difference between the two and how do we make that distinction? What does it mean to live in a world defined by national citizenship and deeply felt local kinships when everywhere we are called upon to enact principles and values that are derived from something else, something more… global?

In October 2008, every major paper on the planet was captivated by the economic collapse of housing markets and the financial industry. It was happening with almost instantaneous effect from one country to the next, like a string of falling dominoes. National banks had either frozen shut or had melted to the point of insolvency. Thousands of people across the world with equity in real estate or in stocks found their holdings astoundingly devalued. The late October issue of *The Economist* printed a short phrase on the margins of its cover page: "how long until we hit the bottom?" No one seemed to have a definitive answer. Somehow, that remained in my mind as I monitored the responses to this crisis (or these crises) and how each respondent tried to identify the root causes and interrelatedness of each particular collapse in what has now been defined

as one of the greatest financial disasters in modern history. There seemed to be great difficulty describing the catastrophe, much less understanding its causes or consequences, and it struck me how rigid the vocabulary used to describe this "global" catastrophe really was. As of this writing, I am unconvinced that we were able to imagine the appropriate scale of the downturn, and I believe that this is because the vocabulary used to measure the crisis relied too heavily on measurements meant to study national financial structures. If this crisis was indeed a global one, then we never did learn how far we were from the bottom, because we never learned to imagine the problem as a particularly global one. This reminds me of a passage from *Alice in Wonderland*, the scene where Alice falls down the rabbit hole, and she asks,

> I wonder how many miles I've fallen by this time? I must be getting somewhere near the centre of the earth…but then I wonder what Latitude or Longitude I've got to? (8)

I have found it greatly curious that Alice would choose to describe her fall in relation to a system of coordinates that specifically relates to the planet as a distinct and unified landscape. Alice somehow knows something that has confounded those who have tried to address the global financial catastrophe. She knew that in order to answer her own question, she needed the appropriate vocabulary, and perhaps, if financial analysts were to ask "what is my latitude and longitude" (in a manner of speaking) in addition to "how far is the bottom," we'd be in a much better place to respond to crises of a global nature. I've started to realize that some places are better at imagining the social, political, and cultural landscapes of the world than others, but because these places are fictional, they are not commonly associated as resources that assist in solving "real-world" problems. I

have chosen in this present endeavor to avoid that distinction, to join Alice as she falls down the well to explore just how deep the rabbit hole goes and ask: how do we begin to make the global legible?

Without a doubt, globalization is one of the most overused terms in contemporary academic discourse. It is a term that receives so much attention that it almost receives passing attention. Jan Scholte, a prominent analyst of global structures, argues that globalization is one of the defining terms of contemporary society, and yet, we are primarily left with a sense of hesitation, vagueness, or inconsistency, the kind that renders any constructive discourse in any number of fields problematic:

> …much discussion of globalization is steeped in oversimplification, exaggeration and wishful thinking. In spite of a deluge of publications on the subject, analyses of globalization tend on the whole to remain conceptually inexact, empirically thin, historically ill-informed, economically and or/culturally illiterate, normatively shallow, and politically naïve. Although globalization is widely assumed to be crucially important, people generally have scant idea what, more precisely, it entails and how they should respond to it. (1-2)

Project Summary

I am interested in a small, but digestible, facet of the globalization problem. I would like to place world polity theory and world literary theory in conversation with one another. For this reason, I am going to perform an intensive analysis of literary figures that I will demonstrate to have global value, and I will explain how they help us make legible the world polity and the world system. I will construct a genealogy of global

figures that I argue have crystallized since the 19th century, and I will apply my understanding of what those figures do to a text that is rich with global figures, Alan Moore and Dave Gibbon's *Watchmen*. Then I will conclude by demonstrating that any text, whether it is legal, political, or literary, has a literary function, and that the analysis of global figures and how they make the world real or believable (the process of legibility) is applicable a broadly distributed analytic tool which has benefits across several disciplines. In order to achieve these goals, I need to:

1. Establish how a global structure is distinct from an international structure and to demonstrate how the conflation of the two terms creates significant socio-political problems. I focus primarily on one particular problem that emerges when the terms "global" and "international" are confused, a kind of misreading that I refer to as a problem of global legibility, or more precisely that the confusion I refer to makes global problems largely "illegible." This builds upon studies of globalization, particularly world culture theory and world polity theory that define a global structure as having distinct and dynamic cultural properties and how those properties have since the turn of the 19th century crystallized into a set of socio-cultural realities that can be identified and analyzed as part of a world heritage.

2. Utilize these perspectives of global structures in identifying a set of global literary figures. I will demonstrate how these figures are part of a common world heritage, and how they help readers imagine the way global structures and the world system become part of a reader's social reality. This builds upon contemporary studies of world literature that focus on world literature as a way of

reading, and who demonstrate that reading can be derived both from a distance (meaning from identifying patterns in many texts) and from an intense reading of a single text.

3. Demonstrate that any text (literary, political, legal, or otherwise) has literary value. Furthermore, when a text employs a global literary figure, it creates an imaginary map of the world system that identifies particular actors in the world system and shows how they make the world system legible. This builds upon my own synthetic use of world polity theory and world literary theory.

I propose that by addressing these claims, I help construct a diagnostic tool that is applicable across a broad array of scholarship on global structures, including those in foreign relations, international law and finance, and world literature. This allows me to conclude by identifying trajectories that have a legitimate stake in addressing contemporary issues of global significance, including questions concerning the recent financial crisis. Consequently, I will also elevate the status of fictional work, particularly magic-realism, and prove how sophisticated these literary forms can be in framing global problems.

This project is separated into five chapters. In order to produce a general sense for how I will achieve the aforementioned goals, I will briefly describe what each chapter achieves and how it relates to the entire project.

Chapter 1: The problem of legibility and illegibility in the world system

Legibility

I have chosen the term "legibility" to help define how it is that the imaginary spaces created by literary production come to the surface and make believable and comprehensible certain parts of our social reality. This chapter frames and defines global legibility by describing how the conflation of international systems with global systems produces a sense of illegibility. In other words, the social realities (the events and phenomenon particular to world culture) that we often describe as global are in fact international, and the confusion of the two creates significant problems in the way we address and respond to issues of global significance. This is partially explained by the prominence of national actors in the world-system and our heavy reliance on nations as the most important, if not the sole, actor in issues of global importance. On the one hand, international systems work well utilizing vocabularies and units of measurement that are derived from a national structure. On the other hand, a case of global importance requires something different, and most often the thing that is needed is underdeveloped or has not yet been fully conceived. In the case of the global financial crisis, several scholars, such as Ben Stiel argued that international monetarism is one of the main obstructions to understanding the value of the global economy. He argues that because we rely so heavily on domestic national currencies, it is difficult if not impossible to measure the value of the global business cycle or the global economy (28). Consequently, he and others have called for the development of a global currency and global standards of financial measurement. This problem illustrates how the vocabulary of international systems is often relied upon or culturally enacted by default, when in fact a different system of measurement may more adequately analyze what is being conceived as a global problem, not an international one. This chapter will explain this problem in

relation to three different fields of study – foreign relations, international law, and international finance – to demonstrate how pervasive this disjuncture remains, and how much of our analysis of globalization must first begin by understanding how we make legible the people, places, and things that are global. In order to begin such a discussion, several other key terms must be described, each of which will be used heavily throughout this project:

World Culture

I rely on a definition of world culture based largely on Boli and Lechner's definition which I paraphrase herein:

> World culture is **global**: this makes a distinction between world phenomena, as properties of large geographical areas, instead of global ones of true planetary scope, which thus orients itself in relation to the scale of the planet and its distinct physical and territorial features;
>
> It is **distinct**: meaning it does not "supersede the local", nor does it "make the world one in the sense of being utterly similar," but that it "grows alongside of, and in complex interaction with, the more particularistic cultures of the world;"
>
> It is an **entity**: meaning that it is a recognizable culture, that you can see it every day, and is crystallizing as a phenomenon with its own content and structure, which has permeable boundaries and is inclusive and changes in relation to other cultural forms;

> It is **culture**: meaning it is socially constructed and contains a socially shared symbolism;
>
> It is **dynamic**: meaning it is not a finished structure, that it doesn't always carry a hard boundary between itself and nation-states, for example. It is "open to new ideas, vulnerable to new conflicts, and subject to continual reinterpretation;
>
> It is **significant**: meaning it influences world society in various ways, and that its impact has meaning for the whole planet and "all its varied parts." (26-28)

The global, then, is separate from the Kantian notion of a fully unified, harmonious community of all-encompassing, universal values. It is a relatively smaller community that engages in the "cosmopolitical" machinery that makes us aware of the world, makes it appear as a social reality, and create structures that make the world system a dynamic entity. As Isabelle Stengers writes:

> The cosmos must therefore be distinguished here from any particular cosmos, or world, as a particular tradition may conceive of it. It does not refer to a project designed to encompass them all, for it is always a bad idea to designate something to encompass those that refuse to be encompassed by something else. In the term cosmopolitical, cosmos refers to the unknown constituted by these multiple, divergent worlds and to the articulations of which they could eventually be capable. This is opposed to the temptation of a peace intended to be final, ecumenical: a transcendent peace with the power to ask anything that diverges to recognize itself as a purely individual expression of what constitutes the point of convergence of all. (994)

The cosmopolitical shares much with a tradition of scholarship that is essential to world polity theory and frames itself in much the same way. I choose to rely on the terminology of world culture, because it emphasizes the way that rules, standards, and values are socially derived and negotiated.

World Polity

World polity theory lets us think more broadly about the idea of a global culture, asks what constitutes a world culture, who are the actors within a world culture, and what are the social realities produced by world culture. World polity theorists want to know the circumstances that produce world culture, and how different actors in the world system, including nation-states, but also inclusive of NGOs, political groups, epistemic communities, and cultural subgroups contribute to world culture and world civil society. We can take from the word itself "polity," the classical meaning of the term, which is a "public," or a group which maintains civil authority which is personified by some sort of body, that has features that are distinct and recognizable. This borrows from Hobbes' *Leviathan* as well, which views these bodies as being like machines, with complex inner workings, but which also have surface value that we use as the thing that is "more than the sum of its parts" (110). World polity theory is largely defined by the fields of sociology and political science (see Myer, Thomas, Boli, Lechner, Robertson, Scholte, Ramirez, and others).

World System

World system herein merely refers to the modern (since the 16th century) overarching, massively interconnected network (a political economy) of social, political,

and cultural interactions that take place in relation to the entire planet. Wallerstein's definition is perhaps the most utilized and common referent:

> … [a] social system, one that has boundaries, structures, member groups, rules of legitimation, and coherence. Its life is made up of the conflicting forces which hold it together by tension and tear it apart as each group seeks eternally to remold it to its advantage. It has the characteristics of an organism, in that it has a life-span over which its characteristics change in some respects and remain stable in others. One can define its structures as being at different times strong or weak in terms of the internal logic of its functioning. (347-57)

Part of my argument assumes that the complexity of the world system, which some scholars view as anarchic (e.g. Walz), and others see important elements as rational (e.g. Huntington) turn the world system into a system dominated by nation-states, and world-systems theory, culturally enacts the kind of illegibility which began this discussion. In this, I take a critical approach to these perspectives on globalization and how they both illuminate and obscure emergent parts of the political economy. I choose to emphasize the world system as a political economy, because the choices made to emphasize certain actors within the world system are indeed political, and in the sense that certain problems that assert the influence of nations are also political (see Wallerstein, Frank, Chase-Dunn, Walz, and Arrighi).

By focusing on how major global structures (such as legal systems and financial systems) share a problem of illegibility, I will frame a new method, one that helps us understand how we make global forces legible when they are obstructed and obscured.

Chapter 2: Methods: Legibility, Aesthetic Analysis, and Polity

Legibility relies on the way that we sense the world, or in turn, how we make sense of the world. For this reason, I choose to emphasize the world system and the world-polity as political *bodies*. This chapter will explain how we understand these bodies to emerge as recognizable parts of our social consciousness and our social realities. This is largely the expertise of literary theorists, whose work often deals with the mimetic properties of language, and that also creates a robust vocabulary for the way that text produces images that relate to the way these bodies manifest themselves socially. I characterize my methods of legibility as both an aesthetic analysis and a systems analysis. I will define two terms in this chapter that are essential for the reader:

Aesthetic

Fundamentally, an aesthetic is a sense object. It helps us to understand the material presence of abstract concepts, and it traces the development of bodies in relation to a story or a cultural expression. All bodies have aesthetic features. A fictional character, like Frankenstein's monster, or the White Rabbit in *Alice in Wonderland*, has qualities and features that make us react in a specific way. Why is the monster made up of different body parts, why is the rabbit white? These are small but subtle expressions, metaphorical conveyances that are present in all language, and they also help the text tell a story in a certain way. They direct the flow of ideas into tangible, material expressions that can then be seen as part of the organizational structure of a text. We can understand how the words of a given story have effect, how they are schematized, and why they are significant because the aesthetic features of a text influence the ideological thrust of a text and organize the text in a specific way. I will establish that once an aesthetic feature has

crystallized into a particular trope, a literary figure, they begin to do the work of more complex ideologies. I will argue for example, and quite frequently, that the Antarctic landscape is a figural element of a complex planet-oriented history. When it appears in a text, it somehow makes the world real or believable.

Text

Literary and cultural theorists refer to a text as anything that can be transformed into a narrative. For the literary critic, a novel or a poem shares something in common with a legal agreement, a speech, or a dance performance. Each of these things has a way in which they tell a story, or how they convey several complex messages through multiple articulations. The job of the literary critic, then, is to be able to "read" any cultural element and interpret what that story is. I will make the transition throughout this project from focusing on novels and graphic novels to political and legal agreements, and I will demonstrate along the way how their story is saturated with ideas and narratives that can be seen as largely valid and reliable expressions drawn from the words or gestures made therein. By the end of the project, I seek to demonstrate that any document has literary value, and by pulling out certain figures within those texts, we begin to understand how any text has the ability to varying degrees of making world culture legible.

A text is also a way of containing a number of participants in the process of reading. In other words, I refer to what a text does instead of what an author intends (which is definitely a large part of what a text does) because there are things outside of our conscious intentions, including shared anxieties and shared values that manifest themselves through different readings and different periods of time. A contemporary

reading of Frankenstein, for example, could contain very strong readings concerning post-human subjectivity, or questions of gender roles that were not part of the social vocabulary in the 19th century. Therefore, this project uses the text as a way of referring to a constellation of people who participate in the derivation of meaning in a text -- the world (the social circumstances that produce a reading), the text (what the author wrote or how a document is paraphrased) and the critic (the reading and the interpretive response to a text) (Said, *WTC* 45).

By focusing on an aesthetic analysis, a reading that identifies particular aesthetic features of a text and interprets their significance, I can then perform a systems analysis. If certain figures, like Antarctica, make us think about the world, how then is it used in the text to schematize the world system? Why are scientists and explorers made into parts of the world polity that have authority that nations do not have? Thus, this two part method achieves the stated goal of this project, and lets us think about the political ideologies of a given story in relation to a highly realized system of global social and political interactions.

Chapter 3: A Genealogy of Global Figures

Borges once noted that "perhaps universal history is the history of a few metaphors," and that the sphere is one metaphor that is used consistently throughout history to represent the divine, or to represent the completion of a universal cosmology (351). Like Antarctica, the sphere becomes a metaphor, a figure, or a trope, that can adequately contain a narrative that develops a certain kind of story. This chapter will construct a genealogy of several very important global literary figures, derived from consistent patterns seen throughout novels from the mid-19th century to the present. This

chapter will address how an aesthetic feature becomes a crystallized ideological figure, a container that can shape and direct stories in a specific way, and in the case of this project, directs us to the manifestation of the world as a very believable and nuanced element in our daily realities. By focusing on larger patterns over a broad range of texts, I am demonstrating the reliability of these figures to tell a particular story. Then I will turn my attention to a "close reading" of one very fruitful text.

Chapter 4: The Precise Global Machinery of *Watchmen*

Alan Moore's *Watchmen* is filled with many of the global figures I discuss in Chapter 3, which makes it a very strong candidate for a "close reading." But what makes it additionally useful for our purposes is that it is a graphic novel. Because of this the images on the panels interact with the dialogue of the printed text with such complexity as to render the text an exemplary case of how global literary production makes global cultural realities legible. Furthermore, by focusing on one text, I allow myself to work with a separate and wholly integrated cosmology, a microcosm of a political economy to see how the global appears or disappears in relation to other things, how they compete for attention on the page, particularly the presence of nations, which looms everywhere in the text. Watchmen exemplifies the legibility and illegibility wrought from the conflation of the international and the global, and in producing this analysis, I allow myself a vocabulary that can let me work through major problems in legal and political documents.

Chapter 5: Rethinking the World Polity: the Literary Element of Global Textual Production

Finally, I make the case that regardless of whether we perceive a text as political, cultural, or legal, it has a literary function. I demonstrate how certain documents, particularly the Antarctic Treaty System, the World Heritage Convention Proceedings, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, perform literary tasks. These documents not only create an imaginary map of the world system, they seek to redraw that map by making certain political bodies more prominent within the network of social arrangements that construct global values. For this reason, scientific communities, environmental groups, corporations, curators, and human rights workers all become important features of world civil society, and they are turned into political bodies that directly influence how the world polity is affected.

This project will conclude by showing the impact that a theory of global legibility has as a diagnostic tool. We will return to several of the problems of "illegibility" and provide conjectures for how those issues can be better understood when we include a theory of global legibility as part of our collective analytical framework. We begin then with legibility and illegibility and the conflation of the international with the global.

Chapter 1: The problem of legibility and illegibility in the world system

Once upon a time, not too long ago, we were able to understand the world[1]. It was made up of parts that fit neatly into a clear grid of political units that were charged with the task of constructing world order, and there were cultures, practices, and traditions that were established to conduct the business of achieving that order. Of course we didn't really know how the world worked, but we thought we did, and that seemed good enough to make it possible to see the world as a realm of possibilities that would help us feel like we belonged to a well-oiled machine that was capable of conducting our business in relation to the planet.

The world was perceived as much simpler in the two centuries that preceded our current era of globalization. The world system as understood by international relations scholars is based in part on the Peace of Westphalia, a treaty signed in 1648 that affected most of modern Europe and established a shared system of sovereignty. Among the major features of this treaty was the acknowledgement that states had the ability to make their own decisions regarding internal affairs. This is commonly understood as an underlying principle of self-determination (Camilleri, 51). Second, the Westphalian model established a principle of legal parity among consenting nations, meaning that states had the right to make binding compacts with one another related to trade and policy as equal agents within those agreements. Third, the treaty created an institutional principle of non-intervention, which means that states could conduct their affairs without being compelled in their activity by external forces. Each of these principles contributed to the state having "thick borders" (67). These "thick borders" were just as revolutionary

[1] An insight provided by Dr. Angelika Bammer, my dissertation chair and advisor, Emory University, February 2nd, 2010.

as anything else established by the treaty, because it helped turn the arbitrary status of the state into an irreducible element of a larger system of political and cultural exchange. As Benedict Anderson marked through his concept of the "imagined community," the principles of the state became a cultural norm constructed in Europe but then distributed across the world through the concept of nationalism. Nationalism was the cultural concept that reinforced the doctrinal values of the state, and created a deeply felt sense of belonging and security – a horizontal kinship – among members of a given state (12). It is nationalism, the (cultural category), and the state, (the political category) that turned into an institutional monolith, one that gave people a deep sense of security and belonging in the world. One does not have to look very far to see the evidence of this deep belonging in modern history. Anderson's inquiry was motivated by one question above all others – why are people compelled to fight and die for their nation so passionately?

The story of the nation was so compelling because it was backed up by the institutional stability that the state claimed to provide. What is it about the nation that motivates people to invest their political urgencies so deeply in the nation-state? What does the state provide that keeps us from feeling vulnerable in an ever changing society? Part of the security provided for by nations has to do with the sense of security we feel by knowing that the world makes sense to us. Systems of law, units of measurement, and the rituals and routines of our daily lives somehow revolve around the nation. We are protected by a national military system. We collect revenue under a federal taxation system to provide for infrastructure and vital services. If someone were to ask me, where is my global drivers license, or where is my global tax return check, I'd find myself

replying with a look of shock and bewilderment at even being asked such a question. Most of my evidence of belonging in the world rarely registers as a global affiliation, and if it does, it is usually mediated through a system of local or regional authority.

However, more often, examples of global belonging – that is, a direct and recognizable relationship between an individual and world culture – seem to appear. For example, I contribute to the Red Cross, and Doctors Without Borders, and I belong to artisanal groups that rarely register as having a national origin or relying on having a national relevance. If I had to prove my existence as a global citizen, I would most likely have to provide evidence through a series of institutional mediations, and depending on how those institutions are funded, I begin to realize the complex way that nation and world interact with one another. Regardless of our individual sense of belonging to the world, which often implies a broad and idyllic sense of humanity, we are subject to complex, multi-dimensional arrangements of institutions that mold and shape the imaginary landscapes that constitute our most deeply felt social and political realities. A direct and recognizable path between an individual and their global sense of belonging is rare, for we most often participate in processes that are international rather than global. The degree to which we conflate these two terms is astounding, and creates problems when global phenomena emerge and nations are unable to deal with them. Making sense of these moments is a herculean task. I refer to this as a problem of illegibility, because we so often rely on our relationship to nation-states that we assume nations are themselves aware of the difference between global and international processes. During the recent financial crisis of 2008, several scholars suggested that a global currency was a necessary feature of a long-term sustainable economy. This line of argument held that a

global political economy cannot be adequately measured by national currencies, because nations measure wealth and resources differently and each has their own political agenda that conceals the true value of global goods and services (Steil, 58). Consequently, the value of the global economy, the part of it that is distinct from its international structure, is relatively unknown, and for this reason, the forces that connect all financial institutions were either misdiagnosed or heavily underestimated. This is an example of the type of illegibility described herein. Let us view a circulating currency as a social reality, an object that circulates and passes hands each day through daily transactions. Money and currency are cultural pathways; they are part of a way of life. Currency serves as a metric, a way of measuring the value of one thing to another. The fact that I carry dollars or Euros in my pockets or, that I measure my personal finances in terms of a specific currency tells you a bit about how my financial landscape is made legible. Even though rarely see a dollar these days (because of bank cards and electronic payments) it is part of my social vocabulary, and as a result, I think about financial issues in terms of dollars and cents. Extending that logic further, I can purchase goods and services in other currencies in other parts of the world vis-à-vis the process of foreign exchange. By knowing an exchange rate, I can trade with marketplaces in other nations. I can even trade in relation to regional currencies, like the Euro, which distributes its currency through a much wider network of nations. However, a side-effect of this reliance on my own financial social vocabulary eclipses phenomena that aren't measured in the same way. If it is true that the 2008 financial crisis was indeed global, meaning that the collapse was indicative of a financial strain at a level of the entire planet, then it is also possible that the social vocabulary I currently use to measure such phenomena is insufficient to measure the

scale of such a collapse. In effect, our reliance on national currencies (even regional currencies) has produced a level of myopia that makes it difficult to comprehend the true scale of what a global economy is, what it is worth, and how we can measure its relationship to other economies.

Again, this is a case of illegibility, because the units of measurement, or rather, the things that make it possible to become aware of a global economy as a crystallized structure are disturbed by our insistence upon using metrics that mediate international foreign exchange markets. If legibility refers the degree to which our social realities can be comprehended, the conflation between internationalism and globalism creates a profound sense of illegibility. This chapter will begin by grounding a concept of legibility in two scholarly discourses – that of world literature and that of world polity theory. Then, I will describe several instances of global illegibility, explaining why making the global legible is an important and urgent issue.

World Literature and Legibility

The study of world literature focuses on how stories pertaining to the entire world are told, how they can be told, and how one finds meaning in text. In an attempt to define the problems of world literature, David Damrosch explored Goethe's original concept of *Weltliteratur*. Goethe believed that comparing national literatures (which emphasized literatures in translation -- how is Shakespeare different when read and performed in German?), one would give a reader access to universal qualities or traits that constituted a broader, universally applicable expression of traits and values that applied to all people of

all cultures throughout the globe. Damrosch concludes from his examination of world literature that:

1. World literature is an elliptical refraction of national literatures.
2. World literature is writing that gains in translation
3. World literature is not a set canon of texts but a mode of reading: a form of detached engagement with worlds beyond our own place and time (281).

Damrosch's observations highlight the massively ambitious project of world literature. Not only does it require a cultivation of polyglots and wildly eclectic and diverse readers, it also shows that world literature has long since been a problem of international literature. The conflation of the two terms has existed for nearly two centuries. Damrosch argued that we organize our departments in universities by national literatures, and we only take world literature seriously enough to offer it as an introductory course, a hodge-podge of scattered literatures that compose a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural basket of stories that rarely relate to one another in a cohesive, planet-oriented way (282). This reinforces the idea that for a long time now, we have believed in a great illusion that we still know the story of the world. We knew how to tell it and how to listen to it, but we have also failed to realize how much the world has changed and how little our ability to both comprehend and articulate the world really is.

Ian Watt once wrote in his seminal text, *The Rise of the Novel*, that at one point in human history, we believed in our ability to tell stories filled with distinctive and fully realized worlds (34). Watt's analysis of the English novel identified the transformation of social values based on our ability to narrate through the novel the particulars of

everyday life as they relate to the whole of society. As storytellers, the particulars of our own experiences had become central to the experiences of the world at large, and both nations and novels were the manifestation of our own individualism. Novels had increasingly become the anointed form of narrating our understanding of the world through the lens of our own experiences. As a symptom of our own modern thinking, individualism and social order were inextricable from one another. Similarly, nations had become the newly appointed vessels whereby we would conduct our business on the global scale. Everything about the nation and our model of narration had been institutionalized as a discreet but rigid framework for how we tell the story about the world, its heritage, and the way we find meaning in it.

But even intuitively, we have known this to not be true. As global structures begin to redefine our cultural identities, and govern our lives in discreet but increasingly tangible ways, so too have our stories of the World (with a necessary "W") become increasingly illegible. In his study of the emergence of Irish literature as a post-colonial condition, Frederick Jameson argues that imperialism was a key example of how the human subject does not have living access to the "far flung system that makes his or her existence possible" (Jameson, et al. 45). As a result, our ability to tell stories that relate to the expanding network of institutions that influence and govern our daily lives are represented by "great distances, contradictions, and shifts in reality" that express the great disjuncture of living in a globalized world (46). We are paralyzed by our own autonomy and our failure to comprehend the world system that both gives us a sense of security and undermines it all at once. Thus our stories are Janus-faced. We are constantly looking back with nostalgia for the world that once made sense to us, and we look forward with

terror at a global space, one that threatens that order, takes us out of time and space, and manifests itself as an illegible unreality.

Consequently, literary criticism must refocus its emphasis on the institutions or figures that process or distribute key narratives as it relates to the globe. Pascal Casanova's *World Republic of Letters* was a noble attempt but also equally problematic in this regard. Casanova argued that Paris was the capital of a republic of letters, primarily because Paris served as a model for how certain books were selected and then translated into other languages (17). But not only can this book be scrutinized for its Eurocentric model, it over-asserted the idea that canons of books (determining what is “literary” about a piece of literature) were what made world literature, and that literary power was located in those few books that could be labeled as having "global significance." This is a misguided approach not only to the study of world literature, but also to how literature participates in a global process. With the dawn of instantaneous communication and easily accessible ways of mediating stories beyond conventional publication and circulation, writing circles and book clubs are less significant than we give them credit. Franco Moretti rightly points out that literary scholars have a hard time achieving enough distance from any book to see how literature creates images and patterns in the world (*Signs,* 34). He also rejects the idea that only a few books are worthy of analysis, and although a canon is a practical necessity for literary critics, it is also possible to view the patterns in literature from a greater distance. Watching how these patterns emerge is an essential component of what should be called world literature. Instead of focusing on books, Moretti focuses on figures, on patterns of objects, which he can apply beyond the confines of a few texts (38). Additionally this provides us with an opportunity to expand

the possibilities of reading literature across different places, over different periods, and across various forms.

Having followed the debates concerning the status of world literature as it relates to comparative literature, several observations capture my immediate attention:

1. Because world literature is perceived as a translation between any given number of cultural enclaves or institutional boundaries, translation figures heavily into the problem of what constitutes world literature. What is gained or lost in the translation of a given text, for example, from one language to another? (Damrosch, *WIWL*, 285, 290)
2. World literature is a way of reading; furthermore, a methodological distinction has emerged between 'distant reading' and 'close reading' (Moretti, *GMT*, 1, 15).
3. The question of a canonical body appears and disappears in this debate. Although leading scholars on the subject have argued that world literature has no set canon of texts, but rather that it is a mode of reading, the pedagogical implications of teaching a shared vocabulary across institutions have made the question of a canon a consistent problem. Even if the concept of a canon is characterized as a polymorphous element in a radically shifting institutional paradigm, its practical implications constantly engage the world literature scholar, and more importantly, the professor or teacher of world literature (Newman, 123).
4. World literature revolves around the question of national literature, and even when multi-national or regional literatures are introduced, the gravitational

> pull of the nation-state as an institutional clearinghouse for literary categories remains central (Moses, 34).

A common feature of these four streams of discussion is the assumption that world literature serves as a universal container, an ideological superstructure that is somehow capable of retaining what is both lost and gained in translation, which can negotiate the spaces inside and outside of other institutions, and somehow manages to remain all-inclusive in relation to its multiple counterparts. This raises several problems for the literary critic, not the least of which is the amorphous, albeit privileged, political status the institutional 'world' receives. Being in the world, and belonging to the world, according to its current and most popular usage, is self-evident, and consequently, ignores global culture as an internally active element of tensile social, political, and cultural relationships. I like to refer to this as the vast, imperial nothingness of the global category, because even though its reach is expansive, and sometimes intrusive, it is far less substantive than its nomenclature would imply. Just like the word 'globalization' has turned into a word that means everything and nothing at once, so too do the institutional bearings of world culture, which we should by now understand as a far more crystallized unit than its categorical rendering implies. Michael Denning rightly asserts that most often, when world literature is injected as an analytic frame into the novel, local cultural features are flattened by the aesthetic of globalization. He writes that:

> the 'world novel' is a category to be distrusted; if it genuinely points to the transformed geography of the novel, it is also a marketing device that flattens distinct regional and linguistic traditions into a single cosmopolitan 'world beat,'

> with magical realism serving as the aesthetic of globalization, often as empty and contrived a signifier as the modernism and socialist realism it supplanted. (703)

Denning, in part, brings to our attention one effect of the universal/particular problem. Because globalization has been conflated as both a universal container and as a particular force that can be introduced into a given text (in his case the 'world novel'), we often read and interpret those interactions as having little productive value. Magic realism receives particular scrutiny because the use of fantastic elements often conflates the process of globalization, which implies a collapse of time and space, with the more particular elements of global interaction that exist inside and outside of local characters (Zamora, 35). For example, Jose Arcadio, the massive second generation character in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, returns to Macondo from his seafaring travels in 'the outside world.' His elaborate tattoos signify his participation in a class of seafaring travelers, as the overdetermined figure of the gypsy, and as a character who participates as a flexible citizen in several social groupings. The features he acquires during his travles produce a literary aesthetic that marks his encounter the outside world while simultaneously particularizing his body as a local and global specimen. His search for the Prime Meridian in Macondo is a subtle gesture, almost a passing phrase in the narrative, but it is also tangible feature of his evolving vocabulary, one that is informed by a global framework. On one level, the cacophony of voices and characters at work in *OHYS* are consistent with Denning's critique. 'The outside world' does little to add texture to the body of the world itself. In fact, the outside remains exactly that, elusive, mysterious, and unhelpful in the sense that, while it transforms Macondo (at times toward irreparable devastation), it rarely appears with any depth. But on another level, the

aesthetics produced by the global minority machine, the paradoxical elements of global and local body existing in unison, provide evidence of a cultural heritage that remain irreducibly global, with particular aesthetic value, and legible in relation to a crystallizing world culture.

This emergence of the global aesthetic, far from being a totalizing, harmonious, triumphalist null space, allows world culture to operate in a commensurate field, one that allows its own socio-cultural machinations room for expression. This is consistent with the idea that over the past two centuries the production of world culture has become increasingly legible. In other words, the global minority machine has created room for itself in narratives despite (and in relation to) more powerful machines[2] (e.g. the nation-state) to produce images and signs precise enough to achieve a crystallized form. As Alice falls down the rabbit hole in Lewis Carroll's *Alice In Wonderland*, she wonders what 'Latitude and Longitude' she has 'got to' (8). Carroll parenthetically remarks that Alice had 'not the slightest idea what Latitude was, or Longitude either, but she thought they were nice grand words to say' (8). Part of *Alice's* (the text) project is to introduce elements of a changing landscape into Alice's (the character) vocabulary, not merely as a representation of an emerging global society or a global bildungsroman, but as an inter-textual project that directly signals to the reader that a global vocabulary is present both within the text, and in direct relation between the reader and the writer. Ask yourself how often you measure your relationship to the world in 'lats and longs,' and the answer may determine how inclined you are to orient yourself to the world as a planetary

[2] Powerful in the sense that they retain an institutional privilege that makes readers pay closer attention to its productive relations. For further information, see Chapter 3 of Deleuze and Guattari's *Minor Literature*. Therein, he explains the relationship between the minority machine to power and how the national consciousness influences other productive capacities (17).

network of cultural exchanges. Sailors of the 19th century were often, and quite literally, lost at sea until John Harrison's chronometer adequately measured the distance east and west on the geo-planetary coordinate plane. Dava Sobel, in her recent inquiry into Harrison's journey, identifies this narrative of Latitude and Longitude as a complex historical program that we are increasingly able to narrate in relation to its global distinctiveness, which was produced by global actors in relation to complex national and non-national interests (4). Part of that historical value requires that we acknowledge seafaring people as elements of a world polity, and much like Alice who falls down the rabbit hole near her home, Jose Arcadio's elaborate chronicle of his sea travels, my former college roommate who knows the location of his birthplace using Google Earth, or a military analyst that uses signal intelligence to locate potential nuclear production facilities, they constitute a cultural enclave that form, reform, and ritualize the usage of 'lats and longs' as a cultural nomenclature in relation to more familiar taxonomies that mediate our daily lives. It is this form of legibility that I refer to in relation to the smallness of global culture, meaning that global culture has a less prominent institutional bearing than nations.[3] I propose this in contrast to the universal/particular problem I mentioned earlier. While the universal container helps render the vast network of cultural exchanges that take place in relation and comparison to one another, the particularity of world culture deserves inclusion as a comparative category in the very network that 'worldness' purportedly contains.

[3] Although it must be noted that nations also participate in the creation of global culture to an immense level. The United Nations, regardless of being an international body, authorized by nations, still produces information that is synthetically specific to a global culture. However, I intentionally highlight other sites of global cultural production to avoid making this discussion about international contributions to global production, which already gets enough attention elsewhere.

Emily Apter's recent exposition on literary world-systems covers a great deal of ground regarding the way literary criticism encounters the framework of a world-system. Far from asserting the conventional system of core, periphery, and semi-periphery, Apter surveys the costs incurred by approaching literature through a macro analytic frame:

> ...there is an equally strong risk of producing a facile globalism in which distinct literary worlds are flattened to fit homogenous paradigms or laws of comparability. These concerns aside, and despite stigmas inherited from the cold-war period when systems theory was a reigning orthodoxy of the behavioral sciences, the theory promises an interdisciplinary field of interest to the humanities as a branch of media theory or literary technics… located at the nexus of economics, cybernetics, biogenetics, information, network, organization, probability, complexity, and chaos theory, literary technics explores the boundaries of literary world-systems by interrogating the conditions of mediality as such. (57)

While Apter reveals the usefulness of identifying and applying a literary world-system, it also serves our purposes to explore world-systems theory in relation to other perspectives on globalization which help us retool the model of a world literature. Despite these advancements in the discourse on world literature, including the espousal of "distant reading," most of the patterns cultivated from the world system still rely on a rigid model of the world system, where nations are still the primary actors. This Wallersteinian model has been used to reinforce the nation as the central feature of an anarchic world system. This model is simply too rigid to account for the emergence of non-national

groups and publics that also create and institutionalize global culture. Here, world polity theory proves very useful.

World Polity and Legibility

World polity theory is grounded in a theory of globalization that perceives the world system as a multi-dimensional system of publics, where the nation is a major but non-exclusive actor in the way that world order is constructed. World Polity theorists recognize that globalization has become a redundant concept, referring more to questions of internationalization, liberalization, universalization, and Westernization than our orientation to a particularized, planet-oriented process (Scholte, 51). World Polity emerges as an alternative perspective to more traditional perspectives on globalization. Let us explore other major perspectives on globalization that informs the literature of World Polity Theory.

Without a doubt, world-systems theory has emerged as one of the major (if not the most utilized) perspectives on globalization. Under world systems theory, the world is separated into different sectors of nation-states: core, periphery, and semi-periphery. This configuration of nation-states represents the existence of a worldwide capital-driven market economy that consumed the entire world by the end of the 20th century. The process of spreading the market system has been conventionally understood to be the product of late-stage imperialism, which 'developed as the realization of Marxist predictions about the division of labor, historicized by Lenin as the power above nations, which now can be found in any part of the world at any moment' (Hardt and Negri, 276). Core powers are nations that have a strong military and have developed a capital-

intensive, high-skill labor force. According to Immanuel Wallerstein, one of the most prominent scholars to coin the term 'world-system,' core powers have accumulated the majority of the wealth in the world, and have thus secured the key components of strategic power in the world-system (Wallerstein, 'Rise,' 402-403). States belonging to the periphery contain a labor intensive workforce, where natural resources are primarily harvested and utilized by core powers. Nations that represent the semi-periphery are states that do not revolve around core powers as much as peripheral states. They have stronger domestic economies and are generally more self-reliant because they have a relatively diverse labor force. According to Wallerstein, this configuration of nation-states developed out of Europe in the late 15th century, marking the end of feudalism and the creation of a labor market, which totally reconfigured the economic system, created a market economy out of agrarian practice and created what is now known as the modern system of capital (Wallerstein *Modern*, 37; Marx 165). These labor markets produced advances in technology that allowed nations to explore other parts of the world, developing an imperial model, exploited the labor of those it encountered, generated an industrial revolution, and ultimately after the decline of imperialism in the mid-twentieth century, crystallized into the market world-economy seen today.

According to the world-systems model, the cultural emphasis lies exclusively on the ideology of the world market-driven economy. While nation states are the main actors in this model of a globalized society, their goals revolve around the buildup of military strength and capital accumulation (Tilly, 34). Because the world market has no central point, several scholars emphasize the anarchic nature of the world-system, which means that nations are the only suitable institution capable of ensuring security and order

(Walz, 48). This has produced several political frameworks, like Political Realism, which focuses on the acquisition of power and the preservation of national security through core power dominance (Morgenthau, 127), and the other which emphasizes the deregulation of market forces usually driven by international models of cooperation (Axelrod, 109). For this reason, only one cultural model works within the world-system: the function of nation-states as the center of institutional power in an anarchic market economy, driven by the cultural logics of capital.

Another major perspective on globalization, World Culture Theory, focuses on the idea of world consciousness. People's conception of the globe, at least since the invention of a world map, opened the possibility of perceiving the world as a contained geographical space. By the turn of the 20th century, people were able to conceive of the world as one self-contained, complete image. Thus, global consciousness emerged as a valid and meaningful part of individual life. Roland Robertson, in his book, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture,* argued that this created a social situation where living as a part of one world problematized one's social identity. Individuals, thus, participated in a tensile relationship, negotiating among an array of components – nation, individual, a world system of societies (international), and humankind as a totalizing concept (27). He believes that these key components are all relatively autonomous units, but each contains a small part of the other three. Unlike world-systems theory, where the emphasis is placed on the institution of the nation-state and the influence of capitalism in the formation of global structures, the emphasis of world culture theory focuses on the individual's production of consciousness and how that worldview creates global structures. Although Robertson does not deny the

importance of capitalism in the development of global structures, he believes that globalization is not necessarily a natural or inevitable consequence of modernity (29). His emphasis is on cultural models, because he believes that regardless of whether a person embraces or denies a sense of global wholeness, the process of reckoning with a global wholeness towards a 'unicity of the world' is unavoidable (30). Culture, in particular the production of aesthetic value, the value of images and things that bring individual attention to a sense of global wholeness, is inextricable from this model.

World Polity Theory focuses on the construction of value systems, rules, or frames of cultural praxis. According to Meyer, the word polity contains in it the elements of culture that generate a 'collective conferral of authority' (112). It is these systems of value that determine how people act in any location. Thus a world polity is one where a value is conferred on a planetary scale. These value systems constitute a world culture, which are defined as:

> certain ideas and principles… presented as globally relevant and valid and are seen as such by those who absorb them… grows alongside of, and in complex interaction with the more particularistic cultures of the world…encompasses different domains and contains tensions among its different components…is a crystallizing phenomenon with its own content and structure…is a socially shared symbolic and meaning-making system…and is open to new ideas, vulnerable to new conflicts, and subject to continual reinterpretation. (Boli, 25-28)

According to Meyer, et al., world culture emerged from a Western tradition, particularly a Judeo-Christian tradition with philosophical roots in the age of enlightenment (146).

But since then, Meyer et al. describe these values as emergent from the massive interconnectedness of people, ideas, and things that created precise cultural signifiers that resulted from those processes. The industrial revolution created paradigms of mass production, and the expansion of commerce produced seafaring and train-riding cultures, each with their own systems of navigation, propulsion, and regulation. By the end of World War II, standards regarding large scale violations of human rights were one of many principles and values constructed in relation to planetary political urgencies. Scientific communities consolidated outside of national influence, creating non-national spaces in Antarctica reserved exclusively for scientific research. International Law refined maritime law as an irreducibly non-national code. Financial institutions became increasingly free of national interest, and the creation of a foreign exchange market allowed the flow of capital to produce a massive geo-social hub of activity. By the late part of the 20th century, three major charters had been drafted which sought to contribute to an emerging global consciousness[4]. And during the Cold War, the emergence of third party non-national actors created security protocols that encouraged globally enacted codes of conduct. Each of these components constructed value systems distinctly global in concern, and had social groupings whose interests were directly related to the planet as the dominant concept that framed their consciousness. World polity theorists view these groups as essential actors in a world system. Regardless of the varying degrees of acceptance to the standards they create, global actors eventually 'generate institutional similarity' (Meyer et al. "ORWCA" 173-174) and as such are significant actors in a very complex array of social groupings within that system.

[4] The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights. For more on these documents as global cultural frameworks see Boli, 1999.

The world polity model, like the world system model and the world culture model, asserts that there is no central actor. However, varying communities, organizations, and movements, interact with one another at such a scale that value systems are writ large upon the globe. Unlike world systems models which privilege the activity of the nation-state, world polity models, while still acknowledging the nation as the single largest political actor in global polity, also acknowledge the presence of transnational actors, international non-governmental organizations, religious groups, and non-territorial phenomena as significant in the construction of global structures and systems of value. While world culture theory focuses on the individual and the production of consciousness, world polity models emphasize the cultural enactment produced by global consciousness. While all perspectives recognize the influence of modern capital as a primary and constitutive element of global structures, world polity theory and world culture models do not accept that system as a cultural inevitability. Furthermore, world polity theory contends that while these values emerged from Western traditions, those models are no longer exclusively within the purview of the West, changed and altered by traditions from all parts of the world, all peoples, and all perspectives.

World polity theorists assert a new category of analysis that assumes that some things are now irreducibly global and the way that institutions react to these global objects, ideas, values, or exchanges, produce a particular kind of culture oriented in relation to the planet despite of and in relation to the national processes that filter these cultural norms (Meyer, et al. “ORWCA”, 145). For example, the institutions that deal with pandemics produce cultural norms that are nationalized, but they also reinforce the

idea of a plague as a borderless, deterritorializing phenomenon that can also be seen as existing on a planetary scale. Like the financial collapse of 2008, the H1N1 virus ignited a consciousness that was aware of the smallness of nations, that in fact, certain phenomenon were operating, even at the level of awareness and sense of urgency, in relation to the entire planet. People began to realize that given the interconnectedness of the people, places, and things on this planet (what Scholte refers to as "transplanetarity" and "supraterritoriality") what occurs in Hawaii or in Hong Kong could have an almost immediate effect on the health, welfare, and security of people in Dubai or in Dublin. As a part of our social realities, the stories we tell ourselves about what is occurring had shifted.

Two stories are being told through the problem of a pandemic. The first is the way that nations respond to widespread diseases and the level of security we feel in a nation's ability to keep us safe from viruses and diseases that circulate with great ease. This story destabilizes the nation as a secure point of reference for our sense of social security, and is often represented by the total collapse of society, as is the case with Jose Saramago's *Blindness*, where human civilization is brought to its knees by a rabidly contagious, all encompassing milky-white blindness. The second story being told is the figure of the plague as a way of telling the story of a particularly global society. After the fall of nations, who remains to create a sense of order? Who can see among the blind? Who are the keepers of safety, order, and well-being in a narrative where all social institutions have collapsed by way of a pandemic? Are they doctors? Are they good wives and caring mothers? Are they organic farmers? These stories reveal the groups of people and the public spaces that retain a quality about them that is not merely universal,

but particularly global, and they help us imagine what happens when the institutions that we currently perceive as essential to our social well-being are wiped away. In popular culture, the apocalyptic vision of the zombie epidemic (i.e. *28 Days Later*, *Night of the Living Dead*, *I am Legend*) have become very sophisticated ways of identifying the sites of global production. In each of those stories, we learn through the figure of the zombie how we imagine the world to interact with global phenomena. Which institutions inhibit or allow us to address a widespread epidemic in a time of crisis? Which institutions lay in waste? Which are preserved? Because part of the way that we begin to measure and respond to social phenomenon is to be able to tell its story, literary analysis becomes a practical way to comprehend the emergence of global culture and how institutions inside of a given story permit the narrative of an emergent global culture to operate.

By applying an analysis of world polity to world literature, we reinforce the concept taken seriously by both fields that there are narrators everywhere. Literature isn't the only place where stories are told. Novels aren't the only sites of literature that are institutionalized. So too are political manifestos, court cases, and trade compacts. They tell a story about how the world should be organized in response to global phenomena. So if we are to think about what kind of things produce narratives in the global literary machine, it is important to focus on institutions that participate in a system of world polity. The story of plague and viruses gets told by all sorts of institutions, in novels, short stories, but also in CDC protocols and WHO statements. Zombies and CDC protocols share a same figural space, and they embody similar problems that reveal the legibility of world culture.

Certain objects are able to tell a story about the globe better than others. Viruses and the figure of plague is one example, but there are several other important ones. They are imaginary landscapes that we have created out of institutional necessity to hold both the story of the world and the complex, often chaotic multi-dimensional issues that take place in the world system. I want to pick a few of these "global figures" and show how they're able to serve as adequate "ideological containers" for the story of the world. Can these figures be used in a story to:

a) reveal the conflation between the international and the global, and illustrate how nations appear and disappear when this distinction is made;

b) make us conscious of the world as its own particular cultural way of life, including particular actors within the world system;

c) let the tensions between nation, world, and local, multi-dimensional systemic issues take place in the same space.

In this process of reading for the institutional illegibility taking place in the world system, and the attempt to make the world system legible in our texts, I will evaluate the usefulness of such literary modes as magic realism, a mode that emphasizes the hidden aspects of our own subjectivity and plays with space in time in a way that helps us think through moments of global cultural disjuncture.

If we are to look at the world system as a series of machines, or productive systems that make the world go, what would be those machines that determine which stories are more socially relevant than others? What are the parts of the world system

machine that are supposed to tell us how the world makes sense? This project is about understanding how institutions shape the way the story of the world can be told, how they manifest themselves in literature and how certain objects allow a story about the emergence of global culture to be told. I'm equally interested in whether or not global figures are good enough to do the work of making one conscious of the world. When global figures appear in a story, they tend to reveal certain institutional problems. Global figures identify publics, groups of people, including organizations and governments that play a crucial role in constructing world cultural norms.

The reminder of this chapter will introduce illegibility as a central problem in the study of globalization and world culture. I will show how major systemic processes produce a certain level of illegibility to reveal how the process of concealing the global takes place in social structures that are of paramount importance to our social lives. I will review the problem of "global legibility" across three fields: foreign relations, law, and finance. If legibility is defined as the degree to which glyphs and vocabulary are understandable or readable based on appearance,[5] then I will identify key processes that political groups use to mediate the degree to which global phenomena appear as part of our social realities. I will also discuss how nations institutionalize readers through the significant role they play in the world system, and I will discuss how the emergence of new global actors in the world system influences the global cultural imaginary.

The purpose of this chapter is to expose that while world culture is increasingly legible across the globe, it largely remains minor in the sense that it is not perceived as a distinct and significant part of our social reality. Thus, issues which are politically urgent

[5] Webster Collegiate dictionary, 2009 ed.

and clearly require large-scale, systematic approaches beyond what national structures are capable of achieving rely on a nationally-filtered vocabulary to articulate the problem, and by extension, reinforce institutionalized forms of reading that determine the significance we place on global phenomena. I am actually showing how the global is being concealed by the nation, so that I can demonstrate how that concealment influences our storytelling capacity (a problem we will see in greater detail in Chapter 3). By understanding the process whereby a global vocabulary is mediated within several disciplines, this project will demonstrate the usefulness of literary analysis (vis-à-vis the concept of legibility) in identifying problems germane to world culture, global structures, and its role in a cultural and political economy.

Legibility in Foreign Relations

Foreign relations is an interdisciplinary field that incorporates elements of diplomacy, military strategy, public policy, political theory, economics and systems analysis. Prevalently, foreign relations (FR) is synonymous with international relations (IR)[6], and it asserts as its principal assumption that nations are the central actors in the affairs of human beings within a relatively anarchic world system (Walz, 134). Consequently, global legibility is implied by the intellectual framework that constructs FR. Since global processes are identified and defined exclusively in reference to national interests, the method whereby global processes are understood are by definition alien. Although several models of foreign relations increasingly seek to set themselves apart

[6] This is partially explained by the circumstances that produced the field in the first place. The first schools to develop an international relations program did so in response to the newly formulated League of Nations, most notably the program established in 1919 in Aberystwyth University, Wales and later the program developed at the London School of Economics (Linklater, 48).

from the International Relations model (e.g. those affiliated with the "Great Transition" movement[7]), the majority of scholars within the field remain focused on a nation-oriented model, especially those geared toward policy.

Through the foreign relations model, the globe is made intelligible primarily when it is processed through a national mechanism. For example, a public health issue that could potentially reach the status of a global pandemic must still work through institutions that filter information through a national lens. As we witnessed during the recent H1N1 virus pandemic, several actors played a role in the construction of that narrative. News organizations organized the emergence of a potential outbreak to particular audiences, and in the current media landscape, the stratification of political ideologies determined how the narrative of the "swine flu" was presented. In the United States, the World Health Organization did not make a statement until the President and representatives from the Center for Disease control were consulted and given the opportunity to present the problem to the general public[8]. Regardless of the degree to which a state is considered open to external relations, procedures for most media organizations generally filter information through the concept of a national audience (Morris, 224). While scientists, researchers, and support groups (NGOs and private sector research) conceived of the problem as one without borders, and mobilized in a way that would relatively register as "nation-free," the primary thrust of the production and

[7] Refers to a movement of scholarship that believes that nationally-oriented models are too narrow to contend with the increasingly prominent influence of global institutions and global actors. This movement can is heavily influenced by more broadly distributed theories of globalization, particularly World Polity Theory and World Culture Theory but is distinguished from it by focusing primarily on action research methods, social activism, and futurist studies. For a more thorough description of this movement, see Rajan 2-7.

[8] As acknowledged by the WHO in public statements, July 2009. Shortly thereafter, the WHO published "guidance tools" for national institutions to help train response teams in relation to the virus. For further information, see http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/guidance/national_authorities/en/index.html.

visualization of how to contain and manage a global pandemic was directed at a national reader. If we were to visualize this narrative as a series of actors and images woven together, the image of the virus is framed as the global ideological epicenter, the main character in a play presented to an audience made up of nation-states, and a few other select invitees. The institutions that we encounter on a daily basis, regardless of our interconnectedness to one another across the globe, strongly reinforce the idea that we are national readers (Corse, 1279). Even when we are globally oriented, the majority of the institutions that operate on a practical social level -- health care, finance, and education – are all processed (funded and regulated) through nation-states. Identity, as a form of socio-political evidence is either processed by or validated by nations (e.g. passports, birth certificates, drivers license). This demonstrates that the power to interpret global phenomena still accepts a nation-state both as an institutional narrator and an institutionalized audience (Bhaba, 13). There are a multitude of issues where this problem becomes clear:

Child Exploitation

Child exploitation (which includes the sex trade, child labor, and the indoctrination of child soldiers among its many facets) is a particularly global issue, because as Michael Wessells notes in his study of child soldiers, the issue of a child's social vulnerability and physical susceptibility to harm is exacerbated by the lack of rights established for children (45). On the surface, the political status of the child is partially explained by the great potential they bear as future citizens. Consequently, transgressions against the child produce an image of a borderless victim, and advocacy on behalf of a child becomes a means to claim children as members of a broader community.

The figure of the discarded, disenfranchised, or exploited child becomes a heavily contested figural space, where an audience is likely to import universal ideas about right and wrong more easily because they perceive the child as an apolitical figure. Morawa offers that the perceived apolitical status of children engenders the broadest consensus among international human rights networks, and among international institutions but also draws the greatest varieties of normative responses from nations and non-governmental entities (68). In almost any case, a child is a hermeneutic site, a person who is coming into his or her own time and place. The concept of the bildungsroman is founded upon this thesis. However, the additional political urgency of exploited children makes a child an extreme case of legibility, since the power dynamics involved in the narration of a person not yet fully acculturated to any one community (or any one time and place) makes such vulnerabilities *homo sacer*, as Agamben asserts, the place in between political life and natural life (Agamben, *HS*, 13).

Terrorism

One of the primary issues regarding the War on Terror is that the vocabulary needed to identify a clearly defined enemy is largely absent. As a result, the legal framework regarding enemy combatants, coalition building, and the location of the theater of combat have traditionally been filtered through nation-states. However, the ambiguous affiliation that suspected terrorists bear to nationality has forced the engines of foreign policy into uncharted territory. This has brought back into fashion the model of the clandestine military operative that characterized the confrontational landscape of the Cold War. Known as Gray Area Phenomenon (GAP), the cold war produced a tradition of dealing with non-national actors by producing non-national counterparts in

the field of battle. Consequently, nations ironically produced cultural norms outside of a national cultural framework. Furthermore, the vocabulary needed to articulate proper legal processes, including the containment and adjudication of prisoners has added a new kind of vocabulary that makes intelligible the presence of a global problem. This is not a new narrative. It borrows from the 19th century problem of the pirate, actors that are still present to this day, as is the case with the several Somali Pirate hostage situations since 2005. Even to announce these pirates as "Somali" is problematic, because there is no conclusive basis for which to refer to these pirates as Somali other than the fact that pirates use the unstable, and arguably unformed government in Somalia as a point of departure for their operations. Here again rests evidence of a heavy reliance on nation-oriented vocabularies to characterize actors who operate outside of conventional jurisdictions. Ignatieff argues that other factors, such as ethnicity have replaced civil affiliations in many important parts of an individual's daily life (14). These traditions force the FR model to confront its basic assumptions about the role of nations in responding to different types of relations, while also constructing a viable foreign policy. Consequently, FR experts have had to question whether or not terms like "nation-building" are the most useful kinds of terms, particularly what has been experienced in Afghanistan regarding the Taliban and the local tribal leaders, whose authority often supersedes the formal national government. Solutions to terrorism, then, will necessarily rely on how one separates the assumptions we base on our nation-oriented vocabularies from those based in non-national social landscapes.

Apocalypse in FR -- Nuclear Proliferation, W.M.D., Genocide, and Climate Change

The idea of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) that emerged as a result of the Cold War has shaped one of the most poignant apocalyptic visions in contemporary memory. While one of the primary tools of the foreign relations analyst is the balance of power, nothing has produced a greater sense of political urgency across the international community than the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other chemical or biological agents that could be considered a weapon of mass destruction. The concept of MAD is likely one of the most distributed narratives within the FR toolkit, and it produces a sense of political urgency capable of mobilizing massive political support (Jones, B., 20).

Similarly, the concept of genocide as it developed in the wake of the Holocaust has framed moral ethical imperatives across nations to prevent the mass destruction of entire peoples. The creation of war crimes tribunals, and the study and development of those tribunals has become a key component of how foreign policy has constructed an international legal framework. Additionally, the creation of laws and foreign policy mandates that seek to prevent large scale human exploitation or genocide has also assisted in the production of images and themes that make it possible to narrate and translate national interest into a global vocabulary. The idea of a war crimes tribunal is just as important as the tribunal itself. For all practical purposes, national court systems still insist upon punishing those identified as offenders of large scale crimes as was the case for Saddam Hussein in Iraq between 2003 and 2006. This trial was held in Iraq in large part to promote an image of social stability in the Iraqi government. However, the presence of a system of values that mediates those trials illustrates the deeply interwoven social realities of addressing such large scale issues. Globally applicable values are still measured in terms of national interests, but nations are subject to and are aware of the

importance of those global values. This tension reveals a situation where certain features of the global, particularly the values derived as a result of the lessons learned in the Holocaust, are a part of our social consciousness, but are complicated by the desire to preserve national sovereignty during these trials. Hannah Arendt marks this distinction pointedly clear in her analysis of the Eichmann trial, where she notes the deep but unspoken need to establish a Jewish political state that had the political authority to confront the unspeakable acts perpetuated by Eichmann and the Nazi government (*EIJ*, 45). The trial was a story that needed to be told by Jews and for Jews, and despite the formalities of the case, the need for a state-driven space where that story could be told changed the way that the holocaust could be shared and characterized as a global story. The way that this case was projected highlights the complicated interactions that take place between global value systems and national interests.

Climate change is another narrative that is broadly conceived on a planetary scale, but must be made legible to those who determine national policy. In recent memory, the Kyoto conference and the Stockholm conference on climate change demonstrated the new attention paid to the question of global warming and the effect that humanity has on the global ecosystem. As a result of newly developed scientific evidence and large scale mobilization of the issue of global warming, climate change has become an image that is narrated widely in popular culture. Most recently, the film *2012* merged ancient Mayan eschatology with the theme of global warming to project an apocalyptic vision grounded in human policy. Even in the final stages of the film, the "ark-like" vessels meant to sustain humanity after the world is flooded are organized and managed by heads of state. The cultural imaginary of the film parallels the problems within foreign policy. The

privileging of what economists would refer to as “present value” (the degree to which one values prosperity now in lieu of stability or prosperity in the future) is challenged by the apocalyptic vision made legible by the idea of human-driven global catastrophe. The theme of climate change has now emerged as an ideological vessel that places the world and a social group who support carbon reducing policies as a particular global group, and the foreign policy that reacts to this issue partially contributes to that narrative.

Plague

Before the evolution of the microscope could allow for sophisticated mapping and imaging of viruses, bacteria, and pathogens, one had to project an image of plague in relation to the decay of the human body and the process whereby plague was transmitted. Representations of plague in art incorporated religious elements, normally set in large public spaces, where the aesthetic lines of the portrait would draw the reader from one end of the painting (where people would contract a disease, usually in acts that involve physical contact, demonic possession, or both) to the burial of bodies and the rendering of social spaces in massive disrepair. In literature, the theme of plague often took the form of supernatural characters, as was the case in Charles Brockden Brown’s *Ormond*, whose titular character could penetrate walls and torment the poor and disenfranchised during Philadelphia’s Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793. In each case, the plague is used to contain the story of a fragile social system, or a system vulnerable to any number of social problems. As I shall demonstrate in a later chapter, the contemporary aesthetic of plague has been popularized in the form of the Zombie or the plague-monster whose purpose is to contain a variety of social and moral problems writ large upon the global stage. The case of foreign policy is no different. As witnessed in recent pandemic

scares, the narrative of the plague was not located in the schematic or a virus, but in the procedures enacted to combat against the spread of contagion. Those procedures found themselves located nationally as much as they were globally, including guidelines for sanitation, travel restrictions, and safety protocols perceived as necessary for the containment of what is a borderless issue. Despite the broad deterritorializing force of plague, China was associated with avian flu, and Mexico was associated with swine flu. This is a result of the responses rendered by foreign policy as much as it was about preconceptions about the origins and causes of the plague.

These issues are merely a few of the myriad narratives that contain a global aesthetic, an image or vocabulary that contains the image of the world (either directly or by the political urgency it validates as having a planetary scale). They are also narratives that the foreign relations toolkit must contend with. We learn from each of these examples that a globally specific issue has produced a broad vocabulary that has social relevance, based on themes, images that produce meaning for specific issues and problems that nations must confront. Several key points emerge:

1. Certain phenomena cannot be contained by nations. However, national interest determines the level of attention we pay to large scale phenomena. In this, FR has an integral role to play in the way that we make the world legible.
2. Nations are perceived as the most powerful actors in the world system. When action is needed, nations need to be mobilized because their institutional bond to the public organizes responses and serves as a clearinghouse that socializes a given event.

3. Because of their perceived privileged position in the world system, nations and their constituents must be made to understand global phenomena, and so nations (or the part of us that understands our social reality to revolve around a national structure) become the primary audience for the narrative that explains these phenomena.
4. The primary instrument whereby nations (as an institution) narrate the globe is its foreign policy. As such, foreign policy is both a global process *and* a literary form, because much of how foreign policy manifests is done through storytelling, and must of what is achieved by foreign relations is based on the kind of social imaginary that is constructed by relations. Thus, the texts produced in foreign policy – agreements, treaties, and declarations – all narratives that are subject to the methodological scrutiny conducted by a literary analyst.

In this sense, FR is a contributor to that grand narrative – it translates global phenomena to a national audience or to those who oversee the protection and management of national institutions.

This concept harkens back to classical political theory. In Plato's *Republic*, the guardians of the city-state were required to pledge allegiance to the city-state, protecting it even from themselves -- *quis custodiet ipsos custodes*, who guards the guardians? (99). The only way to protect the city from the guardians themselves was to construct a "noble lie," a grand narrative that would ensure the loyalty of each guardian. Should a guardian falter in his duties to the state, the "noble lie" would serve as the measure whereby another guardian could understand this transgression to the state, in effect making the

terms of loyalty to the city legible amongst the guardians. In other words, the grand narrative gives a sense for what the city is, and lets the guardians think clearly about what is at stake in the defense of the city. Plato argues that the image of a peaceful city nestled in the hills gives the guardians a way of relating their sense of duty to something tangible, a space that is sacred to them and represents what it means to defend the city and remain loyal to it. The grand narrative manifests itself through many forms, most certainly in art and literature, but also in the narratives constructed by way of policy, mandate, and political manifesto. Each of these narratives contributes to the ethical framework, or the passion machine, within every civil structure (Deleuze TTP, 286). Foreign Relations is part of that mechanism, charged with the construction of the grand narrative that takes as its foundational principle the centrality of the nation-state. It is written for the guardians of nations in relation to all manner of things outside of its sphere.

Were the benefactor of this information anything but the institution of the nation-state, such studies would most likely be referred to as public relations. Corporations, for example, are the subject of similar frames of analysis; however, the emphasis on national actors is replaced by an emphasis on stakeholders and other groups that influence corporate behavior. Most recently, a subset of public relations within the corporate world has developed the vocabulary of corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a means of engaging questions of social, cultural, and political importance within the world system (Werther, 10). One could argue that FR is a subset of public relations, with a focus on the privileged status nations hold as the conduits of public life. It is the term "public" that should be emphasized here, because it also follows from the Platonic and Aristotelian tradition of polity. As a foreign relations scholar, I must ask, "what is this that affects the

nation, and how does this affect the nation?" This implies, as Aristotle once demonstrated, that democracy does not itself produce a government or a civil society. Civil society is produced by a select few who render government in a spirit that they believe accommodates the people (Kraut, 129). His assertion is that knowledge emerges esoterically, and although it can be distributed publicly, the distribution itself is evidence that democracy is constructed between those who know and those who do not know (135). Those who know construct the narrative of the city in a way that secures the loyalty of the guardians. This is why an understanding of world systems requires understanding FR as an element of world polity, because as the world system continues to produce new groups, new publics that construct a world civil society, so too must the grand narrative of the nation-state adjust in relation to those evolving publics.

It is important to note that this problem has existed as long as the nation-state emerged as the dominant civil institution. With the assistance of Lock, Hobbes, and Rousseau, among other proponents of that nation-state, modern civil institutions depended upon an escape from the ecclesiastically reinforced concept of divine right, and an equally distributed articulation of social power, which most notably took form as the theory of the social contract (Ertman, 24). The power of the social contract is afforded it by general consent for the provision of security and civil order. The nation was able to adequately contain this, not merely because it has provisional authority, but people invest in the capacity of a state to rule consistent with shared values. For this reason, the state (a political category) aligns with the nation (a cultural category) to construct not only a practical system, but one infused with "passionate recourses" which motivates citizens to care for the institution and consent to be governed by it (Locke, 45).

This alignment of the cultural and the political was one way the nation emerged instead of other institutional counterparts. Culturally, we judge (in the Kantian sense) the efficacy of the institution, and (compared to earlier forms like city-states or city-leagues) the nation state has held up and outlasted its competitors because it was able to contain the desire of its people "to 1) act internally as a central form of authority and 2) incorporate and attend to long term agreements externally" (Spruyt, 54). Militarily, city states could have been more effective than the nation-state and at times were more effective, Venice being a good example in the modern era. But the nation state maintains a certain form of authority that can organize the military and attend to business within a world system in a way that was sustainable, not because it was more efficient, but because it was able to capture the imagination of its people and demonstrated its diplomatic value by promoting a robust understanding of foreign relations. Thus credibility, what Spruyt calls "clear sovereign authority" FR was what helped the nation state outlast all other institutional options.

The authority located in the nation-state is partially responsible for the centrality that it retained during the century that institutionalized many global processes. At the turn of the 20th century, the trend brought about by the formation of international institutions, particularly the League of Nations, prompted populations to seek recognition as a nation-state. The gestures made by Manchukuo to gain status as a League member, serve as a good example. Despite accusations from the Chinese that it was a Japanese puppet state serving as a base for Japanese imperial interests, Manchukuo produced evidence of its distinct cultural heritage, one that claimed it had a self-determining community separate from that of China. It also argued that it had a tradition of

cooperation and diplomacy outside of its boundaries, meaning that it conducted foreign relations on its own and therefore merited inclusion to the League of Nations (Duara, 48). While an elite group among the Manchukuo struggled to construct a consciousness that would demonstrate its deep national heritage (including novels and poems that celebrated a national consciousness and rituals that showed that it hosted heads of state), it made extensive gestures to appear as a nation and to assert that it had developed the institutional similarity necessary to validate its application to international institutions. Ultimately, the League of Nations, headed by a push by the United States, rejected the state of Manchukuo as an internationally recognized nation in 1932[9]. Scholars in FR mark this moment in the United States by the Stimson Doctrine, a policy principle arguing that international recognition of a nation or political group cannot occur when it is formed by way of military involvement (in this case, Japan, who left the League shortly thereafter[10]) (Herring, 302). The resulting principle, *Ex injuria jus non oritur* (illegal acts cannot create law) was constructed through a national framework within an international system and remains a fundamental legal principle among international courts, primarily as a means of invalidating claims to sovereignty in regards to terrorism. Herein lies the crux of the foreign relations model – it is not only guided by the assumption that nations are the most significant means of attending to issues of global importance, but nations convinced other nations to replicate its structure because of the combined political and cultural force nation-states wielded. During the 20th century, particularly with the founding of the United Nations, the nation-state retained a special

[9] As a result of the Lytton Report, commissioned by the League of Nations to verify the validity of Manchukuo's status as a sovereign nation (Walters, 491-492).

[10] It is important to note that the League's decision regarding Manchukuo did not necessarily mean that all nations had adopted the same view. Several nations, including the Soviet Union recognized Manchukuo as a valid nation and opened relations with them in the years that followed.

place as integral to the production of a global vocabulary. As Meyer, et al. write: "[a]s creatures of exogenous world culture, states are ritualized actors marked by intensive decoupling and a good deal more structuration than would occur if they were responsive only to local, cultural, functional, or power processes" (Meyer et al. 1997: 173). The productive value of foreign policy lies in the authority it perceives itself to have regarding global phenomena, and as we shall see, its inability to make legible certain types of global phenomena.

All of this discussion about the nation-state and its rise to prominence is important, because it reminds us of the reasons that global phenomena are difficult to identify. Globalization poses a serious problem to the assumptions made within a conventional FR model. Despite the post-Westphalian assumption of an anarchic world system, the nation-state has encountered that the particularities of world culture are themselves much larger than previously understood. This is commonly referred to as evidence of the decline of the nation state (Alesina, 266). However, it is more likely that instead of the strict institutional competition model (it's either the nation or the world) nation-states are increasingly forced to confront a global frame of consciousness. It's not that United States citizens are less nationalistic, but rather, their nationalism has begun to incorporate the newly emergent global consciousness far more than ever before. Boli and Lechner use the example of the Olympic Games to introduce the emergence of global culture within a nationally-oriented system:

> In this way, the Olympics begin to tell our story of world culture – the culture of world society, comprising norms and knowledge shared across state boundaries, rooted in nineteenth-century Western culture but since globalized, promoted by

> nongovernmental organizations as well as for-profit corporations, intimately tied to the rationalization of institutions, enacted on particular occasions that generate global awareness, carried by the infrastructure of world society, spurred by market forces, riven by tension and contradiction, and expressed in multiple ways particular groups relate to universal ideals (WC, 6).

This helps define the complicated emergence of global phenomena despite and through the problem of the nation-state. What is becoming increasingly legible about global culture is there are people, places, and things of large significance to people throughout the globe that cannot be reduced to a nationally-consumable product.

If foreign policy is to remain a reliable resource in the narration and translation of these phenomena into questions of security, economy, and heritage, then this problem of legibility must be understood as an inescapable and principal problem. Aiwa Ong's concept of the "flexible citizen" is useful here. As studies of citizenship emerge to account for the flexibility of perceived social identities, it has become increasingly clear for political theorists that nationality is a plastic concept. National interests are no less conflicted about their own allegiances than their constitutive elements. Ong is correct in asserting that flexible citizens are themselves products of flexible civil institutions whose interrelatedness cannot tell anything but the story of a changing population, where one can no longer rely on rigid conceptions of the state to define the social landscapes that prevail within a global society (233). Roland Robertson argues that nationality, for the most part, fulfills the particularistic elements of our identities (99). Our social realities depend upon a national identity, and global society, despite its relevance in daily life, is perceived with a certain level of distance. One must usually produce a form of

identification (e.g. a passport, birth certificate) that is validated by a national system in order to travel, pay taxes, or formalize legal agreements. Even when large scale phenomena occur, like an outbreak of plague or a natural disaster, it is likely that our responses to those phenomena are initially processed through a national response system or an international system that is authorized by nations to intervene. In this sense, global phenomena are defined through the lens of the national structure because it is practical and customary to do so. However, those relationships intermingle, and at times, eclipse one another.

It would be easy to dismiss FR as a field that is designed to fail at the level of global comprehension because of its emphasis on the national actor. However, that criticism assumes that the national reader produced by the FR model has developed some form of cognitive narcissism and has done absolutely nothing to comprehend a global problem as truly global. This is untrue. On the contrary, the national reader produced by the FR model is complicit in the production of a unique and valuable sort of global aesthetic. This kind of reader has taken what they perceive as the dominant social reality (that perceives nationality is where sovereignty is presently located) and tries to consume the image of the global in a way that is practical and less confusing. In this framework, the World is seen at its most confusing as anarchic and at its least confusing as nascent. Therefore, the images, signs, glyphs, and vocabulary that constitute the global often appear as placeholders, not yet completely filled with meaning, to somehow signal the emergent properties of a unified whole. These ideological containers reflect the contested status of the nation-state as much as it renders the global as not yet fully formed and at times uncanny (Trouillot, 87). As we shall see in later chapters, these images have

a great deal of consistency, and by simply identifying moments of disjuncture between nation and World, one can begin to understand that there is a tradition of using particular objects to help tell the story of an emerging global structure.

Legibility in International Law –judicial review in the world system

The law is the institutionalization of rules and socio-cultural norms, both public and private, which are used to mediate social interaction within a given community or political landscape (known as jurisdiction) (Finnis, 130). Herein, I will focus on four categories of international law, and describe how legibility is produced through the process of judicial review. I will demonstrate that judicial review acts as a way of assigning global value to social issues and interactions, thus serving as a significant mediator the construction of a global cultural imaginary.

Judicial review is conducted through a writ of *certiorari.*[11] A writ of certiorari (often shortened to "writ") is a legal request made to a court to determine whether a case is within the jurisdiction of that court (Hart, HLA 145). In the United States, the Supreme Court will issue a writ of certiorari if it believes a case qualifies as potentially significant national case law. This process is noted by legal scholars as being not only a foundational principle in common law, but also a major hermeneutic element of the judicial system. In effect, judicial review is a way of associating a political landscape to a given legal problem -- the selection of cases is a means of prioritizing what is allowed to be seen as relevant to a political landscape (Hoy, 58). Conversely, by denying judicial review, a court can render a case inappropriate to a given political space, which is why

[11] Certiorari itself means "to be more fully informed" which is why it aligns well with our inspection of legibility.

the denial of a writ is just as significant as its acceptance (Linzer 1228). Consequently, judicial review is a process that filters narratives. The role of the judge is not merely to interpret law, but to act as a cultural geographer – mapping the vocabulary produced by case law along political, social, and cultural lines. For a global framework, this is much more complicated, because the legal system is broadly dispersed, potentially influenced by nations in an unbalanced way, and not as crystalline as national courts systems. Therefore judges are not the only actors involved in the act of global judicial review -- I use the term broadly to refer to individuals or organizations that assume the role of judge in determining the proper jurisdiction of a given legal conflict.

In order to account for judicial review within the world system, let us explore the different types of law that relate to global structures and how judicial review emerges within each category. The study of international law can be separated into four major categories: public international law, supranational law, conflicts of law, and customary international law (Hart, HLA 213-215). We will briefly describe each category with the intent of determining how each element enacts my broadly conceived notion of judicial review.

Public international law is designated as a law that deals with social and political institutions, meaning that it is the codification of rules and norms among sovereign nations, international organizations, and other political groups. This field of law rarely deals with individuals, and most often focuses its attention on institutions that represent individuals and intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations which produce declarations, charters, and manifestos aimed to “encourage the progressive

development of international law and its codification[12]". The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights are all documents that fit under this category. Other treaties, including the Geneva Conventions and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea emerge as documents that update and formalize customary law, particularly the conventions of war and the merchant codes of sea trade and usage. Although none of these documents are binding legal documents, they are documents meant to illicit a sense of awareness of individual rights and universal principles as they relate to particularized cultural values.

The International Court of Justice, also known as the World Court, was created to serve as the official court of the United Nations, made up of fifteen judges from different nationalities. Since permanent members of the UN Security Council have traditionally held a seat on the ICJ, the court has been criticized by some nations as privileging military power in judicial matters and creating an uneven system of participation within the judicial framework (Charney 860). Consequently, questions of jurisdiction, particularly as they relate to military conflict are controversial, because the Security Council is charged with enforcing decisions made by the Court. In this sense, the IJC's ability to call cases before it are very limited, and when they are issued, they require that the member states involved in these conflicts comply with the writ. More recently, the United States has removed itself from complying with decisions made by the IJC on all counts. Instead, it has determined that it will comply with IJC decisions on a case-by-case basis. Some states, like Iran in the late 1970s, refused to accept a writ altogether. It

[12] Article 13, Section 1 of the UN Charter

is more accurate to say that the process of judicial review is inundated by national interests, and consequently, rarely appears as resolving issues of global importance.

The International Criminal Court approaches this problem a bit differently. As the permanent tribunal whose jurisdiction is limited to The Crime of Genocide, Crimes Against Humanity, War Crimes, and the Crime of Aggression[13], the court was constructed with the intent of addressing the most serious crimes, while also being able to balance national interests in such crimes with that of the international community (Weschler 87). As Boli points out in his analysis of Kofi Annan and Philippe Kirsch during the courts inaugural ceremony, the emphasis of their language was not on authority, but on words like "Conscious," "Mindful," and "Recognizing" (Boli, *WC* 216). The emphasis of the court's attention to these matters, while practical in cases where a state cannot or will not deliberate such crimes in good faith, has a jurisdiction that is mainly "complimentary" (216). It is the ritualizing function, however, that carries with it significant weight, and as a means of projecting a sense of global consciousness, the ICC appears able to project an image of global consciousness and awareness more effectively than the IJC. In any case, the ICC recognizes the shared status of victims of large-scale crimes. In spirit, the ICC pre-packages the idea that global values exist and must be made known to all citizens of the planet. In practice, the act of judicial review retains its "complimentary" status, and consequently doesn't have the same effect as a case that is rendered within a national court system. It still reinforces the idea that nations are the

[13] Which remains largely undefined by the court. The UN has created a working commission to define a crime of aggression, and as of this writing, a report is due by the commission to the general assembly in May of 2010.

primary actors pertaining to social questions, and global issues are essentially marked as undeniably national.

Conflicts of law relate to private individuals or corporations in private civil disputes where the legal jurisdiction of both claimants is determined to be "foreign to one another" or "incorporating elements of foreign law" (Alston, 278). In these cases, local courts (courts that oversee other relevant civil matters for each claimant) negotiate among one another the jurisdiction of a given claim, including whose civil law is applicable, and which forum will be selected to determine the outcome of a case. Historically, this type of law emerged as an evolution of the concept of *lex mercatoria* (the law of merchants), which emphasized the ability to make contracts freely and without borders and whereby disputes among merchants were judged by those who were familiar with the customary practices of merchants (Baker, 298). In many cases, particularly where multi-national corporations are involved, a contemporary private case is determined by arbitration (Pryles, 74).

Although the concept of judicial review does not apply to conflict of law principles, the negotiations that determine the proper legal venue are similar. In most cases, these cases are related to issues of trade, and as such, they take place in areas that are financial epicenters. Sklair identifies the transnational, cosmopolitan aspects of these cities as being a way of ritualizing citizens to those qualities (42). In regards to issues of international law, these centers of commerce such as New York, London, and Sydney ritualize the jurisdictional landscape of international law as sharing that same cosmopolitan, transnational quality.

Supranational Law

The European Union (EU) was conceived of and enacted as the first supranational union, meaning that a "high authority" was needed because certain values, particularly related to justice and trade in the wake of World War II could no longer be determined by one state[14] (McDougal, 13). Within a supranational legal framework, nations relinquish a nominal level of sovereignty in exchange for a formalized legal system. Several scholars liken this to a federal process, but it is distinguished from it by the lack of a "supreme law of the land" (Weiler, 270). Instead, the conferral of authority is given to the higher court to act on behalf of a member state with the intention of creating institutional similarity among all member states. In this model, jurisdiction is not merely an act of the member judges selecting an applicable court case; they play an active role in legislating within the governing body (272). For this reason, the act of judicial review is located not merely by judges, but is influenced by heads of state within each member nation. In the case of the EU, these decisions do however have an influence that registers as a European case. For this reason, the process of judicial review in a supranational legal system is much like that of a national court system. By accepting a given case, judges make legible the outcome of that case as a European decision. While this is not a global process, but a regional one, other regions have begun to adopt a similar process, including the Union of South American nations and the African Union. Therefore, the procedure itself creates a narrative placeholder that supersedes the authority of the nation state. The result is a very legible hint toward a global legal process, one that encourages similar regional authorities to generate institutional similarity outside of an international framework.

[14] This was known as the Schuman Declaration, named after Robert Schuman, who is credited as one of the principal architects of the EU.

Customary International Law

While the United Nations and other intergovernmental bodies have institutionalized customary international law[15], the field itself reserves a space for customs that operate outside of the sphere of influence of the courts. For example, rules of conduct and governance in virtual online communities are largely unrecognized by international governing bodies, but still construct rules that become a common practice in the daily lives of online activity. The same could be said for athletic commissions that organize groups either globally or internationally, hobbyists, or interest groups who continually produce rules and guidelines regarding conduct, trade, participation, and any other number of socially constructed caveats for participation within these communities. Non-governmental organizations, like the Red Cross, or Doctors without Borders are constantly making protocols based on higher principles. This is how Meyer et al. define a polity as a "system of creating value through the collective conferral of authority" (Meyer 1980: 111-2). We are becoming increasingly aware that laws and the ability to make decisions about the applicability of law are being made among people who view themselves, at least as they related to those practices, as global citizens. For this reason, customary law is one of the most poignant examples of an emergent global legal narrative. In online communities, conflicts among members are determined by site administrators, and the appropriate legal landscape remains largely undesignated.

[15] Chapter XIV of the United Nations charter, also known as the Statute of the International Court of Justice acknowledges the existence of customary international law in Article 38(1)(b), incorporated into the United Nations Charter Article 92: "The Court, whose function is to decide in accordance with international law such disputes as are submitted to it, shall apply...international custom, as evidence of a general practice accepted as law."

To summarize, the global legal landscape is largely determined by the degree to which nations have institutionalized customary law. While laws and the courts in a national cultural framework produce a narrative that has a national outcome, court systems in a global context must carry the ideological baggage of nations and nationality. If the law serves as one of the principal foundations wherein we ground a social reality, then this brief discussion on the complexities that frame global law indicate how difficult it is for a global sign or a global vocabulary to emerge as clearly global. As we shall see in later chapters, the most adequate ideological containers for a global narrative are those that are perceived as isolated from overexposed social realities. Places like the ocean and Antarctica are places where global narratives are capable of being told. Part of the reason for this is because they are designated as sites that are not owned by any one nation. Ultimately, our concept of legibility will focus our attention on the tradition of producing "isolated geographies" that can allow what is unique and crystalline about global structures to appear without being immediately processed as a contested site.

Legibility and Economics: The Problem of Global Currency

One reason economics deserves its own space in regards to legibility is because the functions of money parallel the function of language. Money has four basic functions – it serves as a medium of exchange, a unit of account, a standard of deferred payment, and a store of value (Rivera, 122). But it also acts as a form of language, or language functions similarly to currency in that it is a:

> **medium of exchange** (by replacing one idea with a sign or object to confer meaning – the communicative property of language);

unit of account (in that language produces a historical representation of a given event or phenomena – the mimetic function);

standard of deferred payment, in other words, it serves as a placeholder whereby debts in a given economy can be repaid. Gold or silver were the traditional objects that money represented, but recently, this is much more complicated given that most economies utilize a fiat currency. In a similar way, language is a way of representing the thing itself, it is an ideological placeholder that can contain a given idea, theme, or complex concept by way of an imperfect but function language (the ideological function); and

store of value which could be interpreted to mean that language is a memory site, an excavation of a given communicative moment, which allows an idea to live outside of the time it was written. Furthermore, it becomes a snapshot of a given problem, which can be taken apart from the act of communication and placed under deeper scrutiny to determine the various ways a concept when written down has meaning (a teleological function). In economics, this is a methodological principle known as *ceteris paribus*, all things being the same.

As such, legibility is ingrained in the problem of money. Thus, a brief examination of global currency will demonstrate the problem of legibility as it relates to the global political economy.

Rigorous studies of the global political economy must inevitably contend with the modern financial structure's contribution to the concept of globalization. You don't have to look very far to witness the historical conflation between the crystallization of global

structures and the emergence of latent capital. The term "capitalism" itself has become a descriptive category which stretches across a broad canvas of complicated, discipline-oriented vocabularies, and is often implied when the often overused and inflated term, "globalization," appears. But capitalism, or the financial structure that signifies its presence in our cultural consciousness serves as a placeholder for more tangible evidence of a cohesive materialism representing increasingly global social, cultural, and political spaces – a world polity. This brief section will explore global currency as a tangible and overlooked element of the financial structure's contribution to world culture. I propose that global currency, when viewed as a highly signified form of language, has literary value. Currency is not merely an exchange of dollars and Yuan or Euros and yen. Certain ideas about what is valuable and how we measure society are included in any monetary transaction. A dollar, for example, could heavily rely on oil as central to its value. A Yuan could rely on steel as its primary resource that gives it value. When oil prices rise, the value of the dollar may improve, and the Yuan may devalue. Moreover, the politics of oil drilling, and the mining of iron ore in sensitive environmental regions are hidden in the equation of dollars and Yuan. So the exchange of currency is not a simple transaction. Money is a highly complex political transaction. It transmits information, communicates certain political sensitivities and expresses much social urgency. Furthermore, it serves as a source of national or regional pride. To have dollars in your wallet tells you something about where you reside and where your lifestyle is located. Every transaction tells a powerful and complex story, and in this sense, it is no different than a very sophisticated language.

Currency is an ideological container, and its properties permit an economy to mediate value in a uniform, measurable way. Thus, if world literature is indeed a way of reading, writing, and interpreting the world, then global currency makes legible a global economic structure, culturally distinct, and replete with its own urgencies, flows, and aesthetic traits. Thus we will attempt to achieve the following:

1. I will discuss why the financial collapse of 2008 is considered a global event, and why it is privileged as the first "global economic disaster" when many events that preceded it can lay a similar claim.
2. I will explore why the call for institutional reform of the monetary and financial system implies a desire to make the global financial structure legible – as an economic indicator, and as a distinct element that can manifest politically and culturally in relation to national, regional, and local urgencies.
3. I will briefly explore the evolution of currency as it relates to its value as a language, how it serves as an ideological placeholder that mediates value culturally. Thus I can make claims about the ways that the current discourse on global currency can be improved by my overarching question of world literature as a component of world polity.

Our recent economic downturn has become culturally mediated as modern history's first global economic downturn. In an October 2008 issue of *The Economist*, the stark, crimson image of a man teetering over the edge of a cliff was used to illustrate that issues' coverage of the collapse of the multi-national investment firms, banks, credit and housing markets, that participated in a crisis felt by the global financial network. The title to that issue, "World on the Edge," was followed later that month by an image of the

globe plummeting into the abyss. These moments represent a dramatic expression of a vulnerable world economy, or rather, an interdependent system of economies, whose collapse had an urgency that spanned all aspects of the planet. The scramble to understand the cause of the financial downturn produced interpretations, to varying degrees, about the status of international monetary systems, national banking systems, and the status of the foreign exchange market, particularly the question of global currency reserves. Each of these expressions shared one thing more prominently than anything else: the assumption that a global economy had crystallized to the point that it had tangible, measurable properties was more than a theoretical concern. It had become a political urgency that required the immediate and coordinated efforts of heads of state with their counterparts in transnational board rooms. While there is much to do to bring the financial structure in line with practices consistent with global market behavior, most agree that something should be done, and the "global" in market is always assumed as a social reality.

So why then, does the collapse of 2008 receive the honor of being called the first global economic crisis? It almost appears self-evident, but any number of other catastrophes could make similar claims during the 20th century. A few examples include the atrocities of two World Wars, particularly the Holocaust and Hiroshima, the major famines of Northern Africa in the 1980s, or the rise of nuclear arms proliferation during the Cold War. Any or all of these could be characterized in economic terms, and each, in their own way produced a concept of planetary catastrophe. In a crude but somewhat useful interpretation of this claim, the complexity in dealing with the cost of human life, including the trauma associated with millions of lives lost, the forgone contribution that

those lives will make to humanity, and the cost of saving social and civil structures from the threat of complete annihilation make evaluating the cost of globally-urgent events subject to interpretation. The collapse of financial markets is different because it is signified by the vocabulary of economy immediately, and on the surface, needs no additional work to mark it as an economic problem. In short, the history of the financial markets has a central position in the narrative of capital, and as a result, bears the cultural mark of capital each time it is evoked.

In their study of museums as a critical element of the global cultural economy, Karp and Kratz acknowledge one of the primary challenges we face when describing the flows or processes that are called global is "to specify the type and kind of geographical and temporal reach associated with the process… whether we are speaking of economics or culture" (4). For them, "globalization" is not the "necessary endpoint" of the relationships we mark as global, and a "discussion of globalization does not require a triumphalist point of view" (5). Identifying the space and time of global structures allows us to introduce terms such as "world heritage" to economics (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett160). Thus, when we are talking about the financial collapse of 2008, we are referring both to a process and to a cultural category. There is a distinction between the *structure* as a cultural category and the *system* as a polymorphous, infinitely complex arrangement of socio-political relations.

The financial structure elevates to the status of the global because of the distinct role that capital plays in the way we understand world culture and world heritage. The financial structure, the sum total of capital in its complex, even immanent social, political, and cultural array, has a special place in the development of global culture. In

addition to Capital's theoretical grandfather, Marx and the long line of Marxist thinkers that followed him, any number of scholars of the political economy including, Deleuze and Guattari, Hardt and Negri, Alliez, De Landa, Jameson, and Robertson (to name a very small contingency) identify modern capital to varying degrees as more than a mediated system of value. The mediation *itself* has emerged as an epistemological and historical category, one that traditionally ranges out of a modern narrative rooted in a 15th century European agrarian system, incorporates the rise of industrialization, includes the seafaring expeditions that produced the colonial encounter, participates in the technological advancements that allow people to communicate with each other with minimal spatial and temporal requirements, and becomes visible through the production of financial institutions that mediate production and in part communication across all aspects of the planet. We can't think about the invention of the world map, the rise of a merchant-explorer class, the development of latitude and longitude, or the space race that eventually provided us with our current satellite-operated telecommunications monolith without thinking about the role that capital played in each of those moments. Capital, as a proper noun, has become the historical placeholder for the immanent and over-determined process that created the global political economy. This distinctive albeit polymorphous characteristic is one of the primary signifiers afforded to a financial structure, and is what conflates matters of finance to the level of a global phenomenon.

But the financial system, the banks, lenders, capital investment firms, consumers, laborers, and accountants throughout the world that comprise the financial structure retain a mixed relationship with nations, regions, and localities. While major corporations have become monolithic multinational enterprises, their constitutive elements negotiate

between the local factors that determine the various aspects of any given market structure and the sovereign elements that monitor, regulate, and accommodate their core. It is this disjuncture that produces the incongruity present in our discussions about the downturn of 2008. The financial system helped us to mark it as a global phenomenon, because the Capital makes that category partially legible. In a fundamental way, Capital is the ideological placeholder that permits financial analysts and politicians to talk about the current problem as a global one. As the system continues to adjust, negotiate, and reframe what we call "global."

These tensile relationships have produced a transnational capitalist class, which scholars such as sociologist Leslie Sklair describe as a recent product of a fully realized cross-cultural network that "no longer prohibits those who work through the processes of finance and capital from identifying in relation to their transnationality… both in relation to and apart from other ways of being in the world" (44-45). Just as Capital with a "C" has a place in a distinctly global heritage, so too are those who consider themselves a part of that heritage. People, places, and things that relate to that aspect of capital that is inseparable from what we perceive as a global heritage have added texture to the way we understand flexible political identities. The financial structure affords a certain ideological purchase that claims a global distinctiveness, but it is polymorphous and elusive at best. But that is changing at a rapid pace.

Since 2008, economists and financial experts have increasingly acknowledged the need for institutional reform in relation to the international monetary and financial system. A large enclave of economists and financial experts have responded to the crisis by suggesting a critical analysis of predictive measures, the creation of regulatory bodies

acting separate from and in accord with the growth and changing behavior of national economies, and the production of new measures to adequately describe the economy in relation to its trend toward an interdependent, transnational body (Steiglitz, 14). The last of those suggestions have intensively focused on the status of a global reserve currency, particularly the relationship between the dollar (and increasingly the Euro) as a reserve currency. These are problems that arise as a result of having a national currency, particularly one with the properties of a fiat currency, serving as a unit of reserve. In popular media, George Soros has continued to lobby on behalf of a new global unit of account, one that shifts the burdens and benefits of a national currency serving as a global reserve currency (often referred to as Triffin's Dilemma) to a system that acknowledges the development of a world economy (Wade, 4). Analyses (as early as 2005) already suggested that the relationship between debt in the U.S. dollar, and the credit market infrastructure would eventually lead to significant problems within the foreign exchange market (Van Den Spiegel, 303)[16]. These discussions buttress problems configured within international finance, particularly whether the Euro will eventually overtake the dollar as the dominant unit of reserve (Chin and Frankel, 2008), and what role the Yuan will play in relation to the dollars valuation and the influence that rate plays on the larger political economy (Oberpriller, Sauer, and Sell, 2008). Additionally the role that developing nations will play on the selection of a currency reserve and the role of American political

[16] The proportion of dollar claims held abroad versus U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) increases, the foreign exchange value of the dollar must decline if dollar interest rates do not increase at about the same rate as the foreign dollar claims. Issuing the reserve currency gives domestic policy makers an advantage by making it easier to finance either domestic budget deficits or foreign trade deficits because there always is a ready bidders' market for any financing instruments from that issuer. Issuing the reserve currency enables the domestic population to consume more goods and services from whatever source than otherwise would be feasible. And issuing the reserve currency gives foreign policy officials of that nation the upper hand in determining multilateral approaches to either diplomacy or military action.

influence on developing nations complicates whether the financial structure is capable of departing from the dollar as a unit of reserve (Fan, 2006; Ekpenyong 2007).

Each of these studies to varying degrees agree that the role of the dollar as the unit of global reserve is problematic, and aside from institutional reform, will necessarily be addressed by adjustments between particular foreign exchange rates and between national banks. However, these studies focus intensively on the problem of international solutions to what others perceive as a particularly global problem. Allessandrini and Fratianni both agree that the international paradigm and discussions of international finance must necessarily begin to acknowledge the presence of "supranational money" as an integral solution, and the institutional reform currently proposed must take seriously the use of the SDR as a starting point for institutional reform (2009,3). Among interlocutors within economics, finance, and international business, the attention focused on international paradigms is beginning to turn towards a means of measuring the global economy as its own distinct site of transaction[17]. This complexity is not merely a theoretical problem. In September of 2009, Joseph Stieglitz, along with several top economists and financial experts called upon by the United Nations to suggest reforms to the "international monetary and financial system" suggested that a global unit of currency will become a "necessary feature of a new and sustainable financial landscape" (34). Steiglitz acknowledges that our financial system is not only outdated, the units of analysis and

[17] This does not mean that international models are being ignored or discarded. In fact, most of the studies mentioned above still privilege the status of international exchange, and despite institutional reforms, proposals for global currency remain largely theoretical. For more on the volatility of a global currency in relation to international trade see, Witte, Mark David. "When Is a *Global Currency* Optimal?" *Global Economic Review*, March 2009, v. 38, iss. 1, pp. 1-11.

trade currently utilized have rendered the financial system illegible. In effect, we are using national and regional tools to measure and account for a global structure.

This can be understood from several perspectives. First, traditional macroeconomic indicators, including GDP, inflation, employment, exchange rates, balance of payments, and debt, while capable of identifying the presence of a major failure in the financial system, continue to fail as predictive models in relation to a global structure. Rose and Spiegel[18] claim that all indicators failed in a recent study, explaining as follows:

> Three reasons can explain our predictive failure. First, the causes of the 2008 crisis might differ across countries. Alternatively, the 2008 crisis might be the result of a truly global shock, such that its incidence varied across countries in a way that is unrelated to the country-specific regulatory, financial, and macroeconomic "fundamentals" we consider. Finally, the shock might be one that originated in the United States and spread contagiously across national borders. (17)

Benn Steil has proposed that the "truly global shocks" that cause predictive failure in current economic models is due in part to what he calls "monetary nationalism," or the insistence upon a system framed by the exchange of money controlled by nation-states. He argues that the cacophony of issues related to sovereignty and monetary control in the international political economy render an analysis of the current crises nearly impossible from a supranational perspective (45). His call for institutional reform, like Steiglitz's

[18] Utilized multiple-indicator multiple cause analyses (MIMIC) to determine whether or not conventional macroeconomic indicators serve as predictive models.

suggestion, is less as a liberalization of market spaces, but a call to regulate a system in accord with its current macro-relational elements intact, which they view as a global space.

On September 7, 2009, a United Nations panel called for a new global reserve currency to replace the dollar[19]. Instead, they suggested a new system of soft pegs, that is, a system where currencies adjusted in relation to a global reserve currency. Concurrently, The Special Drawing Rights, a basket of currencies that currently includes the dollar, pound sterling, and yen[20], used by the IMF as a unit of account for the foreign exchange market, has become the source of attention as the leading global unit of reserve. These debates include what should be included in the basket of currencies, or as Soros and others suggest, whether that basket should expand to account for a much broader reflection of the commodities, goods, and currencies to which the global economy is sensitive (Ussher, 403). As these considerations gain momentum, it is important for our present purposes to know that the general trend in these studies is an attempt to understand what is unique about a global economy and how we can begin to measure it. It is an attempt to reconcile the cultural awareness of a global category with the goods, service, commodities, and currencies that operate with a distinctiveness and directly accord with the rules, regulations, and cultural practices of a given economy. It is reminiscent of the 19th century configuration of a political economy, where the terms of production in a given market are understood in relation to "laws, custom, and charter (governance)" (Smith, 156). The reconciliation of production with its social, cultural,

[19] United Nations conference on Trade and Development, Wall Street Journal, Sept. 08, 2009.
[20] In 1999, the French Franc and Deutsche Mark were removed from the SDR when the euro was introduced.

and political foundations must necessarily emerge during periods of illegibility, and it opens up opportunities to discuss why the desire to account for the global in a global political economy encounters major obstacles.

Currency is merely one component of a large array of objects that are beginning to serve as an index in relation to a global culture. The search for a legal framework that is not only practical, but globally valid and hermeneutically commensurable, the search for universally applicable principles and strategies that can adequately contain the myriad of military, political, and ethical dilemmas present in questions of statecraft, all suggest that a global sphere of influence is present, but only partially cognizable. Money itself serves as a complex linguistic apparatus. It is used to demonstrate pride in a given community's cultural legacy, to remind people of notable people, places, and things that serve as sites of memory, heritage, and kinship. To less noble ends, these devices are also used to manipulate populations, to claim authenticity and legitimacy for various political ends, and to assert power within and among others reaching for similar social, political, and cultural status (Simmel, 236).

Although it would seem like a trivial question, one needs to ask: if global currency indicates a desire to make a global culture legible, what images would we place on our coins to represent a global heritage? Who are the great personalities viewed by the world as iconic leaders of a global culture? What collective commons are present in our grand narrative or the global community that would mark the heritage of the emergence of global culture? The answer to this question serves as a threshold to a discussion of how currency acts as a language. Not only does it serve to mediate economic value representative of a given economy, it also serves as a cultural artifact, a

medium for the expression of collective memories used to signify people, places, things, and events of particular relevance to the authority placed in a given community.

All of these concerns inter-relate to the other properties of money, to serve as a unit of taxation and revenue gathering for a given community, to mediate exchanges, and to serve as units of account, and more broadly to represent value. All of them participate in a complex meta-narrative, which at present, identifies our increasing awareness that globality has confronted the primacy of the nation-state. Just as exchange rates mark value across two different nations, the need to mark the relation between a given nation, a group of nations, or all nations in relation to its global counterpart will become increasingly important (Alliez, 134).

The mere fact that financial systems beyond the scope of the nation are marked as an international system indicates the assumptions made about the way that capital is mediated throughout the world. Nation-states are perceived as the primary actors in nearly every aspect of civil society, and despite the emergence of regional associations some with their own currency, the emergence of a distinctly global unit of account has only recently emerged with the sort of political urgency that permits my present inquiry to reach across disciplines. It would seem reasonable that global problems require a global frame of analysis. In order to understand this more fully, let us look briefly at the history of the dollar as it evolved into a fiat currency, and later into a global unit of reserve.

The United States, like many nations founded upon a system of confederated economies, operated with several valid currencies. Before 1792, each state was able to

freely print its own money, hinged independently upon different sources of material goods, including agricultural product, and precious metals (Friedman, 156). By 1792, the United States consented to a currency that could harness the value of the cumulative trade taking place within the economy. Alexander Hamilton, in the passage of the Coinage Act of 1792, the law that effectively established the dollar as an official currency stated the following:

> … it is imperative that all sums are taken into account within these federal borders. A nation cannot sustain itself without the establishment of a unified system of account… and consequently, a proper measure of this great nation's wealth and activity. (138)

Hamilton understood that a currency was not merely a measure of the gross domestic product, but that production was a function of a cultural identity. He attempted to take into account the diversity of the burgeoning American economy. While some states thrived upon infrastructure, including masonry and civil engineering, and products like furniture, others were dominated solely by agricultural interests, like tobacco and cotton. Even in a pre-industrial society, these developing economies were already complicating the notion of a national economy. In order for a nation to consolidate its interests among potential trade partners, those such as Hamilton believed that a currency was a way of representing an organized domestic economy. Hamilton further asserted:

> Though beyond the reach of this act, it should be noted that a currency with full support of its people is the only means that reasonable trade may be conducted among nations of good faith… states must consent to trade by nations to eliminate conduct by states beyond their grasp, and with the faith of this union. (141)

Even then, the function of a currency was perceived as an ideological placeholder, inextricable from its value in trade. Those who championed the production of a unified currency understood that states had variable and sometimes competing interests, and a nation required a standard that could consolidate both its ideological and material production.

But it was difficult to fully eliminate state currency. No consensus could be given on the status of a state currency even though Article I, Section 8 of the constitution gave power to the federal government to assert power over the regulation of currency, including its value. Only until the Civil War did congress enact a tax upon state currency. By doing so, it eventually made it increasingly difficult to hold state printed money. Eventually, by 1878, all state currency had been eliminated in favor of the dollar. It is important to note that as the cultural project of the Civil War took place, including the unification of an American identity; currency became a symbol of consolidated interests made possible by the philosophical weight of Abolition.

At each of these points in American history, the dollar had either been weighed against the domestic value of material goods or two precious metals, silver and gold. Silver had become problematic because its value was erratic. Gold, on the other hand was perceived as a standard that favored the banking system, because by fixing the value of currency to material that was controlled by bankers and their expanded network of investors, small businesses and farmers feared they would never be able to repay their debts. Despite these fears, by the turn of the 20th century, silver was seen as a more feasible legal tender in coin form, given the discovery of massive stores of silver in the Southwest (167). Despite, the gold rush, a limit to the production of gold led to the

creation of the gold standard in 1900. It set the value of the dollar at $20.67 per ounce. For every dollar, one could receive 1.5 ounces of gold. This meant that because gold had value throughout the world, or at least among parties interested in open trade, it became the intermediary whereby the value of commodities was calculated. Thus, a dollar in the United States could be a dollar anywhere else, so long as the sum total of gold could be monitored or controlled. This would become the benchmark of the United States economy through the early part of the twentieth century, and broadened the possibilities for the trade of US dollars by foreign entities. The gold standard, in part, was partially responsible for the creation of currency as its own market.

In a way, gold had become a dominant index of American nationalism following the Civil War. It was the impetus to unify the domestic economy in relation to foreign interests, and during the nation's most difficult period, it was a structure that could contain the ideologies of unification and tranquility, ironically juxtaposed by the systems of capital that diversified and stratified interests within that economy (keeping in mind a history of slavery and forced labor that drove the darkest parts of the engines of commerce) in the first place. This was illustrated during the 1896 Democratic National Convention when William Jennings Bryan coined the term "a cross of gold" to refer to the exploitation of farmers and laborers and the hasty development of a global economy. In this sense, the gold standard became the ideological mark of value that exceeded the national economy, and forecasted the international structure of commerce that would determine policy, monetary or otherwise during the 20th century.

Briefly looking at this monetary history gives us several insights into the present question of global currency, or rather, currency as a fiat for global legibility. As currency

shifted from a system of exchange between states to a system of exchange between nations, state currency eventually went away. This was done less by legal mandate than by cultural necessity. During the Bretton Woods accords, Keynes suggested the creation of the bancor, a world unit of currency based on goods and services that could reflect an international system of value. That proposal, along with the United State's proposal for a currency called the unitas, were largely ignored in the culmination of the Bretton Woods system, but their legacy was implied by the desire to mediate the new geo-political state reached after World War II. It is unclear where global currency will emerge in the next few years, and it is equally uncertain whether it should, but recognizing the crucial role that currency plays both as a cultural and economic indicator, as a marker both of the financial structure and the financial system must begin with new trajectories that train us to understand whether or not these questions are yet culturally legible.

These three problems provide a small window into the massive relationship between the nation and the social, political, and cultural forces that have constitutively evolved into a fully crystallized world culture. Each example demonstrated that the conflation between the international and the global has produced a certain level of illegibility in relation to the global. National interests obscure the presence of global phenomena by insisting upon value systems, units of measurement, or cultural practices that engender a sense of national urgency and make it necessary to mediate our relationship to the world through the nation. Moreover, I have cast each problem in relation to the projection of a social imaginary. How are the global phenomena in law, foreign relations, and international finance an attempt to tell a story about the emergence of a global structure? Every institution contains part of its institutional practice a way of

making a map, a way of schematizing where authority lies and who and what is a relevant participant in each social process. National security protocols, writs of judicial review, and national currencies all have a way of delineating the vast social, cultural, and political interactions within the world system through national boundaries. They effectively reinforce a story about the centrality of the nation, even when phenomena beyond the scope of the nation insist upon a different way of telling that story. What then gets us to think outside of the nation? As we shall see, there are certain ways that we imagine ourselves, and indeed write ourselves, outside of the problem of the nation, a way that way makes legible the presence of global structures. The most effective way to understand this is by first understanding the consistency with which we imagine ourselves through this problem of illegibility. Thus we will explore several literary works, to understand how the social imaginary is re-imagined to include the global. Before that can begin, we must understand how certain literary problems work, and how our examination can take advantage of a critical practice grounded in literary theory.

Chapter II: Methodology – Legibility, Aesthetic Analysis, and Polity

The previous chapter has demonstrated that reading is a problem that requires rigorous attention as it relates to world polity and the problem of global legibility. If world literature is indeed (as Damrosch claims) a way of reading, then we must define a method of reading that accounts for the manner with which social and political structures become legible -- so that world literature becomes the manner whereby the particularistic features of world culture are understood as part of a relevant, meaningful, and dynamic social reality.

First, this chapter will describe a method of world literature through a process of legibility. Legibility will be defined as having the following methodological characteristics with the following key vocabulary:

1. It is an aesthetic analysis. I will demonstrate that aesthetics are an element of literary criticism best suited to attend to the concept of legibility. By introducing the tradition of aesthetic analysis in literary criticism, I will introduce the concept of an ideological container as part of this analysis.
2. It is a systems analysis. I will demonstrate how once an ideological container is identified as adequate to a global structure, it becomes a figural element within a complex array of political negotiations. Here is the point that an aesthetic figure participates in a political economy. Thus, I will show how literary criticism has treated systems analysis and how world polity is a useful methodological trait of legibility.

3. It incorporates certain literary and philosophical terms, including hermeneutics, semiotics, narrative, and interpretation, distant reading, and close reading. I will briefly describe these terms in relation to the traditions of literary analysis that lend themselves to both an aesthetic analysis and a systems analysis, and I will explain how they relate to a concept of legibility.

Secondly, and concurrently, I will focus my attention on the act of reading as a methodological tradition. I will frame my project in the context of several literary and philosophical traditions, including Marxist critique, post-structuralism, and neoinstitutionalism. I will characterize how a reader conducts the work of studying text, and how text has evolved as a theoretical concept to broadly account for different forms of writing. Part of this process will require that I describe the role of readers, authors, and institutions as part of what we now understand as text. This section will frame the act of reading as a methodological trait common throughout the humanities, but largely ignored by the human sciences. As a result, I will have to address what reading produces as a form of evidence. I will address how legibility attempts to confront those problems in a manner that renders reading an effective cross-disciplinary method.

Thirdly, I will describe the selection of my materials, which includes both literary materials and political documents. I will explain why they serve as valid and reliable samples for this project, focusing in particular on the value of the forms I have chosen. I will also explain why I have chosen to focus on the time period in question, and how they relate to the evolution and institutionalization of the nation-state within the world system. Finally, I will pay some attention to why magic realism appears as a part of the analysis I

am making and why the surreal or supernatural emerges as a means of making the global legible.

Fourth, I will describe my organization in the following manner:

1. A genealogy of global figures
2. A literary case study – The Watchmen
3. An application of literary critique to political narratives

I will explain my reasons for this organizational frame work, describing the difference between a topological approach to reading and what is often referred to as "close reading." The limitations of my research will conclude this section and the chapter.

Defining a method

Glaucon: I understand. You mean in the city we have just been founding and describing; the one that exists in words, since I do not think it exists anywhere on earth.

Socrates: but there may perhaps be a model of it in the heavens for anyone who wishes to look at it and to found himself on the basis of what he sees. It makes no difference at all whether it exists anywhere or ever will. You see, he would take part in the politics of it alone, and of no other.

-Plato, Republic Book IX, 592b

The preceding exchange between Glaucon and Socrates underscores the relationship that a literary imaginary plays in the construction of a political structure. The city that "exists in words," is built upon the ability to imagine it in the first place. Glaucon places the act of "founding" and "describing" as part of the same process. Equally telling is Socrates' response. He indicates to Glaucon that the city is available "for anyone who wishes to look at it and to found himself on the basis of what he sees." Strictly speaking, aesthetics may be defined as "sense objects[21]" or the properties within objects to make people sense them in a particular way. These are terms that indicate to

[21] Taken from the Greek *aisthetikos,* which produces the terms "sensitive," "sentient," or "perception," Oxford *English Dictionary.*

me the power of aesthetics in the construction of a political imaginary. Aesthetics are a point of reference whereby one may wish "to look at," "found" and "participate in the politics of" a civil structure. Just as "founding" and "describing" go hand in hand, so too does legibility rely on an analysis of aesthetics. When we are asked to describe a structure as complex as a city, we must often replace all the myriad details with a placeholder, with an object that represents the complexity of the city, something that retains its essence. This is a very classical concept, and one continuously maintained by theologians, writers, and political theorists for hundreds of years. The 12th century mystic and theologian, Marguerite Porete, wrote that the divinity of God was represented by God's body of followers. The larger body, Church Greater, was the totality of all things, a complex union of all things under creation that was only knowable through a second body, Church Lesser, which had to express its adoration for God with sacraments, and material evidence of the invisible presence of Church Greater (112). Aquinas, Pseudo Dyonisius, Wasil ibn Ata, and Plotinus each contained elements of this in their own teachings, often referred to as negative theology, which often emphasized the use of the tangible as a representation for the intangible or unknowable. A central feature of what is and knowable relies on the presence of bodies, corporeal objects that can be used to contain complex ideas. These bodies have aesthetic features, things that convey meaning to us and direct our attention to the particular elements of those complex ideas.

Aesthetics have developed into an important feature of cultural studies and literary analysis. Aesthetics are a foundational principle in a Western philosophical tradition. Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Kant relied on aesthetics to varying degrees and for various purposes as a way of assigning value to problems that emerge

chaotically. Kant in particular believed that aesthetics were the connection between civilization and the natural world (*TCPR*, 34). He emphasized the difference between noumenon, the *thing-in-itself*, and phenomenon, which is the appearance of the *thing-in-itself* to us via our senses (114). These two terms serve as a point of reference for the way we understand things to become comprehensible (thus producing reason). In order to know or make sense of the world, we employ "concepts of understanding," which are distinctive figures or classifications of things that we conceive in order to make sense of something chaotic (121). In effect, we make sense of things because, more generally speaking, we can sense things and attribute the qualities of those things to a higher idea. No human being experiences all things in the world first hand, nor do we begin to create a system of politics only through some divine or supranatural osmosis (at least I do not claim to know how that process occurs). Instead, we determine which objects best help us organize our thoughts around the thing-in-itself, and we mediate that relationship through shared experiences, which is where an ideology becomes an important factor.

Ideologies are collective sets of ideas that become associated with a given group or system. If aesthetics are the means whereby the material and the immaterial become understandable, between things and thoughts, or as the sensual manifestation of the invisible presence of a thing, then the shared experience that produces a social interaction or a cultural practice are the ideological properties of shared sensations, or to coin the term, common sense. This is similar to the way that Eagleton configures the concept of the "free particular," which relates to the territory that encompasses "the whole of our sensate life together" (13). For an aesthetic analysis to work, one must identify sense objects that contain a communicative element. An aesthetic is able to tell the story of an

idea, in whatever way "telling" is a manifestation of sensation (112). For this reason, an aesthetic analysis begins with the identification of an ideological container. If an object can be used to tell a story consistently, then in some way its constitutive properties as they relate to a shared experience have allowed a given object to serve as an adequate ideological container. This project is interested in ideological containers that allow a given story to be told in relation to global culture. If a certain object allows one to orient themselves in relation to a global landscape, that is, they can sense the world is "real" because the story engenders a sense of truth about the way the world works, like William's "structures of feeling," then it has accomplished one important element of global legibility. Williams believed that literature and art serve as the staging point for the development of a shared sense of subjectivity (25). Literary works, for example, served as a record of an emergent element of social consciousness, and could be used to identify the foundations of ideological development.

Literary criticism has a long tradition of treating an aesthetic as a framework whereby subjectivity and ideology are understood. Marxist scholars, like Frederick Jameson, would argue that the aesthetics produced by literature were already fully realized ideological structures, and where part of our body of "political unconsciousness" that reacted to the presence of social norms that inadequately explained the whole of human experience (*MAF*, 14; *TPU*, 38). Terry Eagleton would argue that ideologies are fully articulated through bodies, both political and biological, and that our relationship to our own bodies is how we begin to frame consciousness, particularly in relation to abstract political phenomena (15). Elaine Scarry would evoke the tradition of the Frankfurt school by arguing that complex political problems, like war, torture, abuse, and

mistreatment are articulated broadly as political problems first through a discourse on the body. For her, pain and imagination go hand-in-hand, both as a projection of our interiority on others and our desire to produce shared meaning out of large scale atrocities (63).

Other literary critics, like Emily Apter and Shoshana Felman would emphasize the psychoanalytic elements of aesthetic production. For her part, Apter would argue that virtual subjectivity was the production of a deterritorialized subject, and as a result of global processes, the ability to create imaginary landscapes outside of fully realized political landscapes created an emergent sense of subjectivity that was capable of transfiguring political ideologies multi-modally (135). Felman would create a vocabulary of a juridical unconscious, stating that social phenomena, including trials and political rituals had a literary function to them. Instead of serving as a purely legal problem, trials such as the O.J. Simpson trial encountered our unconscious drives through a series of narratives (in the case of the Simpson trial, it was the staged dialectic between race relations and domestic violence). The trial itself served as an aesthetic feature that operated as an expression of our collective unconscious (45). Freud himself would argue that the uncanny emerges as an aesthetic trait in literature[22] to serve as the focal point of our relationship to objects and problems that appear familiar yet strange at the same time. Mysterious and supernatural objects were a manifestation of the space in between consciousness and unconsciousness, and those objects served as hermeneutic foci for things (or ideas) that are repressed or obstructed by our own consciousness (68). As we

[22] Through his analysis of E.T.A Hoffman's "Te Sandman" which I will refer to later as a precursor to the graphic novel of the same name this also uses fantastic and uncanny elements to construct a series of global figures.

shall see in the next chapter, many global figures retain an uncanniness (e.g. the zombie, the doll, the android, and the alien life form) that I will argue emerges because global culture remains in Freud's terms, "concealed, hidden, and obstructed" by the ideology that frames national subjectivity (70). Recalling our discussion from the last chapter, this concealment is precisely involved in the way that things are made illegible. It is only by understanding how to think through that concealment that we make the world legible.

Post-colonial theorists achieved great work describing the transformation of the world system into a series of new geo-political landscapes, emphasizing the aesthetics produced as a result of imperialism and colonization. These aesthetics are vital to my present analysis for they closely explore the relationship between deterritorialized bodies, nations, and globalized political processes. Franz Fanon would develop the idea that being colonized through language and other cultural values forces a colonized subject in a state of disjuncture between himself and his body -- hence, his articulation of the "white mask" covering the "black skin" (18). Zizek would argue that nationalism was a cultural monolith that the post-colonial condition would have to contend with always, calling it the "national Thing" that resists universalization but retains "its absoluteness" over daily life (202). This, he argues is why even minorities and the disenfranchised must enjoy their cultural practices through national myths and traditions even though it is denied to them because of their status as a political Other (204). For Zizek, the state of post-coloniality produced a system of geo-political aesthetics, all of them grounded in the same universal project that Kant and Hegel intended as the primary thrust of their respective philosophies. It is the prominence of global processes, the exchanges made possible through the industrialization of the 19th century, and the regrettable project of

imperialism, that produce figures aligned with the interests of this project. Paul Gilroy would lay out the aesthetic of the sailing ship (a figure I will borrow in the next chapter) to explain the state of escaping from the nation while reproducing national consciousness on a microcosmic scale:

> The image of the ship-- a living, microcultural, micro-political system in motion-- is especially important for historical and theoretical reasons.... Ships immediately focus attention on the middle passage, on the various projects for redemptive return to an African homeland, on the circulation of ideas and activists as well as the movement of key cultural and political artifacts: tracts, books, gramophone records, and choirs. (*TBA*, 4)

This image in particular also frames the type of ideological container I will describe in the next chapter, because it contains tremendous value as a global ideological container. While Gilroy rightly describes the ship as an escape from nation (and in turn a return toward nation) and a circulation of localizing cultural artifacts, the ship also draws attention to the tradition of seafaring culture that so profoundly transformed the world, that created practices that are uniquely global, and serve as an imaginary landscape that can tap into the deep complexities of a world system increasingly defined by deterritorialized publics and crystallized instances of global culture. Other post-colonial scholars, such as Lois Zamora, would identify specific literary genres as having a particular affiliation to the post-colonial condition. She would argue that modes attributed to magic realism, particularly the use of supernatural characteristics, hybrid characters that are out of time and place, and surreal effects that utilize antinomy as a way of weaving complex “narrative pluralities” together, are aesthetic features of a

deterritorialized world system. Like Freud's use of the uncanny, the magic realist tradition emphasizes binary aesthetics (what is known and what is unknown or mysterious) as a hermeneutic element. The general thrust of post-colonial studies can be viewed through an understanding of aesthetics containing the disjuncture between mind and body on a global scale. Edward Said would note that at the turn of the 19th century, culture and imperialism would become synonymous with one another, for one could not separate the world-making processes of colonialism from the institutionalized spaces within international and post-national societies (*CAI*, 276). It is this tradition that transformed comparative literature and world literature (as the founding concept of the comparative tradition) into a field of study that must contend with multi-culturalism, post-nationalism, and other neo-global concepts as part of traditional comparative frameworks. Franco Moretti, David Damrosch, Gayatri Spivak, Emily Apter, and others, including myself, have taken this as an opportunity to view aesthetics from multiple globally-oriented trajectories, each participating in multi-modal, multi-cultural ways of reading, writing, and interpreting.

Despite the varying ways whereby an aesthetic analysis is employed, through a Marxist, semiotic, philological, post-modern, or psychoanalytic tradition, the common methodological trait is to transform any feature within a story (people, landscapes, or creatures) into a physical element -- a body that can be interpreted as a translation of the binary of mind/body, and a manifestation of a complex concept or way of being in the world. These bodies then become vessels for the ideologies of complex political systems, and the world system is no exception.

The last chapter focused on several aspects of a world political system and how institutional production (i.e. foreign policy, judicial review, and foreign exchange markets) can significantly determine the imaginary landscapes that framed how we understand the presence of global culture (not that they always do, but that they *can*). Those systems partially determine the way that narratives are disseminated culturally, and they tend to shape those imaginary landscapes through a nationalizing imaginary. I have proposed thus far that global legibility is achieved first by identifying a global aesthetic and examining its ability to tell a specific story. To what extent can a given figure tell the story of global culture?

But another element is vital to this analysis. There are varying degrees with which a global aesthetic can serve as a dynamic arrangement of turning universal concepts into particularistic elements of a cultural field.[23] Some aesthetics are flat, meaning they only orient one to the world in a vacuous or superficial way, while others have the ability to tell a deeper, more complex story within a cultural economy. The image of the globe, for example, is clearly a means of telling a global narrative, and as Deleuze explains, every discussion about the world necessarily reduces itself to the image of the world map (TTP, 146). For Deleuze, the surface is an extremely meaningful feature of subjectivity. The skin, or the surface material, determines both hermeneutic and ideological production. Surface material is the contested site where what is understood about a thing and what the thing is "becoming." Thus, the "superficial," the "distant," or the "topographical," are meaningful to the critic, because it constitutes the

[23] What Roland Robertson refers to as the particularization of universalization and the universalization of particularization. Robertson here is referring to the tensile social exchanges that take place between local, national, regional, and global interests. For more on this framework, see Robertson (71).

site where language produces meaning (*DR*, 29). The world map is the final surface material of the global. It already has an appropriate landscape, and it helps one comprehend the totality of living in a space defined on a planetary scale. To employ the image of the globe in a given narrative serves an aesthetic and ideological purpose, but it doesn't necessarily have the dynamic properties that other aesthetics contain. In the last chapter, we briefly discussed the figure of the child as a contested site of global significance. Child exploitation engenders a deep investment in our encounter with society and culture, and becomes a global issue when it is filtered through foreign policy. Children who are dispossessed of nationality or are exiled into a state of vulnerability create a deeply complex arrangement of multiplicities. The story that we can tell about these children must then be multi-dimensional and pluralistic. This borrows from Robertson's analysis of globality, where he describes the images of world order as following a dynamic process:

> Globalization – A process in which actors create 'non-equilibrium' in terms of differential images of the global-human condition. This non-equilibrium both challenges and constructs aspects of the world system (71).
>
> Globality – the circumstance of extensive awareness of the world as a whole, including the perception of a global process as being a species, or having the quality of a species (71).

Where Robertson asserts a certain "danger" to the qualities of global culture, particularly the projection of the image of world order, I remain neutral about the images produced by global processes (71). The projection of world order does not necessarily project the

inevitability of a global government, which is commonly perceived in images a "new world order," or the figure of the dystopian landscape[24]. I think this figure is particularly useful and relevant to our discussion, for the image of the child is also the image of the world's attempt to produce a world order for the neo-citizen, for the vulnerable subject in pluralistic and complicated ways. What is useful about Robertson's analysis of globality is his description of images as having a dynamic process wherein social interactions take place among individuals, societies, systems of societies and humankind. It also acknowledges those negotiations as political and systemic, explaining that the multi-dimensional features of certain images expose the degrees to which certain objects can serve as useful ways of telling a global story or creating a global-specific aesthetic response. Just as it is important to ask if a given object acts as a suitable ideological container, so too does it serve to ask how those containers, once they are characterized as global figures (meaning they are filled with a particular narrative) operate within a world system (or a representation of a world system). Ultimately, globalization is systemic, and in order to determine the depth and efficacy of a given ideological container, one must ask how those figures operate systemically within a narrative.

I use this to expand aesthetic analysis to include systems analysis. Once an aesthetic object becomes figural, how then does it interact within the system provided by a given narrative? The Marxist tradition will consistently assert that ideologies operate within an economy, meaning the way that we produce a given ideology participates in exchanges and negotiations among a myriad of social possibilities (Williams, MAL, 25). Ideologies are like resources, they can be seen as having value, and that value participates

[24] but I do not believe that global narratives produce this as a social inevitability nor do I believe that the perception of world order necessarily incorporates an element of danger as Robertson uses that word.

in a transactional space. Ideologies are not different than any other good, service, or transactional unit that is understood under an economic framework. Appadurai describes a global cultural economy, wherein the exchange of ideas (ideascapes), the mediation of information (mediascapes), the exchange of money as a transactional property of capital (financescapes), the creation of tools and processes that construct networks of interaction (technoscapes), and the diversification of people and socio-cultural interaction (ethnoscapes), all create a system of global construction and disjuncture:

> The image, the imagined, the imaginary – these are all terms that direct us to something critical and new in global cultural processes: *the imagination as a social practice*. No longer mere fantasy (opium for the masses whose real work is elsewhere), no longer simple escape (from a world defined principally by more concrete purposes and structures), no longer elite pastime (thus not relevant to the lives of ordinary people), and no longer mere contemplation (irrelevant for new forms of desire and subjectivity), the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility. .. [t]he imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order (31).

This passage draws our attention to the fact that imaginary landscapes are produced within the global economy and manifests itself broadly (note that he identifies five different categories). In order to make Appadurai's conjecture meaningful, global figures (the productive elements of imagination as a social practice) must be subject to social

analysis as much as they are to hermeneutic critique. I would however add another category to Appadurai's field of cultural economy, and this is the "polity-scape," the organizations, social groups, and political institutions that formulate and filter and produce an imaginary landscape. This emerges as a useful trait within the Marxist tradition, one that opens the door to the possibilities of world polity theory and world culture theory to enrich the analysis of world literature. Institutions are as important to world making processes as any of the other categories Appadurai mentions. And as we have seen, institutions (like the city of Church Greater) are represented by complex ideological containers. This is how we make them legible in the world. Thus we have come to a point where we can understand the role of aesthetics in making the world legible. So then, aesthetics are placeholders for the institutions, and their flow through the global cultural economy is part of the polity-scape that draws the map of the world system. What is necessary then is an understanding of systems analysis. Once aesthetics have made the world map visible, what is it that they do to construct and confer authority within that system?

Franco Moretti has taken on the problem of systems significantly throughout his work. For Moretti, world literature is identified as a planetary project, and much like scholars in the field of world literature, the study of a world system is essential to understanding world literature. However, Moretti departed from the concept of "reading more" literature as a way of gaining access to the planetarity of global culture. Inspired by Immanuel Wallerstein's model of a world-system, Moretti demonstrated that the analysis produced by literary scholars was always going to be "too close" to make any synthetic statements about the larger patterns that emerge with a literary system. He felt

that Geothe's ambition to construct a theory of *Weltliteratur* had time and again failed in its project because "the ambition of a project" was "directly proportional to the distance from the text; the more ambitious the project, the greater must the distance be" (CWL 151). In a striking departure from most theorists on world literature, Moretti suggested that literary critics move away from close reading in favor of what he terms distant reading:

> …the trouble with close reading… is that it necessarily depends on an extremely small canon. This may have become an unconscious and invisible premise by now, but is an iron one nonetheless: you invest so much in individual texts only if you think that very few of them really matter. Otherwise, it doesn't make sense. And if you want to look beyond the canon (and of course world literature will do so: it would be absurd if it didn't!) close reading will not do it. It's not designed to do it, it's designed to do the opposite…what we really need is a little pact with the devil; we know how to read texts, now let's learn how not to read them. Distant reading: where distance, let me repeat it, 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 (151).

Moretti later produced a volume of work that quite literally created a literary map, utilizing bar graphs and statistics akin to methods produced in the social sciences, where certain figures and objects appeared in relation to a system of figures, appealing to the frequency with which they appear in relation to geo-political systems (*GMT*, 27).

Despite the polemical discussion that ensued following his "conjectures on world literature" Moretti drew our attention to a decent and still underappreciated point. It is equally important to understand the circumstances that produce the units within a text as it is to invest in the text itself. The patterns produced by this type of analysis assist one in making synthetic remarks that actually change the way we read. Otherwise, reading will always be informed by the same procedures and the same institutional filters.

The first chapter was written to show how this problem of distance and closeness doesn't only happen in the study of literature. The closeness of global systems to nationalizing forms of reading produce the same problems in foreign policy, law, and economics as they do in literature. One of the primary critiques of Moretti's model is that by trying to understand patterns in global processes, he maintained a global perspective that suffered from the same closeness that literary critics held in relation to text. World systems theory has been a staple of rational actor models within the social sciences, and it does have an appealing virtuosity. However, as previously noted, while Moretti and the scholarship concerning world literature was moving away from close reading, so too were world polity theorists moving away from a standard core/periphery/semi-periphery model. They had already developed a broader understanding of the units that participate within a conventional world systems model, and they demonstrated that these units render that system far more fluid than previously understood and focusing on new geo-political organizations, including NGOs and non-national cultural institutions required closer, more qualitative analysis. While world literature was trying to negotiate between close and distant reading, grasping beyond the qualitative and playing even with the quantitative, world polity was reaching the other

way, looking for narratives produced by emerging cultural groups to recalibrate patterns seen through conventional perspectives on globalization. What is refreshing about world polity theory is that it exposes the false choice between distance and closeness. Perhaps it is because of its proximity to sociology that it navigates between culture and politics with a balanced perspective on methods, or perhaps it is because it allows the properties of cultural critique to sit with validity and authority in fields of study where culture is algorithmic at best, but it's ambition seems manageable and its processes are neither scandalous or unreasonable to a scholar like myself, who doesn't feel compelled to make the choice between distant patterns and close readings. In some way, what is at stake for me depends less on how I occupy a field of study than how my inquiry can benefit from both ambition and modesty. As a result, I treat my method not as a normative claim directed to any particular field, but as a *strategic choice* that permits me to make synthetic remarks about how global culture becomes comprehensible in text.

And herein lies the crux of a method for global legibility. It is the attempt to strategically account for the methods of a close reader while finding a way to produce a cognitive space to read a given text intimately and productively. It is a way of engaging any text, whether it be produced or derived from a political statement or from a novel with an architectural knowledge of the things that allow a global story to be told, so that I may understand the degree to which the global is capable of being articulated.

To summarize, a method of global legibility retains the following process:

1. Identify an adequate global ideological container. Herein we ask ourselves as informed readers: does this object allow global culture to emerge as part of a narrative?

2. Explain what story about world culture that container is capable of telling, thus turning a global container into a global figure. This requires that we construct a genealogy of global figures, units (aesthetic objects) within texts that help us understand the patterns of a world system before one engages a text. Mindful of Moretti's cautionary remarks, the genealogy should be modest enough to identify a pattern adequate enough to produce a limited but productive literary analysis.
3. In a move back to close reading, I will analyze how that figure operates within a story, which is a self-contained economy of signs, vocabularies, and exchanges. This is the systemic reading of a text. What are the circumstances inside a text that produce a global narrative? How do global figures interact with a world polity, both as a container for global culture, but also as a contested site? What does this tell us about the polity invested in specific elements of global culture? What is at stake in the negotiation of these imaginary landscapes?

These inquiries constitute the framework of our present inspection. I have attempted to generate a methodology that accounts for both the ability to perceive the globe as a meaningful part of a social reality and the ability to expose problems within a complex and dynamic social system.

Reading as a method

I am not interested in exhausting a history of deconstruction, post-structuralism, or any literary movement that has led to the evolution of reading as a method that is unique to the humanities. To do so would most certainly kill and chance for this project to emerge without the appearance of pedantry. But I have talked so much about close reading and distant reading, aesthetic reading, and meaning making that, if this project is

going to appeal to those uninitiated to literary criticism, I must clarify certain elements of my vocabulary. The main beneficiary is I; and it should be the project of every person who conducts reading as a method to take ownership of reading as an explicit act and a critical practice. This is part of what I alluded to in Chapter 1 when I discussed the way that scholarship is intrinsically bound to institutional intelligence. Reading has become so closely affiliated to particular fields of study that it almost becomes invisible. In some ways, the what, where, and when of a given problem is so intertwined with the "how" of a given literary inspection, that it becomes necessary to create an arbitrary but practical barrier between the analytic framework that motivates an informed reader (informed by what, where, and when) and the procedural traditions that permit a literary critic to conduct an adequate interpretation of a given text. This section will articulate how I understand reading to operate in relation to this project, incorporating vocabularies that are important to the treatment of my present inspection.

Let us begin with the word "reading". An etymological search for the term "reading" brings up several items. The words, "to seek," "to count", "to reason", and "to explain" appear at the top of the list. Further down the scale of pre-Germanic and proto-Indo-European terms appear the words, "to advise," "to counsel," "to attend to," and "to interpret.[25]" I gather from these words that the act of reading is not merely about processing words as I receive them from a series of glyphs and objects. It is also about the act of measuring and the act of putting things together not only for oneself but for others. I enjoy exercises like these because they help me think through the assumptions we make about the most common human traits. For me, the act of reading is the

[25] Online Etymology Dictionary, 2010.

application of knowledge (which is how I begin to measure things) into an organized system of words. I read because I am searching for something, but also I bring something to the act. I have what I currently know, which means that somehow whatever it is that I currently know is inadequate to explain my relationship to the world. And also, I read because I have a responsibility to do so. I see the words "to advise" and "to counsel" as an ethical feature of reading. Somehow, in the act of reading, there is a responsibility to share knowledge with others, and that responsibility manifests itself as counsel. Aside from satisfying my basic intellectual curiosity about the work that I'm doing, I liken this sort of exercise to a philosophy of first principles. It gets me to think about the many facets of reading, and it gives me an appreciation for the type of vocabulary that has emerged to explain both what the act of reading is, and how it can be applied to other types of problems. However naïve this exercise may seem to others, it affirms something basic and pure about the approaches scholars take to their work, and that sort of practice is in my estimation, noble and valuable.

Reading, as Catherine Belsey explains in her study of literary criticism, is a critical practice, one that is filled with "isms." One cannot begin to understand how fast certain styles of reading go quickly out of style or are displaced by metaphysical conjectures that affirm another way of looking at text. But one thing holds true for readers then as it does now – we must still contend with what a text is, and how we begin to approach it with an analytic eye. The rest, the "isms" themselves, are politically grounded, and despite the many ways that one approaches a text, one still reads "in a similar way… in that no practice of reading exists without theory, however much that theory is suppressed, unformulated, or perceived as obvious (5). The literary critic is

charged with applying what is known about the structures of language in an attempt at exploding the meaning inside of it into something that can be reconfigured as "counsel" or critique. For my purposes, the theories and perspectives that are known about globalization and the construction of global structures features heavily in what I will look for in a given text.

I have mentioned with much frequency the concept of an ideology, trying to be careful about what an ideology means as a political concept and as a literary feature. Ideology is not merely a free floating concept that is given to words through conscious effort. Ideology is i*nside of* words, and it is *embodied in* words. I repeat this concept to reinforce the act of reading as an identification of meaning both inside and outside of words. Simply because a text says a thing does not necessarily mean that the statement is necessarily true. The discourse of language is one that looks for the spaces in between words, and what is absent from a discussion is just as important as what is present. Given that I bring to any reading a given amount of knowledge, I know what to look for that is missing. For example, if a certain aesthetic within a story appears as part of a narrative, say for example the villain of a story plots the destruction of the great superpowers of the world from a secret base in Antarctica (which is what happens the text we will read in the 4th chapter), I already know that Antarctica is a global figure. I know this because I have learned from political readings, studies of cultural geography, and several readings on globalization that Antarctica has developed into a space that is allowed to exist outside of national interest, or at least minimally so. I also know that research communities -- scientists, explorers, and engineers – normally live and work in Antarctica and their interests are both national and global for various reasons (which we will explore in

chapter 3). So when I read about Antarctica in a story, I already carry with me a certain attentiveness that treats Antarctica as a certain ideological space that can perform a certain kind of work. That knowledge didn't emerge spontaneously; it was simply put into play because I as a reader of many texts have put them in conversation with one another. When I refer to **intertextuality**, this is precisely what I'm referring to. I can interpret based on my understanding of what Antarctica does as a global figure that the villain of the story has sought refuge from nations, and depending on what the text is doing with that story, it is making a certain claims about nations and global power. Note that I did not say that the author is making these claims. For quite some time, the author has been reduced, elevated, and sometimes removed entirely from the intent of a given story. This leads us to our next term. When I refer to **text**, I am referring to the body of words that constitute the linguistic borders of a given subject (Saussure, 45). A work of art tells a story, and thus is seen that have a text inside of it, a story that can be told based on the way a work of art is constructed (Sontag, AR, 23). A building has a story to tell, because it carries in its design, its various properties, a way of directing and molding spaces, and thus has several stories to tell based on where it is, what it does, and how it appears to people who encounter it (Karatani, OA, 243). Thus, reading is not merely an act of processing what is already written on the page. It is the act of finding the words that a given text or object is able to express.

Consequently, the act of finding words, the act of interpretation, is essential to what constitutes an informed reader. Interpretation is often a question that relates to what is evident in a text and can be understood as a valid form of interpretation. For these purposes, I borrow from a very lucid passage from E.D. Hirsch:

> Interpretation is made valid through a rigorous application of constructed knowledge… That knowledge is a guide to the act of reading, and should be understood as a framework that minimizes the conventional biases that are implicit to all acts of reading… [t]he discovery produced by reading has been placed under a series of careful procedural gestures can be said to contain some validity… for it is the privilege of constructing an educated and informed perspective that constitutes what will always be determined by what can be done, always in the spirit of pragmatism (259).

In this spirit, my reading will employ an aesthetic and systems analysis to constitute what I call a theory of global legibility. For the literary critic, literature is viewed as something that mediates a broad range of senses and experiences. It is a site where complex social negotiations can take place in the confines of a given text. The act of reading I employ is a method that treats text as an autonomous organism, a self-contained cosmology that produces a well-established set of conditions that the reader brings to a text when they turn reading into a form of analysis. This means that I employ the basic tenets of post-structuralist and Marxist theories of reading, each of which owe a debt to the traditions of deconstruction and semiotics. In his very lucid and personal reflection on the act of reading, Jonathan Raban recalls his personal encounters with the act of reading, and with the literary critic William Empson, whom he viewed as a model for how one reads well[26]. Raban remembers a life of reading broadly, and the intellectual curiosity that encouraged an understanding of patterns in social and cultural life. He reconciles the process of

[26] Raban, Jonathan. "Summer with Empson" London Review of Books, Vol. 31, No. 21, 5 November 2009 pp. 37-41.

reading from a distance and reading closely as being essential to one another, as we see in his reflections on Empson:

> Empson was simply continuing his reading of the poems into a larger reading of the man, the times and the language in which Marvell lived and spoke. He was the best close reader of literature alive, but his definition of 'reading' was infinitely more generous and catholic than that of the New Critics who were his immediate contemporaries.

Raban acknowledges in his article the need for understanding the patterns that consistently inform the time, the circumstances, and the places that produce language and valorizes the sort of "generosity" needed to place that distant reading in conversation with an intensive, close reading. It is a value that I find quite useful in my present inquiry, and I proceed in my reading of literature with that same spirit of generosity, which I interpret as having the ability to escape the forced choice of either reading closely or reading from a distance.

Selection of Materials

I have also introduced the idea that the signs and images common to world culture are tied into the concept of modernity, at least for practical reasons. Since the invention of the world map and the multiple ways in which we are now able to express the world as a fully unified organism, world culture is increasingly conspicuous in our social reality. On one hand satellite imagery is capable of giving us a palpable image of the world in its entirety as seen from space. On the other hand, virtual worlds, like those made in online gaming communities, totally recreate a world space with actors participating from all

over the world in a common space potentially (and relatively) devoid of other cultural frameworks. More than ever, we are used to the idea of the world as a fully realized cultural space, which is why we are able to develop a vocabulary that engages how the world has meaning apart from its local, regional, and national renderings.

This project will conduct a reading in two separate sections. First, I will survey a set of global figures to provide an initial context for a closer reading. These figures will be drawn from literary works written within the past 150 years. I have chosen this period because my focus is on both the era of globalization and the institutionalization of the nation-state in global affairs take place during this period. The late 19th century is marked by the rise of mechanical reproduction, sea-faring cultures, and the conceptualization of a world order that provides a rich location for global literary figures. For the most part, I use novels, not because I necessarily agree with Moretti's argument that the novel is the planetary form, or Bakhtin's assertion that the novel is the form best suited to contain an entire cosmology (*TNV1*, 15; TDI 34). Those claims may be true, but I also leave open the possibility that other cultural objects, including films, art, and architecture contain similar aesthetic features, and in my construction of a genealogy of figures I wish to retain the ability to refer to other forms of media literacy that have emerged in the past century that are also planet-oriented, like the online gaming community and the graphic novel. But I remain respectful to the intellectual frameworks that analyze those forms, and I do not claim to have the critical training that is adequate to do those forms justice (with the exception of the graphic novel, which I will frame in chapter 4). Ultimately, my selection of readings are economical, focusing mainly on novels written between the late 19th century and ending with the turn of the 21st century.

It is important to note that most of the materials I have utilized emphasize surreal qualities, and many have been characterized either as fantasy novels or as magic realist novels. Part of this is a necessity of categories. You are not likely to find a story that includes an alien invasion being labeled anything but science-fiction or fantasy. However, a great deal of attention has been paid to the relationship between the tropes of magical realism and the globalizing process. Borges once theorized that one cannot understand the infinite complexities of the cosmos without dwelling in the figure of the demiurge, of the preternatural, or the mythical (97). Most writers who have been labeled as magic realists have rejected the "magical" component of this field of thought. Salman Rushdie claimed that world literature has always needed characters that were out of time and place, that the immortals of his stories were able to tell the stories of great civilizations, and their rise and fall with greater clarity[27]. Gabriel Garcia Marquez claimed that phantasms were real to his grandmother, from whom he adopted his storytelling practices (11). As Luise White notes in her analysis of stories of Vampirism in modern African media, "it is not what can be proven to be true that is real or valid in these stories… it is what people believe to be true that permits… [the storytellers] to tell a story" that explains with great elegance the complexities of a drastically changing world (Cooper, 278). A vampire may not be real, but a vampire *story* couldn't be more real, and the unit of analysis is not the magical feature of any aesthetic object, but rather, the manifestation of the object itself within a narrative. The relational properties that permit a story to accommodate social, cultural, and political disjuncture are what serve as real, even if they act as placeholders for something within the narrative that could be perceived as "real" in the sense that they are believable outside the text as adequate metaphors. No

[27] In his foreword to Midnight's Children, 25th anniversary ed.

one would deny that a metaphor is real, but inside of the text those relations may appear fantastic or even ridiculous. But some literary modes allow the implicit act of reading to emerge as a cognitive property, reminding the reader that the storytelling itself is an essential component to the act of saying "I see ghosts." I "see" ghosts, both as the unit that allows me to tell a story, and as the relation that implies the veracity of my own storytelling, which makes the use of the magical a highly sophisticated transfer between text and narrative, between story and storyteller.

The fantastic is not an assertion of realism. Instead, it is a method whereby the "real" can be told in the first place. Thus, fantastic or supernatural aesthetics will emerge as a natural product of the kind of aesthetic I already seek. They are able to the kind of work needed to reconfigure time and space. This works in the tradition of Deleuze's concept of "immanent spaces," Bakhtin's concepts of "chronotope" and heteroglossia," and Freud's concept of the "uncanny," all of which see elements of the fantastic as necessary mediators of newly emergent languages.

Finally, instead of selecting a broad range of political documents and legal texts, I will argue that all texts have a formal function and a literary function. I will not be so bold as to argue that a document like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is as literary as *Don Quixote*. That sort of claim would be ridiculous. What is not so ridiculous is that regardless of what a document does formally, a document must still use metaphors and figural language to explain complex concepts. Just as we began with the idea that complex political structures must use figural language to contain complex and abstract ideas, it is also fair to apply this to legal documents, to treaties, and to other texts that do not necessarily register as having "literary" value. Documents such as the

Antarctic Treaty System use high-minded concepts such as “mankind” and “international discord” with a very sophisticated rhetorical nuance, particularly because these documents are visionary texts. They have the ability to project a social imaginary, and as we saw in our previous chapter, the projection of a social imaginary is tantamount with the way that we make the world legible. This is the extent to which I emphasize the literary function of a text such as a treaty or a legal case, both of which I use in Chapter 5. I have chosen to evoke unconventional literary materials because they are all documents that are oriented towards a global community, and they are also complicated by a broad set of institutional concerns. Thus, they can demonstrate the degree to which certain figures can be used to narrate and distribute a feeling on social consciousness with relation to the globe. How can these documents construct an imagined social, political, and cultural space? What are the figures used to make construct that imaginary space? These are questions that are reasonable to ask of both a conventional literary text and another kind of text, and it becomes the parameter whereby I limit the scope of this analysis. In summary, the selection of these materials is intended to form a modest but significant contribution to the role that literature plays in other places or, at the very least, to highlight that those who analyze political texts and who interpret legal cases share something in common with the literary critic.

Organization of materials

Instead of cultivating a purely historical perspective, I have developed categories of aesthetic features that have evolved into useful literary devices that helped make the emergence of globalization legible. Instead of forcing my materials into a chronology that would serve as a history of globalization, I introduce each category separately, and I

will describe each aesthetic as a device that, while grounded in a history of globalization, does not necessarily emerge as a historical object. If I were to begin with the earliest of ten texts and proceed chronologically, there is an assumption that I am trying to impose some grand assumption that each text followed the next logically and somehow built a linear tradition of using specific objects to tell a story. While it's true that *Alice In Wonderland* (the earliest published book I will cite) influenced almost every other book that I mention, and H.G. Wells was foundational in the development of an alien aesthetic (a prominent image that I focus on intensively), any attempt to turn this project into a pure literary history of globalization would distract me from my present task. My purpose is to demonstrate that certain aesthetics permit global culture to emerge in a legible way (the adequate ideological container), and because its legibility is obstructed by a nationalized form of reading, these aesthetic features don't appear as "real", or they have to do another kind of work to appear real. They can often appear surreal, out of time, ageless, and even supernatural because they occupy a time and place that we as institutionalized readers and writers aren't necessarily looking for. While these problems certainly refer to a historical problem and merit the treatment of a historical analysis, it is outside of the scope of this project to frame these problems historically much more than I already have by grounding my study in the past 200 years of global history. So while *Alice in Wonderland* and *War of the Worlds* are benefactors of a certain kind of literary problem, and participate in a certain literary history, I choose to emphasize the way that the objects themselves develop a stable meaning.

Nietzsche once criticized history (at least the kind that became fashionable in the 19th century) as having achieved a form of narcissism that made human beings the center

of all events, producing a rigid concept of history that could not make sense of a changing and evolving world. He views history as having a "sickness" for which the remedies are the "*ahistorical* and the *suprahistorical*:"

> With the term "the ahistorical" I designate the art and power to be able to *forget* and to enclose oneself in a limited horizon; I term "suprahistorical" those powers that divert one's gaze from what is in the process of becoming to what lends existence the character of something eternal and stable in meaning… (163).

I interpret Nietzsche's designation of the ahistorical and suprahistorical as a way of looking at the act of "organizing the chaos" of human experience as a nonlinear (or supralinear respectively) process in addition to the linearity favored by a more conventional historical analysis. It is not that history is irrelevant or necessarily counterproductive. It is the excess of using history to articulate a factual or objective relationship to the world and its complexities that Nietzsche so heavily criticized. For this reason, I have elected to resist a literary history of world culture whenever possible, because I am more interested in what the objects themselves do in relation to a complex arrangement of social, political, and cultural transactions than how they serve a purely linear historical purpose. Just because sea creatures (to use one of the figures I will discuss in the next chapter) make global culture legible, doesn't necessarily mean that sea creatures are the historical heir to a global problem and were selected on that basis. Instead, I remain agnostic about the reasons that objects and figures do the work they do in relation to their historical significance. I try to identify the circumstances that allow a figure to do a certain type of work and then I analyze what kind of work it is doing. That will most certainly include discussing why objects have value within a historical

framework, but not exclusively so. Manuel De Landa argues that aesthetics, like any objects that are part of cultural transactions work inside and outside of history, and it is useful to view global aesthetic figures as dynamic elements within an equally dynamic system (19). In this sense, I treat the aesthetic figures I have selected as dynamic elements of global culture which is itself amorphous and self-adaptive in relation to all manner of institutional relations.

As stated earlier, I choose to begin my analytic framework with a genealogy of global figures to create the sort of distance Moretti argued for in his conjectures on world literature. But my organization is modest. I do it so that I can conduct a close reading as well, to demonstrate that both the patterns identified by a genealogy of figures and an application of those patterns to one text satisfy a broader scope of reading while remaining practical and meaningful in its own right. Finally, my reading of political documents will assume a similar process. The relationship of a given document to a historical moment, while important, is not what I am doing here. I am creating a diagnostic of the text in relation to what it is able to say about globality without relying on a sense of historical necessity. This project is not trying to make a grand or general claim about the importance of any of these documents. This project is limited solely to the efficacy of these documents to tell a story when if treated with modest ambitions, can tell you something about how a small but important part of a perceived global social reality emerges.

Chapter III: A Genealogy of Global Figures

In making the global legible, our present argument has been thus far that certain objects do a specific kind of work to reveal global processes. These objects let us make sense of the global; they orient us to a part of our social realities that view the globe as its particular social imaginary landscape. Not only do they make us aware of a global social reality, but they direct our attention to the particular institutions – social groups, types of global actors – that are responsible for the construction of global culture. I will make apparent that these objects appear with great consistency. They are so consistent that it is possible to construct a genealogy out of these figures. In order for the world to become legible, a global social reality must have a consistent or shared meaning. What is consistent about the figures I am about to discuss is how they help the global step out of the national paradigm that conceals or obscures it. Thus, these figures appear as complex metaphors that help us conceptualize the world as its own social and political space, and they also help us separate that designation from the complex presence of nations and nationality. It is necessary to understand why these figures appear consistently because then it becomes increasingly clear that despite the concealment of global culture in our everyday lives, we somehow have a common vocabulary and a common global heritage that we use to imagine the world.

This chapter will focus on a few of these global figures to illustrate the way that they direct our attention to the concept of a global social reality. I will begin with Antarctica, because it will appear several times throughout the remainder of this project, both as a landscape that is vital to the plot of my literary case study and also as a political

document that will literally define Antarctica as a space with a special non-national designation.

Antarctica and Isolated Geographies

I recall the first time that I noticed the significance of Antarctica as a literary device. It was after dusting off an old series of comic books that I first began to make connections between Antarctica and its role as a global figure. I was a ferocious collector of comic books. One of my favorite comic books in my youth was the *Justice League of America*, a diverse group of superheroes who joined forces against evils that no one hero could face alone. The Justice League first appeared in a comic book series published by DC Comics entitled the *Brave and the Bold* (issue #28). It was the first time that the most popular comic book characters of that era were placed together in a team dynamic. The initial group consisted of two aliens (Superman and the Martian Manhunter), an Amazonian princess (Wonder Woman), an interstellar guardian (the Green Lantern), a scientist with the superhuman ability of super-speed (the Flash), the king of Atlantis who had command over the oceans (Aquaman), and a super intelligent, anti-social detective (Batman). Each of these characters had the qualities of outsiders, exceptional beings that were somehow alien, or whose origins began before modern civilization had taken form. They united for the purposes of defending the entire planet against extra-planetary forces that no one hero could address alone. In issue #28 of *The Brave and the Bold*, a giant alien shaped like a starfish, Starro the Conqueror, comes to Earth to enslave humanity for his dread purposes. Even at an early age, I wondered why it was that aliens had to look like sea-monsters, and why sea-monsters were a fascination of writers of science fiction and comic books. Note in Figure 1 that the creature appears outside of water, in front of

an urban landscape. These creatures were not placed in relation to the sea; they used the image of the sea creature for another purpose. In my youth I did not understand what that purpose was, but even then, I was aware that there was great consistency with which these objects appeared.

Figure 1 Cover for Brave and the Bold #28, the first appearance of the Justice League of America. Feb-Mar 1960. Art by Mike Sekowsky. 1960 DC Comics, all rights reserved. For link to picture see: http://dc.wikia.com/wiki/DC_Silver_Age_Classics:_Brave_and_the_Bold_Vol_1_28

I found the subject matter compelling, because it meant that greater villains could be introduced, including alien invaders, and magical forces that threatened not any one place, but all places and all times. For me, this was the first introduction to a planetary aesthetic -- the bigger the villain, the greater the chance that more heroes would unite on behalf of all humans. Most of these stories made me believe in the idea of a "We humanity" against the forces of evil.

Justice League, as it would later be called, underwent many incarnations, with different heroes, different artistic visions, and different storytelling approaches. I collected most of these issues between 1982 and 1992, and during a routine catalogue of my old collection, I found one of the more obscure titles in the series: *Justice League Antarctica*. "JLAnt" (as it was referred to by collectors and geeks alike) was a limited series that followed a group of super misfits, sent to Antarctica because they could do less harm there than any other place. I felt then and remember still with great clarity feeling that the ridiculous stories told in JLAnt made perfect sense to me. As a self-professed expert on alien stories and cosmic villainy, I felt that the stories told through JLAnt were far more believable then those told in the series' more mainstream titles. I found them believable in the sense that the images connected well with the story, and had a

provocative visual and narrative effect on me. Despite the over-the-top humor, I could believe that the world really was in danger when I read them through the JLAnt series. Back then, I didn't have an articulate reason for believing this. I simply remember feeling it very deeply, and in my discussions with other comic enthusiasts, I always championed the team from Antarctica as being the most special when it came to matters of the greatest planetary urgency. Years later I would discover *Watchmen* (which had been published six years before the JLAnt series) and realize that there was already precedent for such stories. But through the lens of my childhood naivety, I still had an overpowering reason to believe that Antarctica was a way to engender a sense of planetary urgency.

It turns out that my intuition was not very far from the mark. Near the end of the 1980s, DC Comics, the publisher of *Justice League*, was dangerously close to overexposing the its most famous characters, which include Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman. Several of their characters were already in five or six regularly circulated titles and the Justice League franchise had not been as profitable as it once was. According to then DC Comics president Paul Levitz, the Justice League gained its largest readership during World War II and the early 1980s[28]. He believed that the formation of international governance and the animosity of the cold war made it desirable for kids to consume stories about heroes from all parts of the world uniting against major catastrophes. This sort of framing became so popular that DC Comics emphasized it in various formats, including a massively popular mini-series that played with the convergence of multiple worlds and timelines as a result of some cosmic disaster.

[28] Taken from a documentary entitled "Super Heroes United!: The Complete Justice League History" 2007 DC Comics.

Because so many different writers had told the stories of the company's comic book heroes in such vastly different ways, *Crisis on Infinite Earths* was published in 1985 as a way to fix continuity errors during the fifty years DC Comics published while also moving forward with a bold narrative that treated its readers to a never before seen multi-planetary crisis.

Figure *2Crisis On Infinite Earths*, cover art for issues 1 and 3, Copyright DC Comics, 1984-1986. For images see: http://dc.wikia.com/wiki/Crisis_on_Infinite_Earths_Vol_1_1 http://dc.wikia.com/wiki/Crisis_on_Infinite_Earths_Vol_1_3

Globalization had made its mark on the comic book industry, not merely as a multi-national or multi-cultural aesthetic, but as a broadly conceived planet-oriented narrative. These stories were among DC Comic's most successful, and near the end of the 1980s, planetary images, and multi-cultural, multi-nationalism had become a common trait in their storytelling practices. Thus, there was an opportunity to take old characters into unseen territory. The new format for the *Justice League* intended to contain a tongue-in-cheek humor where new and sometimes incompetent characters would join traditional heroes in large scale battles against alien invaders, often complicating global affairs more then they helped resolve anything. Although the format did not last very long, it enjoyed enough success to split the franchise into four different titles: *Justice League America*, *Justice League Europe*, *Justice League International*, and *Justice League Antarctica*.

Figure 3Covers of various incarnations of DC Comics' Justice League from 1987 to 1990. All characters and the distinctive likeness (es) thereof are Trademarks & Copyright © 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990 DC Comics, Inc. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. For images see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:JusticeLeagueAmericaAnnual1990.jpg, http://www.dccomics.com/dcu/graphic_novels/?gn=11913, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:JLEurope1.jpg

Each title had its own roster, and was given its own jurisdiction from which they could confront the forces of evil. Justice League International, for example, would work

closely with the United Nations, under its liaison, Maxwell Lord, a corporate giant whose influence through his multi-national corporations often shrouded his intentions in mystery and made him both a villain and hero at various moments in the series. Justice League Antarctica was a group of misfits among the league roster. Seen as the least competent, they were asked to oversee the isolated research base in the Antarctic region, hunting down robotic penguins and other ridiculous enemies with the hopes that they would do more good than harm. However, as a general plot device, the heroes of the Antarctic league would often uncover global scale catastrophes that had previously confounded the other league rosters. Thus, some of the franchises most threatening enemies and equally compelling story arcs would unfold from the humorous misfits and their frozen citadel in the South Pole. Learning this confirmed to me what I had discovered as a young reader. There was something about the fictional landscapes portrayed in these stories that made certain narratives possible, and Antarctica seemed particularly suited to tell a story that made the world real or believable, even if it was a comic book that was telling the story. My fascination with aliens and with the fantastic had a relevance that I had never seen before, and Antarctica remained on my mind for quite some time as a recurring image, one that in maturity would serve as a particularly fruitful image.

So what is compelling about Antarctica? For one, it doesn't take a great leap of faith to connect the qualities of a polar territory with the metaphor of polar opposites. The classic dichotomies of good vs. evil and right vs. wrong are contained very neatly in the polar landscape for obvious reasons. The poles serve as a great metaphor for strict dichotomies, and as such, they create a space where one thing can be separated from another with great clarity. Perhaps the most famous of all comic book characters,

Superman, a nearly omnipotent being from another planet who makes Earth his adoptive home, chooses Antarctica[29] as his refuge from humanity. It turns out that many of Superman's most powerful enemies are staged in the fortress. For example, a particularly famous issue concerns Mogul the Conqueror, a powerful intergalactic tyrant obsessed with Earth and its people tries to stage an attack on Earth by destroying Superman in his secret polar sanctuary (Jimenez, 133). Incidentally, this is also the first major issue that Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons wrote and illustrated before they undertook what would become the most successful graphic novel of all time, *Watchmen (See Figure 3)*. *Watchmen*, as we shall see in Chapter 4 utilized the polemics of the cold war, namely nation vs. world, as an integral part of its main plot. One of *Watchmen's* main characters, and it highly ambiguous villain, Ozymandias, constructs a secret base in Antarctica where he plots an elaborate end to the petty bickering of Cold War. His ambition is no less than to destroy the institution of the nation itself, recreating a world order from whence his secret base in Antarctica (aptly named Karnak, the capital of ancient Egypt that is often associated with holding the knowledge of the known world at that time) would emerge as its icy capital.

Figure 4 from left to right: Superman Annual number 11, written by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, Superman 182, Watchmen no 11, written by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, a panel from Watchmen 11 depicting Ozymandias' secret Antarctic base, Karnak. DC Comics 1985, 1968, 1987. All Rights Reserved. For images see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fortheman.jpg, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Superman187.JPG, http://watchmen.wikia.com/wiki/File:Chapter11.jpg, http://watchmen.wikia.com/wiki/File:Karnak.png

At least throughout the comic's genre, there appears to be a consistent pattern in using an isolated Polar region to contain stories about planetary-scale phenomena. But why are

[29] It is actually unclear whether it is the arctic region or the Antarctic region which is the more traditional site of his home. Both have been used interchangeably throughout the many years of the book's publication. See Jimenez 133.

the stakes of a story told in Antarctica consistently global? There are many qualities in this regard that deserve particular attention.

First, Antarctica is mysterious. Its isolation and unyielding terrain provides for an atmosphere that is unfamiliar to most readers, and it's safe to say that the great majority of human beings have neither visited Antarctica nor the Arctic region, nor do they plan to do so in their lifetimes. These places are experienced by a small group of people, particularly explorers and researchers whose work provides them some air of distinction or mystery. Like the superhuman characters in the comic books mentioned above, these people are seen as exceptional, or having some lived experience on earth that is unique.

Edgar Allan Poe's only complete novel, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, features Antarctica as one of its primary landscapes. The story follows Arthur Pym, a young boy from Nantucket whose curiosity leads him on several misadventures, one of which includes being rescued by the *Jane Guy*, a ship that leads him on an adventure to find the South Pole. The story ultimately devolves into a racist account of an encounter with dark-skinned natives who Arthur and his friend, Peters, must escape. Following their encounter with the unnamed natives, Arthur and Peters discover a mysterious labyrinth filled with ancient "Egyptian and Arabian" hieroglyphs[30], and a cataract of "fog and mist" upon "milky white waters of temperate climate" and surrounded by "an ashen rain" (198). Poe's account of the Antarctic quest was a characterization of the icy pole as an exotic haven, not merely removed from civilization, but also endowed with the secrets of ancient civilizations. The characterization of the

[30] This was added later by Poe's editors, who were not satisfied with the seemingly unresolved ending. See ed. introduction.

South Pole as a final archive for a mysterious human knowledge, a core feature of humanity's desire for total knowledge of itself is a common feature of the Antarctic literary space. It becomes a netherworld where the lost knowledge of past civilizations can be played with, much like Atlantis, Pangaea, or Eden. In these narratives, it is up to some obsessive human drive, or exceptional human being that is able to access the mysteries of the invisible archive. As a result, the search for Antarctica becomes in part the search for the great answer to the mystery of all human life, our reason for being, and a shared heritage that connects us all. This makes the world legible primarily because Antarctica is associated with a pangeaic figure, a placeholder for archives that contain the common heritage of humankind. Not only does the landscape get us to imagine ourselves far away from nations, but we are directly confronted with the images of a common heritage, or at the very least the idea that we are united by places or things that have existed since time immemorial.

Jules Verne would later attempt a sequel to *Arthur Pym*, a two volume novel titled *An Antarctic Mystery*. In Verne's continuation of Poe's story, a wealthy American and amateur biologist named Joerling joins Len Guy, the brother to William, captain of the *Jane Guy*. They proceed on their own adventure in the hopes of rescuing the Jane's legendary crew. It is in the second volume where Arthur Pym's partner, Peters, reveals he has survived their ordeal in the South Pole and has returned to find his friend Pym. The story ends with another mysterious discovery. Pym's body and the remaining crew of the Jane are found at the feet of a great ice structure – a sphinx of mysterious origin endowed with the magnetic powers of the South Pole. Like Poe's novel, the climactic encounter is shrouded in the mystery of an ancient civilization, in this case, the enigmatic

creature of the sphinx. Like the figure of the labyrinth in Poe's version, Verne employs a mythology that revolves around having an all encompassing, ancient knowledge. Neither Poe nor Verne actually visited any of these regions, but at each point, the imaginary framework of the Antarctic region would consistently include an affiliation with an ancient, all-encompassing wisdom. Again, this text uses the isolated landscape to make legible the idea of a common heritage, that Antarctica is somehow a social landscape that we imagine has global properties, and as such, motivates people who encounter it to think outside of their more local social affiliations. Sailors, explorers, and scientists all share in the legacy of Antarctica as told though these stories, and for the reader, it demonstrates how these groups of people are part of a global social reality. These traditions continually appear, and they do so with great consistency.

H.P. Lovecraft, an early and influential 20th century writer of fantasy fiction, used Antarctica as the staging ground for his most poignant descriptions of his famous "Old Ones," an ancient race of creatures who preceded humanity, built great civilizations on earth, and who became the objects of obsession of a secret cult whose sole intention became the resurrection of these gods to destroy civilization and recreate a new world order. The "Old Ones" returned often in Lovecraft's stories, most prominently in his 1926 story arc, "The Call of Cthulhu" where he describes his alien race of elder-gods:

> The Great Old Ones who lived ages before there were any men, and who came to the young world out of the sky. Those Old Ones were gone now, inside the earth and under the sea; but their dead bodies had told their secrets in dreams to the first men, who formed a cult which had never died (145).

These fictional alien characters would reappear throughout Lovecraft's story arcs, and he would finally suggest that a group of "Old Ones" also referred to as "Elder Things" built their final city in Antarctica, which became their final resting place (156). At each turn, the labyrinth, the ice-sphinx, and the elder-gods are consistent evidence of the way that Antarctica becomes mythologized as a source of a transcendent, ancient wisdom. Systemically, this plays out in the production of new wisdom, to adapt, measure, and navigate the world around us.

The desire to measure the world in relation to the planet works in relation to the Antarctic figure. The poles are the navigational crux of all life on earth. The major points of reference or systems of measurement we have constructed to navigate the globe are constructed in relation to the poles but are also relatively useless in the poles. A magnetic compass, for example, is unreliable above 70 degrees Latitude. Only celestial bodies are capable of aiding in navigating the polar region. A sun compass will indicate the direction of the sun by the light it emits at the horizon. An astrocompass creates an arbitrary north, an azimuth (known as true north), between a person and their relationship to a celestial body. For this reason, the limitations of knowing one's exact position in the polar region in relation to the Earth are minimal. The reliance on celestial bodies for a sense of place forces one's experience of the polar region into a particularly planetary frame of reference.

Systemically, this property also privileges an elite class of people. People with special training or people of exceptional skill who are capable of confronting these uncharted territories by air, land, and sea become a common trait of the Antarctic literary landscape. In these cases, the superhero who can fly or immediately teleport to the most

isolated regions of the Earth becomes a placeholder for people and technologies that make it capable for us to confront those frontiers. This is why Antarctica is very much like other isolated geographies, like the desert island or the hidden ancient city -- places that require special knowledge in order to access those regions. Antarctica and the Arctic require a special planetary knowledge, and that orientation is implied by the natural challenges of the landscape. With the dawn of GPS (Global Positioning System) technology provided by the triangulation of satellites, many of the old methods of locating oneself in the poles have become near obsolete. This demonstrates the move away from the elitism implied by old technologies. More people have access to GPS technology, and the special information needed to find my way is becoming more accessible as a common cultural practice. The figure of Antarctica adds currency to the desire for a globally-oriented technology. However, despite increased access to the technologies of planetary navigation, Antarctica still produces an image of science and technology as the way to unravel the great planetary mysteries cultivated by the likes of Poe and Verne. There is some connection between the enchanted properties that Antarctica is imagined to contain and the broad planetary scale that Antarctica represents. Weber referred to this problem in his treatise on disenchantment, he argued that our "primitive image of the world" which was made possible by "irrationality" and "magic," was now gone, and that our world, now made up of rational actors and localized representations of reality (148). He wrote:

> The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the 'disenchantment of the world.' Precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life either into the transcendental

> realm of mystic life or into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations. It is not accidental that our greatest art is intimate and not monumental. Nor is it accidental that today only within the smallest and intimate circles, in personal human situations, in pianissimo, something is pulsating that corresponds to the prophetic pneuma, which in former times swept through the great communities like a firebrand, welding them together" (155)

However, the figure of the Antarctic, and the presence of other literary figures have outlived Weber's statement, and have proven that the "primitive image of the world" has survived in the era of rationality. In fact, there is something rational about the images that appear to explain the world, if only for the fact that they appear with great consistency, and they seem to perform a similar function each time they are employed. In a sense, the magic and enchantment that is present in the figure of Antarctica is part of what allows us to escape the rationality that exists in the belief that nations are the sole, rational actors in world affairs. Thus, we make the world legible through both enchantment and disenchantment, and the world has neither left one behind for the other, nor will it so long as change and the social evolution of the global political landscape remain a part of our daily lives.

In literature and film, Antarctica as a scientific haven and as an alien space is very common. The science fiction genre consistently uses Antarctica as the site for obscure scientific research. Elizabeth Leane mentions John W. Campbell's novella[31], *Who Goes There?* as the literary base reference for the two wildly popular film adaptations, *The Thing From Another World* (1951), and *The Thing* (1982). These narratives follow the

[31] Written under the pen name Don Stuart, published in *Astounding Science Fiction*, 1938.

travails of a group of scientific researchers who uncover an alien space vessel frozen deep in the surface of the Earth. After thawing the vessel out, the alien inside the vessel revives and is discovered as a belligerent species. The alien in Campbell's novella is the supreme mimic, capable of acquiring the traits, memories, and abilities of anyone it consumes. Throughout the story, it is unclear what "scientific research" is taking place; it is only made important enough for us to believe that it requires the solitude provided for by the Antarctic landscape (228). Instead, our focus is drawn to the resourcefulness of the scientists, who must respond to the manifestation of an alien threat. Their intellectual curiosity is now exacerbated by a sense of global urgency. They ask: what if the creature escapes to the populated regions of the earth? What then? The alien space created by Antarctica is the means whereby technological resourcefulness becomes globally relevant. To confront and conquer the alien frontier, to solve the ancient labyrinth, and to solve the mysteries of the undiscovered country are part of the world-making imaginary that the Antarctic figure so effectively captures. The plot structure from *Who Goes There?* is a poignant example, because the mimicry of the alien invader renders humanity itself as the image of terror, and our inability to conquer the alien within us is the very thing that makes the scientist conduct his research in the first place. The urgency of global technologies, both the ability to understand and respond to global phenomena, is the privileged charge of the isolated researcher. It is here that Antarctica takes on the metaphor of navigating both the unforgiving terrain of the poles, and the equally complex manifestation of our political interiorities. Technology, as simple as being able to measure from point x to point y and as complex as extracting the terrifying and belligerent element among us, is the way that we narrate through the antinomy of

consciousness and unconsciousness. Antarctica then is a global figure in part because it adequately contains the technologies that produce a global consciousness.

A third feature that makes Antarctica a useful global figure lies in one of its most obvious aesthetic traits. It is really cold. The freezing temperatures of the polar region are an indication of the great challenges the landscape makes in relation to the human body. For example, the arctic passage which is an inextricable element of the narrative in Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*. The book is framed by the journal entries of Robert Walton, an explorer who is obsessed with navigating and charting the arctic passage. During his initial shipwreck on an iceberg near his destination, he encounters Victor Frankenstein searching for his monster. While caring for Dr. Frankenstein, Robert then hears the terrible account of Frankenstein's Monster, and the story unfolds to the reader by way of Victor's testimony aboard the stranded vessel.

It is the extreme temperatures that make this story particularly harrowing. Dr. Frankenstein must encounter his monster at a place that is inhospitable to the human body. Not only does it reveal his vulnerability, but it serves to accentuate his creation's invulnerability. It is the cold of the arctic region that proves to Dr. Frankenstein that what he has invented is a special creature not like the human beings we are used to describing in conventional terms. The Monster, who has proven to him that he has reason and emotion, makes the following overture during his first major confrontation with his creator:

> "I am that which may endure this cold… I intended to reason…If any being felt emotions of benevolence towards me, I should return them a hundred and a

> hundredfold; for that one creature's sake I would make peace with the whole kind!... What I ask of you is reasonable and moderate; I demand a creature of another sex…we shall be monsters, cut off from all the world; but on that account we shall be more attached to one another. Remember that I have power; you believe yourself miserable, but I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master; obey!... I may die, but first you, my tyrant and tormentor, shall curse the sun that gazes on your misery. (156)

The Monster's appeal to Dr. Frankenstein begins by making him aware that the cold is impenetrable to him. At each point, he reminds the doctor not only of his ability to have reason and emotion, but also his physical distinctiveness – his impervious skin and his herculean strength, each of which gain credibility from the cold and the ice where the monster has taken his refuge. After he destroys Victor's marriage he taunts him in the following manner: "[f]ollow me; I seek the everlasting ices of the north, where you will feel the misery of cold and frost to which I am impassive" (278). In contrast, Victor must contend with the light of the sun, which the monster refers to as the light of judgment upon Victor's soul. In response, Victor lets us know he is aware of his physical inferiority. He refers to himself as "the native of a genial and sunny climate" who "could not hope to survive" the "mountainous ices of the ocean" (280).The lack of sun in these desolate regions, and the references between light and enlightenment, distinguish the monster from his master. Victor must live in the sun – he needs it because his body cannot bear the cold as his monster does. The Monster uses the connection between sun and cold to distinguish both their moral and physical distinctiveness. If Frankenstein is a

story about the boundaries between life and death and the obsession involved in crossing those boundaries, it is made legible as a global narrative through the quest for the arctic passage and the subhuman features of the frozen wasteland.

It's no mistake that the story of Dr. Frankenstein and his monster must be framed by a globally relevant obsession at a particular geopolitical moment where the discovery of the Northwest Passage was of major global significance. The quest of Robert Walton to discover the arctic passage is a controlling fantasy written at a planetary scale. For people of that era, the Northwest Passage represented the ability to control the most isolated parts of the world, and expressed the ability for humankind to have mastered the body of the planet's surface. Walton is aware that to discover the arctic passage is to create a line of connectedness that would increase the exchange of goods, values, people, and services at a geometric rate. To open up a line of transport would make the world smaller. It would connect places without having to navigate heavily politicized spaces or in Walton's words "a free passage, where the ice should part and provide a noble and great benefit to all mankind… where all places shall benefit from the grace of this utility and honor I now seek" (290-291). His obsession is the same as Victor's yet writ large on the body of the globe. If Victor's obsession is with healing the vulnerabilities of the human body, Walton's is concerned with the vulnerabilities implied by the world's social geography. In Walton's mind, to conquer the arctic's terrain is to open up the world to everyone. Or to put it another way, the vulnerability of human skin is made dramatically clear by the invulnerability of the monster's skin and the impenetrability of the world's surface. Similarly, we are also made vulnerable by progress, including the expansion of the world's interconnectedness. This is very similar to the vulnerability projected in

Alice In Wonderland. Alice, the child, is exposed to a massively expanding world, and her only recourse is to master that landscape. Systemically, if vulnerability is one of the socially-organizing principles of human rights groups, then it would seem that the human body's subjection to the most unforgiving elements allows the landscape of the poles to incorporate questions of vulnerability as part of its narrative capabilities. Walton's letters frame the entire story, and it is Walton who saves Frankenstein from an icy death long enough to record his story. Furthermore, it is Walton's ship trapped in the ice that gives Walton the time to listen to Frankenstein's tale. But without the legendary cold of the landscape, the narrative would have lost one of its principal nuances, and would have lost much of its relevance as a global narrative.

One cannot talk about Antarctica without mentioning ice. Ice is a property that is used for many purposes in literature. It is a reliquary. It is a mystical archive, and its relationship as a metaphor for time and memory is unavoidable. To freeze is to slow time itself, or to put it another way, the frozen artifact gives time physical characteristics. Although not about Antarctica, the images in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* help us summarize some of the literary properties of ice that directly relate to its production of a global aesthetic. Observe the opening lines of Garcia-Marquez's epic novel:

> Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendia was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice. At that time Macondo was a village of twenty adobe houses, built on the bank of a river of clear water that ran along a bed of polished stones, which were white and enormous, like prehistoric eggs. The world was so recent that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point (1).

Macondo is described as an edenic place. It is so innocent that it escapes language, and its landscape, including the earthen homes constructed upon the ancient bedrock is described as a place that precedes any historical rendering. Marquez chooses this moment to introduce the concept of ice, which makes it the first artifact of progress given to the people of Macondo by the grand gypsy Melquiades. Throughout the novel, ice would become Macondo's most important artifact. It would introduce a plague of nostalgia to the community, and it would also serve as the impetus for the emergence of capitalism, since the banana factories would rely on it for refrigeration. It appears as the most consistent figure throughout the entire story, and it is narrated as the instance that Macondo makes contact with the rest of the world. When it is compared to the daguerreotype and the ancient Sanskrit novel which would foretell Macondo's demise, its properties as an effect of language become material evidence of Macondo's slow departure from its state of origin. At each point, ice is intended to serve as an object capable of storing memories, erasing them from lived experience, and giving language the ability to erode the once perfect innocence of Eden. Indeed, many critics have declared *OHY* a novelization of the book of Genesis. Paul Simpson-Housely makes this connection in his discussion of polar poetry and the Antarctic landscape:

> This lurid opening [to *One Hundred Years*]… demonstrates the impact of ice on the memory of an equatorial revolutionary, completely divorced from terrain in extreme boreal or austral regions. Such is its power in influencing the memory, its impact may occur when the perceiver is in a state of ecstasy or in a state of torpor, in a torrid or a frigid zone. Ice can be appraised as cold, foreboding, with the threat of divine vengeance, or as suffused with light, which enables bright

> colours to repose in its many cells. It is not therefore surprising that lands of ice and snow inspire poetry or the memory of it. (99)

The memory of an ice age, the prehistoric value of ice, and the inimitable memory it represents all develop into a complex series of signs and images that fill the isolation and desolation of Antarctica with literary power. It reinforces the mystical properties of the places that existed before our time, and allows the conditions that push the limits of human experience to take shape as a form of pre-history. If something epic or even something wicked or vicious comes from the Poles, it is because it has qualified under several conditions as a thing that can overtake humanity-at-large. It can threaten civilization itself. There is a literary consistency to the figure of Antarctica, and by extension the isolated geography because it narrates the lives of exceptional people and it prompts them to develop skills and knowledge that have an impact on the globe, not merely on a particular place or time, the planet itself, fully and immanently.

I have mentioned Macondo, Pangaea, and Atlantis as I have described the Antarctic literary figure, and rightly so, because each of these places narrate the global in a similar way. This is why I refer to Antarctica as a prominent feature of an *isolated geography*. Antarctica, like any isolated geography is empty both physically and ideologically. It is empty in the sense that it is removed from the dominant political and ideological baggage that charges most landscapes. It is empty because its perceived innocence allows the reader to see the formation of identity politics from a *tabula rasa*. Stories that develop in these places reveal how the geography and architecture of most places create an ideological mask. A story told in the hills of North Dakota, the streets of Paris, or the ports in Amsterdam can tell a global story. Any space can, if narrated

properly. But the work needed to unmask the ideological baggage from any place is much more complicated than the use of figures that escape the local as much as possible (like Antarctica). In order to make the global legible, a text must somehow confront the particularistic features of local identity that emerge from other landscapes and connect that to a sense of planetary consciousness. Some texts do this well. Others do not.

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* tells a powerful tale about the effects of globalization on a Nigerian Man and his struggle to preserve his home's identity. Published in 1958, Things Fall Apart tells the story of Okonkwo, a man who confronts the influences of Christian missionaries and British Colonialism on his village in Umofia, a fictional group of villages in Nigeria. The story is undoubtedly compelling, and has been celebrated as a critical success, and often associated as a classic of world literature. But after reading Achebe, I get less of a sense about global culture than I do from reading *Who Goes There*? , *War of the Worlds,* or *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Through *Things Fall Apart* I can fully understand the effects of Christian evangelicalism on Igbo culture, and I find it a compelling contribution to the post-colonial narrative. However, in the end, I am left ensconced in the images and aesthetics of the local, I am not given a space for the global that lets it materialize in a way that is any more than a shadowy, vacuous element (albeit destructive and powerful) within a heavily nuanced homeland filled with a deep and tangible heritage. In a striking irony, the stories of alien invasions plotted in the icy wastelands give me a global orientation more than the "real-life" accounts in Achebe's novel. And rightly so. Achebe's novel doesn't make any claim to having a global value in the sense that I have attributed in this project. I mention it because *Things Fall Apart* gets categorized as a masterpiece of World Literature, and

may partially deserve that status for the way it describes to great effect the collision of Europe and Africa in the deeply conflicted characters and equally compelling African landscapes. But aside from its value as a post-colonial narrative, and its propulsion of the much needed category of African literature what sense do I get about the globe after reading this text? When compared to what I get from reading a science fiction novel set in Antarctica, the answer is: very little. Antarctica can produce a material culture of globalization, it can co-opt great and ancient civilizations, it encourages the production of units of measurement based on planetary scales, it engages the discourse on the limits of the human body, it ignites the desire for globally urgent technologies, and it engenders the general sense of "we humanity." This is what is meant when I assert that the Antarctic narrative creates an adequate literary container for the global. People who are confronting the Antarctic landscapes rarely produce more parochial stakes. The stakes of Arthur Pym's travels do not lie in Nantucket. Nor do the stakes of scientific researchers in science fiction novels lay in Calcutta or Kalamazoo. The stakes raised in each of these narratives is consistently made on a planetary scale for the many reasons previously discussed. For this reason, both aesthetically and systemically, there is confounding evidence in the idea of Antarctica as an integral feature of a global literary heritage. The idea of the world as a fully realized, material social network can do much worse than to utilize the landscapes of the polar region as geographical element of a global particular.

From squid of the deep to interplanetary threat – the sea and sea-life as global figure

In his analysis on the origins of nationality, Jean-Pierre Vidal Naquet questions why every major civilization (and every nation in particular) has attempted to claim Atlantis as part of its own tradition. He offers that the mythical ocean kingdom

represents a harmonious relationship between humankind and water -- the most expansive, most pervasive substance on the Earth's surface (333). More than any other geographical unit, the ocean retains a special position as a non-national space. The Atlantean fantasy is compelling as a global aesthetic because it accounts for the most significant feature of the world map, and any image or aesthetic of global orientation must at some point include water, the sea, or the ocean as an implied feature. In some ways, the great literary adventures of the 19th century rely exclusively on the concept of seafaring culture. *Moby- Dick* becomes a shining example of the relationship between humanity and its deepest, most obsessive controlling fantasies. To locate the object of obsession in a mythical sea creature was an expression of the earth itself challenging the imperialist project. Ishmael's account of Ahab's revenge fantasy could be read as a pure account of the desire not only to master the unknown depths of the ocean, but to take revenge on it, to reveal the frustration man has with the invisible forces of water and sea life on this planet. *Moby-Dick* was preceded by the harrowing tales of the desert island, where the microcosm of a deserted landscape, like *Robinson Crusoe*, cultivated a sense of helplessness at the unyielding forces of nature. Hence, the Atlantean fantasy provides a certain resolution to the fearsome presence of the earth as encountered by writers such as Melville and Defoe, whose projects pit man against nature in an unbalanced and tragic battle. Despite the integration of naval power with commercial interests, and the literature that celebrated the imperial project as having mastered the oceans, the literature of the great, deep, unfathomable ocean, served as a great reminder of the unintelligibility of the planet. This is why the great consistency with which sea life is used to make an image globally intelligible is remarkable.

As a fan of science fiction films, I grew very excited about the release of the South African film, *District 9*. Having seen the previews, I grew increasingly curious how the advertisement characterized a sense of "we humanity" in the form of a prohibition sign, which depicts an alien figure having some sort of restricted access. The expression of the alien as the figural empty set struck me as a particularly provocative sign, because the broad and complex concept of humanity was represented by way of negation. With such multi-dimensional allegiances that human beings make in relation to their identity and to civil society, the concept of an alien other becomes a powerful way to express a horizontal global kinship.

Figure 5 (left to right) A promotional poster for District 9; an image of an alien from the film, an early artistic rendering inspired by H.P. Lovecraft of Cthulhu from "At the Mountains of Madness". For images see: http://www.jamati.com/online/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/alien.jpg, http://images.allmoviephoto.com/2009_District_9/2009_district_9_006.jpg, http://codinghorror.typepad.com/.a/6a0120a85dcdae970b0120a86e32a6970b-pi

But what struck me even more than the concept of the alien Other was the way that the alien is imagined as a dramatic revision of the sea creature. After watching *District 9*, I found one of its most poignant features the way that it was able to transfer the devastating racial politics of apartheid into a science fiction drama where humanity itself is the tyrannical aggressor. In the film, a spacecraft suddenly appears over Johannesburg, apparently in a state of disrepair. Its dispossessed occupants are forced into a makeshift shanty town, District 9, a figurative inversion of the shanty towns of District 6 that were emblematic of South Africa's cultural politics of the 1980s. Throughout the film, a seemingly absent national politics is replaced by a form of governance by multinational corporations. Overall, the film is a striking addition to a tradition of global aesthetics, and most particularly because of the features used to

construct the physiology of the aliens. The racial derogatory slur thrown at the beleaguered aliens, "prawns," most adequately describes the way that the aliens are imagined. They are thin-legged, arthropod-like creatures that do very much resemble some form of sea creature. Most notable in their facial features are the large, tentacle-like arms that surround their mouths, which evoke the tentacles of an octopus or a squid. One must ask then why the extraterrestrial and the oceanic are so closely related to one another in our social imaginary. Why does it make sense to imagine an alien creature as a consistent projection of the most concealed elements of our planetary heritage?

It is as if the aesthetics of the oceanic adventures and the reminders of our vulnerability to the ocean were necessarily projected onto the uncharted territory of outer space. But this vulnerability is not merely a human vulnerability. It is an institutional one. The ocean makes apparent the difficulties of social cooperation, in particular the way that civil structures assert power over the high seas. Nations, kingdoms, companies, and fiefdoms are all rendered as vulnerable subjects at the depths of the ocean. Jules Verne's epic tale, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* remains a critical aesthetic projection of this concept. Like many other stories that engage the global figure, this book is framed and narrated by the travels of a scientific expedition. The French biologist, Professor Arronax, joins a group of researchers on an American naval ship in order to ascertain the whereabouts of a mysterious sea creature who has damaged an ocean liner and who has been declared a threat by several other nations. Under the imprimatur of international cooperation, the *Abraham Lincoln* sets sail with the mission of studying and capturing this mysterious creature. However, during their search for the sea creature, the international crew is captured by Captain Nemo and his crew aboard the submarine,

Nautilus. There they find that Captain Nemo and his loyal crew have disavowed any affiliation with nations or territorial governments. Instead, they live aboard the Nautilus "in the undying and noble quest for knowledge…" and plan revenge upon those civilizations on the Earth's surface "for having ruined the affairs of good men" (78). The researchers are held in captivity for the remainder of the narrative, but are given access to the wonders of the deep, including visits to none other than the floor of the Antarctic and the remains of the city of Atlantis.

At each point, the text emphasizes the glory of a non-national civilization, and the images of sea-life and their quest to understand the physiology of the most exotic and rare sea life become the organizing principle of civilization built at sea. Where the U.S. Naval vessel, including a famous Canadian whaler are charged with the capture and destruction of the mysterious sea-creature, we are given a narrative frame through the scientist Arronax, that builds a tension between the territorial interests of national security (which is what prompts several governments to cooperate in defense against the threats of the ocean) and the scientific curiosity of the Nautilus' crew, who are also prompted by a deep resentment for the affairs of land-based civilization. At the center of this tension lies the figure of the sea creatures themselves, their exotic bodies inciting both fear and wonder, and ultimately determining the allegiances of the characters in the text. In the words of Captain Nemo:

> "I have seen the depths of man, and I too have seen the wonders of the deep. I have chosen the latter, for there appears the divine message of righteousness in the oceans that man has long since abandoned in favor of its fearfulness… and savagery." (89)

Nemo's morality is configured in relation to his understanding of what is known and what is unknown. His fearlessness, marked throughout the text as his most dramatic trait is configured as an openness to the bodies of the deep. Those he despises have lost their sense of wonder in relation to the world's remarkable landscape. In a sense, Nemo has characterized what the narrative framework has reinforced. Land-based civilization organizes in relation to fear and trauma, and his crew, who embrace the principles of science and exploration, organize in relation to awe and wonder. In the most famous image rendered by the book, a giant squid eventually challenges the narrative tension, as members of the crew are terrified by the large tentacle "poulpe," which devours one of the crewmates. Now a fearful ship as a result of the attack by the squid, the crew must decide whether to attack a vessel that has been monitoring them. Tragically, Nemo suffers the same fate as those he has criticized so heavily, unwilling to let go of the hatred he feels for those who live above him and the paranoia that comes with that hatred. He destroys the vessel without provocation, and this becomes the turning point in the text. Arronax's narration introduces the possibility that the mysterious ship was merely curious about the Nautilus, and reflects upon the tragedy implied by such a notion. Ultimately, Arronax escapes as the Nautilus is consumed by a Maelstrom, but the tension remains between wonder and fear, and the bodies of the oceans depths are the catalyst whereby that human instinct is motivated. Systematically, the landscapes that most accommodate a sense of the planet as its point of reference must contend with the fearful Other from the deep of the ocean, and exposes a very profound question concerning the construction of global structures. When do we organize by way of fear and when do we

organize by way of a sense of wonder? The body of the sea creature reveals the degree to which our fear of the uncharted determines the formation of civilization.

This dichotomy will play itself out in many science fiction books. The alien other will import the qualities of the oceanic depths. H.G. Wells used the image of alien invaders to great effect in his seminal work, *The War of the Worlds*. That book is separated into two parts. The first book, "The Coming of the Martians," follows the relationship between a journalist and his brother, a medical student as Martians invade the planet. The aliens are depicted in the following manner:

> The whole creature heaved and pulsated convulsively. A lank tentacular appendage gripped the edge of the cylinder, another swayed in the air. Those who have never seen a living Martian can scarcely imagine the strange horror of its appearance. The peculiar v-shaped mouth with its pointed upper lip, the absence of brow ridges, the absence of a chin beneath the wedgelike lower lip, the incessant quivering of this mouth, the Gorgon groups of tentacles…above all, the extraordinary intensity of the immense eyes – were at once vital, intense, inhuman, crippled and monstrous. (20)

Like most alien representations, the emphasis is on the eyes and mouth, in particular the tentacles that replace the human features of lips and a mouth. It's as though the alien must be introduced as a devouring machine, something that can take the body with multiple limbs and consume it. The eyes, much larger than that of the human, distinguish between human perception and the alien, which from the observer's perspective is already "crippled" because it is perceived as being unlike our own sense of perception.

These descriptions emerge from the encounters of a medical student, someone who is being trained to see the minute details of the human anatomy and a journalist, whose eye is fixed on the minute details of society. Taken in conjunction, these descriptions are filtered through a complex relationship between body and society, and as a result, the aliens themselves become a figure of terror not only meant to consume human bodies, but to consume civilization itself. As such, the alien Other is an importation of the sea creatures of the deep, whose access to the most unfathomable parts of our own ecosystem become the objects of fear and terror. Like Jules Verne's Captain Nemo, the complex and murky relationship between fear and wonder become the organizing principles of the alien encounter – we cannot avert our gaze from the new and monolithic thing, but are deeply fearful of the destabilizing properties it introduces to our daily lives. As an aesthetic for the global you cannot find a more forthright parallel between the global processes that unite us on a daily basis and the way that it produces disjuncture at every level of our social being. The alien other then is an object that consumes and is to be consumed, much like the sea-life that serves as the palette for the alien imaginary.

This is why the Atlantean fantasy plays out even in the figure of the alien body. The mere fact that they appear as a threat to humanity implies that they have worked out a way of living that is foreign to our sense of a social reality. Somehow, the alien invaders contain the technology to threaten the very fabric of human civilization, or somehow the sea creatures of the deep live in such a way that is perceived as harmonious in its own right. In this sense, the myth of Atlantis, a union of the uncharted depths of the planet's surface and human civilization, make their direct appeal within the figure of the alien species. If the aliens have it figured out, then what is it about us that resists them so

much? What is it about our sense of fear and wonder that determines who gets to construct socially relevant processes?

These figures do not require a leap of faith to know that they appear with some consistency. What must be emphasized is that the global is allowed to operate through these figures because they are already highly charged aesthetic traits that have gained access to our literary imaginary through many narratives and by tapping into the systemic traits that make the world comprehensible. The global emerges out of the physical and systemic (both eco-systemic and culturally systemic if you want to make the distinction) properties that make up the planet and that they allow the global to appear with precision and with the ability to move a narrative in a particular way. Furthermore, these narratives make it possible to see the groups that receive a privileged position as participants within the making of a global heritage. Those who encounter the icy wastelands and the alien other have particular skills and social codes, and those codes translate into a set of possibilities that govern the way we imagine the world to create order out of its multi-dimensional components. Often, the scientist appears with a sense of wonder or terror, and the explorer, the soldier, and the child emerge as agents within a select group of people who are able to navigate and narrate the global terrain. While there are no limits to the social imaginary, there are cultural pathways that help us trace the boundaries of the global imaginary. In this sense the aesthetic and systemic powers of the global figure are not only undervalued in our present discourse, be they literary or political, they are viewed with a general disregard that the fantastic and mysterious seem to maintain. Yet we are assaulted by these images everywhere, and their relationship to the objects of nostalgia that mark our more local selves seems anything but simple. They

seem magical, or at the very least, surreal. These objects appear with great consistency, and they also consistently perform the same type of work. In each case, the give us an outsider's perspective, a way to view the world from a bird's eye view, or at least from a place where we can distinguish between national and local ways of life and the emergence of a newly emergent, and dynamic global social reality. The insect and the sea creature are the way that our social imaginary consistently gets us to think outside of the nation, and make the world legible to us by allowing that imaginary space to tell the story of how different actors operate outside of an internationally dominated world system. There are several other literary figures that achieve a similar result. Like Antarctica, these figures produce an awareness of the globe as a meaningful social reality. Let us explore the value of these figures briefly.

Wonderland, Looking Glass Worlds and the chessboard

Wonderland and the Looking Glass World are the fantastic opposites of 19th century London's social reality, or in a sense, they serve as London's unconscious inversion. Wonderland allows Alice to understand how a map can be redrawn out of familiar elements, particularly in her second tale, *Through the Looking Glass World and what Alice Found There*. Already in the often shortened title we see that the narrative is not only about Alice's journey, but it is about "finding" something. "Finding," becomes the preoccupation of the main character, as she navigates uncharted territories "standing in one place, as if the whole world had come for a visit, perhaps to stay, or perhaps to build me a new home" (127). Alice's consistent pre-occupation is with understanding where her true home really is, and when she finds it, what kind of person she will be. It is no mistake that what has displaced her from her home is her sense of national identity.

Everywhere around her, national images sit lazily and hopelessly involved in their own parochial affairs, while the machines of progress drag everyone along on a tour of new ways of being and living, all of which point towards living in a global age.

Let us take a passage from Alice's second adventure to see how this works. During her initial entry into the looking glass world, the Red Queen, a chess piece bearing a strong physical resemblance to Queen Victoria, charges Alice with "playing as a pawn," so that Alice "could one day become her own Queen." Upon looking at the countryside where Alice discovers she "could see everything, all of it everywhere at once" she proclaims that everything "is a huge game of chess that's being played – all over the world – if this is the world at all you know" (126). This is a vital moment in the text, because the remainder of the narrative will be framed by her drive to become Queen of this new chessboard she has discovered. Aside from the "whole world" opening up to Alice's perspective, the remainder of the story will express Alice's perception and her social consciousness on a planetary scale. While Alice believes that she is really in England, she also realizes that it has strangely transformed into another place, a country moving so fast, its citizens need to "do all the running they can do, to keep in the same place" (127). Everywhere, Alice is coping with global displacement, searching for evidence of an England that she believes is "hiding, in the forest with no names" (145). Even though things appear familiar to her, Alice is reckoning with the changing landscape of an increasingly global London. In Through the Looking Glass, Alice encounters strange characters, like the man who is dressed in a paper suit, and the insects on the train who appraise Alice with a telescope and a microscope (130). These characters represent the emergence of new media, the rise of widely circulated

newspapers, and increasingly literate society, and advancements in the study of the planets and microscopic organisms, all of which indicate to Alice that she is in a new world which has an increased scale of interactions. The engine driver in this section parallels other scenes in the book, including Pig and Pepper, where the baby Alice is forced to hold makes sounds like that of a great steam engine (49). The representation of mass transportation in the text works in accord with Alice's journey through a new world that she calls "All-the-World" where travel by land and sea have compressed the interactions in a space that she understands as strangely familiar but utterly fantastic. Again, the use of the fantastic appears as a way of compressing massively complex social and historical interactions, used to great effect to characterize the transformation of Alice into a person who is aware of herself as a global figure.

The game of chess is her way of becoming re-acquainted with the social realities of her time. She is determined to become a queen in this strange land, which is less about being a good imperialist[32] than it is a way of mastering the game (remember, the Queen is the most mobile chess piece in the game and the most powerful) so that she may "have tea with all the real people." Her attempt to become queen is her attempt to master her

[32]Gillian Biers marks this as an imperial Alice. There is much validity to this analysis. Certainly Alice asserts herself as a privileged child, and her relationship to creatures in Wonderland and the Looking Glass World are determined by the power Alice feels she is able to assert over them in each encounter. Biers is right to assert that she is an imperialist in this sense. But in a less glamorous place, Alice is thinking about global concepts, and digesting them (literally and physically in some cases) in order to make sense of the world around her. The chessboard then is less a metaphor for the royalty implied by the Queen's position, but more about her agency and mobility on the chessboard. See Biers, 124.

own sense of reality – a global reality filled with measures, signs, and codes that have rendered England strangely unfamiliar to her.

Alice has great difficulty reconciling this new place that she believes is just as real as her old home with the fantastic creatures that cover its landscapes (155). During her journey she encounters a Lion and a Unicorn (the national symbols of Britain) asleep and lazily bickering amongst one another while sailors and merchants attend to their monarchical duties (173). This encounter is clearly a metaphor for the decline of the monarchy and the rise of a globalized seafaring merchant class. Later in her trip Alice encounters a train filled with insects, sea creatures, and farm animals who charge her each time she speaks because "in this land… land is worth a thousand pounds an inch, smoke [from the train] is worth a thousand pounds a puff, and.. language is worth a thousand pounds a word" (130). Alice claims that these confusing rules are "much like learning geography," a subject she finds confusing and frustrating. But while Alice is learning her "geography" she is learning the rules of capitalism, another sign of a global process and its relationship to the changing landscape that Alice encounters. Taken in total, Alice's many adventures serve as a complex aesthetic network of encounters with creatures that are reminders to Alice that the old England is being replaced by an increasingly global set of networks and processes. Alice will often be put to sea, as she is in the chapter "Wool and Water" and her obsession with marking her displacement in terms of latitude and longitude, which as I have mentioned previously, is Alice's unconscious reminder that she occupies a global plane of existence. In "Wool and Water," Alice is confronted with a sheep in a curiosity shop. In this shop, Alice experiences an insatiable desire to consume, and nothing she consumes seems to be

enough. The text incorporates the evolution of latent capital, the culture of consumption into the changing cultural landscape that Alice encounters. Not only did the rise of British sea power make it possible to trade goods and services, the text reveals that it also created a culture of consumers who had no relation to the production of those goods and services. This becomes a very tangible feature of the global processes since the end of the 19th century, and highlights how the global landscape in the Looking Glass World makes legible the social realities of globalization and global culture.

All of this is made possible by the inversion of her local identity in the Looking Glass World. Unlike the Antarctic landscape, Alice must gain a sense of global consciousness through a profoundly complex set of encounters with the familiar. Carroll's novel can be seen as extremely ambitious in this regard because it manages to produce a sense of the things that make England recognizable before they can be manipulated, transformed, or played with. What makes the global legible is the framing provided for by the chess-board. Without it, Alice's perception would remain an overly-complicated mess. But the stakes of Alice's journey are clear. She has seen "all the world," rendered by the patchwork boundaries of the chessboard, and she desires to also be a queen of this new world. The complex and overwhelming world of a changing London is thus translated through the self-contained field of the chessboard into something that can make a complex social network manageable as both a literary and conceptual project. For this reason, the ideological landscape here is the global world, made legible through the aesthetic of the chessboard.

Playfulness or "pretend worlds" are useful in particular in relation to a child. As stated previously, the child is a proto-citizen, not yet fully indoctrinated into a system of

beliefs. This is why throughout the text, Alice pretends to know things, but she has no reason to believe that any of them are true. She is simply repeating things that are turned into nursery rhymes or fanciful games. The figure of the child playing a game of global significance (because she views the chessboard as representing "all the world") is an excellent way to narrate the complexities of coming of age in a global society. It provides boundaries that would otherwise fill the narrative with over determined signs and symbols that would remain illegible to the child. However, the chess game, played by a neophyte, clears enough space to make a claim about the global without having to contest everything as in-flux. The pairing of the chessboard and the child becomes an isolated geography, a condition of *ceteris paribus* in an otherwise illegible space.

Macondo: edenic space, magic Pangaea

Gabriel Garcia Marquez's mythical village is the quintessential edenic landscape. The story is situated in a primordial state, preceding the development of a fully operational language. By stepping back into an ancient state, the narrative framework of the village is allowed to do multiple things related to the global aesthetic. First, it can cast itself as a Pangeaic image, which means that it can appear as a cohesive, unified whole, a landscape in its original state. In the first chapter, the elder Jose Arcadio discovers that Macondo is surrounded by water on all sides. At this discovery, he wonders if the world is indeed as large as Macondo itself. Although his hypothesis is disproven very quickly through his dealings with the gypsies, Macondo becomes the test case of a place that must encounter the world from a state of innocence and purity.

This novel could be very similar to Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* for several reasons. For one, the focus of the story, and the stakes of the story appear to be entirely

focused on the local. Secondly, both texts grieve the loss of local innocence in some way or another. In fact, the story of Macondo and its focus on seven generations of the Buendia family could be read as Macondo's tragic subjection to capitalistic dependency and the detrimental effects of global hegemony on developing nations. In this, the story told could be more about Westernization or universalization than it is about globalization. But *OHY* constantly inverts the familiar in a way that allows the global to emerge as its own distinctive figure. As such, it is more like *Alice In Wonderland* than *Things Fall Apart*.

Colonel Buendia, for example, escapes the fate of the firing squad, and becomes obsessed with translating the ancient Sanskrit text that Melquiades introduced to the village. He believes that the Sanskrit text holds the key to all ancient wisdom. He feels that being able to translate this text is the village's key to salvation, that becoming a part of the book will somehow connect Macondo to the rest of the world. Much like "Tlon, Uqbar", the fantasy of a text having the ancient wisdom capable of changing the world becomes a salient feature of *OHY's* narrative thrust, and like other isolated geographies who are obsessed with the discovery of ancient wisdom, characters are prompted to develop elaborate technologies to assist them in finding their edenic state of grace. For Colonel Buendia, that technology lies in the mysteries of gold, which he obsessively molds into dozens of tiny fishes he believes are somehow related to the Sanskrit tome. His father would suffer from a similar obsession. Upon discovering that Macondo is surrounded by water, and upon discovering the mysteries of ice, and the traveling gypsies that would create new lines of access to the outside world, Jose Arcadio evades his duties as village patriarch and takes on an ascetic lifestyle:

> That spirit of social initiative disappeared in a short time, pulled away by the fever of the magnets, the astronomical calculations, the dreams of transmutation, and the urge to discover the wonders of the world (9).

Like Alice, Jose Arcadio deals with his displacement by obsessing over uses of the stars and planets to orient himself:

> Having completely abandoned his domestic obligations, he spent entire nights in the courtyard watching the course of the stars and he almost contracted sunstroke from trying to establish an exact method to ascertain noon. When he became an expert in the use and manipulation of his instruments, he conceived a notion of space that allowed him to navigate across unknown seas, to visit uninhabited territories, and to establish relations with splendid beings without having to leave his study. That was the period in which he acquired the habit of talking to himself…The children would remember for the rest of their lives the august solemnity with which their father, devastated by his prolonged vigil and by the wrath of his imagination, revealed his discovery to them: "The earth is round, like an orange." (4)

The desire to seclude oneself from the world in order to make legible the mysterious Sanskrit text or the desire to leave Macondo and see the world (one or the other) is a common thread among each subsequent generation. One brother will involve himself in local affairs, while another, usually his twin or social equivalent, will recede into the planetary instincts of his own studies. This hyperbolic narration is juxtaposed by the presence of ghosts and phantasms, like Jose Arcadio the elder, who long after passing

will remain as a ghost in the backyard chained to a tree still murmuring to himself about the shape of the earth and the wonders of the ancient world.

And herein lies one of the primary modes of a global text. Whether it is the mysteries of the Antarctic, or the absurdity of sailing sheep in the Looking Glass world, the mysterious, fantastic and magical are a key element of the global figure. Like *Alice In Wonderland*, Macondo's daily occurrences appear as blatant inversions of the familiar. However, they must also be fantastic representations of the familiar in order to express the profound disjuncture that exists between a global social reality and other, more familiar ways of being. Some of the most compelling story arcs are about the extreme destructiveness of familiarity. Jose Arcadio Buendia and Ursula Iguaran, the founders of the village and the totemic Adam and Eve characters, forecast the demise of their village as a result of incest. Incest occurs many times throughout the Buendia family tree, most poignantly at the end of the novel where one of the last Aurelianos born to the Buendia family (fathered by a union of Aureliano and his Aunt Ursula) emerges from the womb with a rat's tail, a prophecy that the elder Ursula fearfully claims will mark the damnation of the family line.

There is nothing magical about the projection of possible worlds, and the magic realist mode is often discounted prematurely as an infantile or overly simplistic manner of storytelling. But the uncanny, the fantastic, and the magical can contain multiple ways of being in a single figurative space. Jose Arcadio does not sit outside of his family home chained to the tree as a ghost simply because that fantastic element adds local flavor to the text. His immortal presence is a way of allowing the unresolved elements of the past to linger in the present, to allow the characters within the narrative to interact with their

past in a material way. In this sense, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* allows Sethe's ghostly child to represent 400 years of slavery, and with it the complex emotions which are brought to bear upon the daily lives of those who reckon with the monolith of being a part of that struggle – both as a historical struggle, and as a daily confrontation. Similarly, Jose Arcadio can become the immortal reminder of the first encounter with the outside world. His murmuring becomes audible in the present, in a way that lets it step out of its concealment by time and death. In this way, the time of the world can operate in a localized space, in the time of the provincial or the isolated. All the parts of the global that are hidden, unconscious, concealed, or blocked by the forces of our own consciousness and the assaulting images of our "social realities," can be fine-tuned in a literary space to accommodate both, to play with them, and to determine how they interact with one another in a way that is comprehensible and intelligible. Extracting the global out of the familiar spaces of Macondo requires the sophisticated machinery of the magic realist mode to create the conditions that distinguish our global orientations from our local ones, and to see how they interact socially and politically. Macondo and the characters who live there, make the global legible by allowing a space to emerge from its edenic, pangeaic state into a place that encounters the world despite its desire to keep itself isolated. The epic scale of the text is only made possible by the compression of images and signs into fantastic objects, which is able to convey the encounter of multiple histories and multiple origins in a single space.

The Inn At World's End

Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman* effectively uses the cosmopolitan space of the public house as both an enactment of and an escape from the complexities of global social

interaction. *The Sandman*, a 75 issue series published by DC Comics during the 1990s, had critical and popular success rivaled only by *Watchmen* in the graphic novel medium. The series follows the affairs of a group of immortals known as the endless, who oversee the affairs of the cosmos and maintain the internal balance with each living creature. These "endless" are cast as a dysfunctional family whose temperaments reflect their function and immortal duty. The androgynous Desire, for example, is a twin to the gluttonous Despair, both of whom resent Dream for their lot in life and constantly plot his demise. Death, the eldest, and Destiny, the third eldest remove themselves from the petty bickering of their younger brethren, observing and recording their activities.

We are primarily drawn into the affairs of the second eldest family member, Dream, whose capture during World War II and subsequent fall from grace leads him to a tragic but unavoidable encounter with his elder sister, Death. During the series, humanity has lost their ability to dream as a result of Dream's captivity, and as his tragic tale unfolds, humanity is forced to deal with a "reality storm" that irrevocably alters their worldview (6). In order to take refuge from this massive reality storm, humanity is forced into a public non-space, a reality that exists outside of reality known as The Inn At World's End. Constituting the final story arc of the Sandman series, World's End becomes a story about storytelling. In order to pass the time and survive the reality storm created by Dream's demise, the occupants of the Inn must tell stories to comfort one another.

The metaphor of the Inn itself is a powerful example of an isolated geography. It takes the narrative structure of the public house, a place of complex social interaction where people of different backgrounds meet, drink, and tell stories, in the tradition of

Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, and places it in a realm outside of reality itself. The "free house," a metaphor for a pub that is not affiliated with a brewery of any kind, translates neatly into a house free from territorial or political affiliations. Throughout the house, people of "many nations, from many worlds" may enter and tell their stories, but can make no claim to anyone or anything within the house. It is a sacred social space, removed from the political ideologies, from the social realities they impart, in an attempt to re-imagine a global socio-literary space. As the storytellers from each world pass on their wisdom of the world that once was, the storm begins to break, and the funeral procession of the gods becomes visible from out the main window of the inn. In a striking and poetic manifestation of the relationship between worlds and the imaginary one of the stranded characters, a young man from Chicago, Brandt observes:

> So, like everyone else, I was staring out of one of the windows of the Inn at the End of the Words. Worlds. I meant worlds. …There's a feeling I first got in Australia, when I was a student, back-packing my way around the world, and I've had it in the Midwest a few times, driving through the flat cornfields that go on forever. And in the mountains… It's an optical illusion I expect… The Big sky. That's how I think of it. There are just some places where the sky seems so much bigger. That was how I felt, looking out of the window. And I felt so tiny, like a speck of dust, or a dream (4.16)

The transition from storytelling to a perceived social reality takes place for each occupant at this moment. And in a sense, the entire story arc leads up to a moment where the parochial worldviews of those who enter the Inn are forced to expand through the act of re-imagining their world. Dream is triumphantly resurrected in the following chapter, a

powerful rendering of a re-imagined social space. Aside from *The Sandman's* striking philosophical and literary conjectures, its utilization of the free-house places an emphasis on hospitality workers as mediators for the exchange of ideas and thoughts across various ideologies. The Innkeeper herself is seen as a deity whose sacred duty is the protection of storytellers as they navigate reality storms and seek refuge from the great disjuncture they cause.

Tlon Uqbar, Orbis Tertius

In Jorge Luis Borges' short story, "Tlon Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" the transformation of the world takes place in the most isolated geography of all. Nowhere. Actually, the transformation manifests in an obscure book, known as the *First Encyclopedia of Tlon*. The story revolves around a detective/scholar, narrated by Borges himself, who has uncovered a conspiracy by a secret group of intellectuals (Orbis Tertius) to recreate the world through the introduction of an entirely fictional world, Tlon. Borges' research takes him to visit Uqbar, a country thought to have existed in the Fertile Crescent before civilization as we know it developed. Here, Borges discovers the first evidence of Tlon, and as he visits different places marked by his study of the obscure text, he begins to realize that the world is becoming Tlon. The figure of the eternal, obscure archive is a constant theme in Borges' writing, including the "Garden of Forking Paths" and the "Library of Babel," but this story takes as its primary thrust the idea of the imaginary space of a book having the ability to transform reality itself. His emphasis on intellectuals as a significant element of the world making polity marks another consistent systemic property of his work. Ultimately, Borges chooses to escape this world, receding to the isolation of the countryside to remake his world, making the figure of the obscure

text the most literal representation of a site that can remake the world, with powerful capacities that Borges takes very seriously. More than any other text I have encountered, this story most incarnates the idea that text itself operates as a figure of world polity, and those who read, write, and interpret those texts are partially responsible for the determination of social realities. Recalling Borges' reflections on Pascal's sphere, he noted that there are only a few metaphors that encapsulate the universal. Borges was obsessed with the problem of the metaphor for the universal, and he used the labyrinth, the sphere, and the tower of Babel (to name a few) to draw attention to the idea that the world is very small despite the scale we often ascribe to it. The world is made legible because the metaphors, or in my terminology, the figures employed make it possible to escape an internationally dominated world system and help us to understand how non-national actors, how outsiders, or Gray Area Phenomenon (to use terms that have been ascribed to these groups) appear on the surface of the world map. I have demonstrated that certain figures appear with great consistency to get us to think outside of this problem, and most often they contain fantastic elements, because they compress the complex social interactions that take place by virtue of global interconnectedness (the making smaller of the world that Scholte refers to as transplanetarity). In this sense, global culture is the expression of hyper-compressed histories that appear as the mystical archive, or the pangeaic figure. They appear as Atlantean, extraterrestrial, or the phantasmic. But regardless how these images and figures appear, they seem to perform the same type of work, they redraw the world map, and they present actors and institutions that would otherwise be seen within an international paradigm as distinctly global actors. They highlight global processes and call for units of measurement that are

distinctly planetary. In this, they make the global legible, they tell the story of the world as its own distinct place, with a common heritage, and a fully crystallized, dynamic culture. We are now able to make a connection between the literary and the socially legible, because the metaphors, the images, and the figures used to redraw the social imaginary make us aware on many levels the presence of a global social reality. Now we can apply this to a fully contained text to fully explore how that legibility manifests.

Chapter IV: The Precise Global Machinery of *Watchmen*

While global literary figures help us understand how we imagine the social realities of global culture, an essential piece of the puzzle is still missing. We still need to understand how those figures operate within a contained narrative. By examining literary figures within a confined textual space, we can begin to understand how global social realities participate in a complex and dynamic array of socio-cultural expressions. To utilize Frederick Jameson's theory of post-national aesthetics, a novel or any self-contained narrative serves as a laboratory for a set of problems within a political economy (Jameson, GA, 18). To closely analyze a text is to work with a snapshot of a given political economy. Moreover, the text itself is a political economy that makes it more practical to obtain the analysis of complicated cultural and political transactions. A good text will help us work with dynamic confrontations that take place between nation and globe, for example, and how those affiliations are made distinct, how they blur in and out of each other, and what happens when ideas have to compete for the words and images produced by a limited space. This chapter will demonstrate how one particular text exposes the problem of legibility in a contained space. The text I have selected for this line of inspection is Alan Moore and Dave Gibbon's graphic novel, *Watchmen*.

As we discussed in the previous chapter, certain literary figures help us make the world real or believable. They are able to contain the qualities necessary to make conscious a global social reality and how that reality is distinct and tangible. I refer to this process as legibility, because as I have stated previously, global figures do more than simply make us feel that a world is real or imaginable. They point to a very precise set of people, places, or things whose expressive power emerges from the social realities

rendered by belonging to a global community. They draw out the systemic properties of social groups within a world system and how they participate in making the world meaningful in our daily lives. Moreover, these figures make evident a distinct global heritage, meaning they appear as artifacts that schematize the way the world develops, thus conveying something that is dynamic about the way that global culture develops and has developed.

Indulge me for a moment in a metaphor that introduces the text and also explains how the limited space of a text is an important site of legibility: a grand complication watch. For those uninitiated in the world of horology, such watches represent the pinnacle of watch making, because they require far more artistic and technical knowledge to produce than a simple timepiece. A regular watch will display the hour and minute, and sometimes will display a second hand. A more complicated watch will serve as a stopwatch, or chronograph, allowing one to measure time in two distinct and separate parts of the mechanism. But the grand complication will incorporate many different ways of measuring time in one unified mechanism. It is not rare to find a perpetual calendar, lunar calendar, altimeter, barometer, Greenwich Mean Time function, and even an astrolabe as a component in a grand complication watch. Thus, a multi-dimensional watch suggests the many different ways we measure time and place in relation to our daily lives. We are consistently called upon to measure the world in multiple ways. Each measure makes the world legible to us differently – not merely in terms of hours, minutes, or seconds, but in other tangible manifestations of our daily lives. And yet each cog, wheel, or gear that is added to a watch must find a way to operate within a limited space.

Consider that each way of measuring time requires its own little machine to produce its work. How then do these machines work in unison, and how is it possible to construct a larger mechanism that allows each smaller machine to draw from the energy of the timepiece? Such a problem is a systemic one, and is very similar to the problem we face when we analyze complex political systems with different social groups each participating with their own set of social realities. Like the grand complication watch, the world system is made up of tiny machines that somehow work together within the confines of a distinct set of social and cultural interactions. Similarly, a text has many ways of expressing complex ideas through metaphor and narration, and more specific to our inquiry through landscapes, figures, and aesthetic objects. Each idea or set of ideas is like a little machine that is drawing upon the energy of the text itself, and must somehow connect to other ideas in order to appear as a legible feature of the text. Just as a watch has systems of transfer gears and cogs translating mechanical power into a legible measure of time on the dial of the watch, so too does a text have interactions that make certain ideas appear on its surface. I have argued that literary figures, including characters and landscapes serve as the parts of the machine that direct our attention to and make it possible for a global social reality to appear on the surface of the text. By analyzing how these figures operate within a text, we can gain a better understanding of how global social realities interact with other cultural machinery, including the machines of nation and the machines of the local. Roland Robertson would refer to these as the tensile relationships and comparative social interactions that make up a social being's multi-dimensional image of the world (27). Like a social being, and like a watch, these

multi-dimensional features produce legible features of our social realities -- they both draw from the contained space of the text and help to define it at the same time.

No sense of irony is lost on the fact that one of the main characters of *Watchmen* is in fact a former watchmaker. Dr. Manhattan's transition from a watchmakers' apprentice into a superhuman being with atomic powers marks the transition from a time of simpler mechanical reproduction to the era of nuclear proliferation, a problem that the text uses to explain the kind of national animosity heralded by the Cold War. The story behind W*atchmen* utilizes many of the literary figures discussed in the previous chapter, including the planetary landscape of Antarctica and the use of aliens and sea life. This chapter will examine the sophisticated global machinery within *Watchmen*, and explain how that machinery makes this text register not only as a story about global culture, but also creates a schematic for the multiple and interrelated ways that globality confronts nationality within the world system.

Watchmen is a story that deals directly with the frustrations that emerged as a result of Cold War international politics, and the fear that nuclear holocaust was an imminent outcome of the animosities that existed between powerful nations during that early part of the 1980s. Written during a particularly tense period of the Cold War, *Watchmen* is a story about a group of "masked adventurers" (although never formally known as the Watchmen as the title suggests, I will hereafter refer to the group as "Watchmen") forced into exile by the nation they once served. After the mysterious death of the Comedian, a hardened cold war spy and former member of the Watchmen, his former teammates suspect that an unknown villain is conspiring to destroy all masked adventurers. The unstable and anti-social Rorschach solicits the aid of his former

teammates, the Night Owl, Silk Spectre, Ozymandias, and Dr. Manhattan, in a quest to discover the Comedian's killer. Throughout the story, the threat of nuclear war between the United States and Russia appears imminent, and everywhere there is anxiety about the possibility of nuclear holocaust. The only thing stabilizing the threat of nuclear war is the presence of Dr. Manhattan, a former scientist who suffered a freak accident in a nuclear test chamber and now wields the unlimited ability to manipulate all matter. Eventually, Dr. Manhattan is framed as part of conspiracy to characterize him as a carcinogenic threat, and he leaves the planet Earth for fear of taking innocent lives. Eventually, Rorschach and the remaining Watchmen discover that it is Ozymandias who has killed the Comedian and has framed Dr. Manhattan. Ozymandias' ultimate goal is to destroy Manhattan with a giant squid in order to pose the threat of an alien invasion. He does this in the hopes that it will force nations to give up their power, thus heralding in an era of global peace.

Few stories pose more starkly as their primary purpose the story of a global utopia that emerges from the ashes of international discord. *Watchmen* is a story about the crystallization of a global consciousness. This consciousness includes the re-imagining of cosmopolitan urban spaces, the production of a global ideological heritage, and the projection of a utopian fantasy that a planetary-oriented sense of belonging provided the only recourse to nuclear war. The story expresses the emergence of people whose powers and abilities threatened a perceived sense of national security. Although rarely referred to as "superheroes" in the story arc, Watchmen is a story about beings with exceptional powers. Through their encounters with their own government and through their frustrations in dealing with nations competing for military superiority, these

characters provide a unique insight into the problems we face when given a clear choice between serving national interests or the horizontal kinships provided for by a global community.

Widely considered one of the most important critical successes of the graphic novel genre, *Watchmen* also holds the distinction of being the most financially successful graphic novel of all time as well as the first graphic novel in wide distribution geared toward older audiences who could understand the political nuances of the text and who were also allowed to read a comic book with such graphic violence.[33] Initially published as twelve issues during 1986 and 1987 by DC Comics, each issue began with the image of a doomsday clock ticking closer to midnight, representing an imminent nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union. Set in an alternate history where superheroes emerged at the beginning of World War II, Richard Nixon has managed to extend his presidency in perpetuity after winning the Vietnam War through his exploitation of the atomically transfigured, nearly omnipotent Dr. Manhattan.

The title of the graphic novel, "Watchmen," and the most famous image evoked from the graphic novel, graffiti-splashed walls laden with the phrase "Who watches the watchmen?" comes from Plato's famous discussion with his student Glaucon, where Glaucon asks Plato how the guardians of the city will themselves be governed (Reeves, 98). It is no coincidence that Moore chooses to end the novel with the Latinized version of this quote (*Quis custodiet ipsos custodies*?) which appeared as an epithet to the Tower

[33] According to the NY Times 100 greatest English novels of all time, of which *Watchmen* has been on the list since its publication and has sold over 2 million copies in standard form. No final sales information is available at this time regarding the impact of the successful movie adaptation on sales of the novel in standard format.

Commission Report that evaluated the Reagan Administration's involvement in the Iran Contra Affair. Published during a time of that citizens in this country felt betrayed by their own government, the text expresses a particularly strong anti-national sentiment. At each level, this is a story about a group of people (masked adventurers) who had grown too powerful for a nation to contain, particularly at a time when global nuclear catastrophe seemed imminent.

The narrative revolves around the murder of the Comedian, one of the few masked adventurers permitted to operate in the service of the United States. Through his clandestine military activity, the Comedian conducts the dirty work for his nation, wearing the iconic smiley face that pervades the entire graphic novel to represent the "cruel joke" he knows about America and its involvement in global affairs, a joke that he never explicitly reveals to anyone (2.13.4)[34]. He along with the superhuman Dr. Manhattan are the only two members exempt from the Keene Act, a congressional mandate which effectively outlaws masked adventuring for fear that these agents had become too powerful for any nation to control (Moore, 1.4.5). The mystery surrounding the Comedian's death motivates members of the modern minutemen (known informally to the reader as the Watchmen, although never explicitly stated in the text) to reunite. Rorschach, the self-proclaimed vigilante of the group believes that someone is killing off costumed heroes as a part of a larger, more heinous conspiracy (1.12.4). This conspiracy theory leads Rorschach and his former companions, the Night Owl and Silk Spectre to the steps of their former partner and primary antagonist, Adrien Veidt, a.k.a.,

[34] A brief note on references in the Watchmen -- references follow a three section format (X.Y.Z) in which X refers to the chapter, Y refers to the page number of that chapter, and Z refers to the panel or panels on that page from left to right and then top to bottom.

Ozymandias. Through this plot device we learn that Ozymandias is responsible for the Comedian's death as well as a plot to discredit Dr. Manhattan as a public danger. These are all elements of Adrien's larger purpose, which is to destroy all the nations of the earth in order to create a new, harmonious utopia made in his image (11.26.4). At each turn, the story places the fantasy of a global community at odds with an internationally-oriented world system. The use of the graphic novel, in particular the nine panel format that Alan Moore and artist Dave Gibbons use to frame their narrative, provides the space to reinforce images of a global society emerging in relation to a national civil structure that is portrayed as hypocritical, violent, and dangerously nostalgic.

Watchmen remains an elegant representation of the evolution of storytelling media. It effectively utilized a medium perceived as a genre for young readers and demonstrated that the comics medium could directly confront complex geo-political issues for older audiences. Furthermore, it utilized the visual elements of serial comic books in a manner both unobtrusive to and complimentary to the narrative elements of a conventional novel. Like other luminaries of this genre, including Spiegelman's *Maus* and Gaiman's *The Sandman*, this kind of intertextuality allowed for a visual element that could tell its own stories through the images in each panel. Thus, the aesthetic elements produced by the text had multiple layers of expressive nuance, making the machinery of global legibility a very sophisticated feature of the text.

Take for example the use of the "Gunga Diner" in the narrative. The Gunga Diner is introduced to us at the same time that the Keene Act is introduced (1.4.5). It is never mentioned explicitly in the narrative. However, it appears thirty-seven times throughout the twelve chapters of *Watchmen*. This element of the story is an obvious

reference to Rudyard Kipling's poem "Gunga Din," a poem which famously evokes elements of eurocentrism, racism, and colonialism. Gunga Din helps us understand the 19th century as an era of colonial conquest, but more specifically, it marked the synthesis of new cultural paradigms made possible by sea travel, a site where global civil society crystallized. The image of the Gunga Diner restaurant, billboards, advertisements, and discarded food containers bearing the restaurant's name are scattered throughout the story. They often appear in conjunction with other objects that repeatedly mark the landscape of the city, for example the run-down mechanic's shop that specializes in "obsolete models" (1.9.8). One could easily dismiss these images as trivial were it not for the number of times that they reappear in the text and the timing with which they appear. During Dr. Manhattan's recollection of his time on earth, narrated from the planet Mars after his exile, he recalls walking through the streets of New York with his girlfriend and former adventurer, Laurie Juspeczyk:

> In New York, we go walking. The streets smell of ozone rather than gasoline. Flat and intangible blots of gray slide across the summer sidewalks, the shadows of overhead airships. In 1959, a child is weeping for its lost balloons. Any moment now, Janey's watchband will break somewhere, the fat man is already lumbering toward the shooting gallery, steps heavy with unwitting destiny. It's August 1985. I'm walking through Grand Central Station with Laurie, we stop at the newsstand and buy a copy of time magazine, commemorating Hiroshima Week. On the cover there is a damaged pocket-watch, stopped at the instant of the blast, face cracked… hands frozen. (6.24.4-8)

The Gunga Diner appears as a subtle reminder of the increasingly global cultural landscape of Manhattan. Food is one of the more poignant ways that people are introduced to different cultures, and the Gunga Diner represents a shift in daily consumption that is not easily located nationally. The iconic little elephant of the Gunga Diner, much like other repeating images in the story, represent the multiple levels used by the text to express the particulars of a global landscape. These images insist upon the idea that the landscape and its people experience a tension between a world dominated by a national world system and a cultural space marked in relation to a global social reality. Their recurrence and their deliberate placement at key moments in the narrative suggests that the text contains a certain kind of intelligence about global legibility and the medium it is using to express that legibility.

In order to make this more apparent, let us take one page that represents the kind of multiple layering that central to this inquiry. I have selected a page that is not necessarily vital to the plot, but represents the more casual usage of the global aesthetics in *Watchmen*. Take the first three pages of Chapter 3, which begins with a glaring image of a nuclear fallout shelter. Instead of explaining what's going on in each panel, I'll first construct a schematic of these panels so you can see the multiple levels of narrative expression that are taking place.

3.1.1 – Text box: "Delirious, I saw that hell-bound ships black sails against the yellow Indies sky, and knew again the stench of powder, and men's brains, and war."

Image: A close-up shot of a nuclear fallout shelter sign, so close the lettering on the sign is not yet visible, only the colors.

Dialogue: “We oughtta nuke Russia, and let God sort it out.”

3.1.2 – Text box: ‘The heads nailed into its prow looked down, those with eyes; gull-eaten salt-caked; liplessly mouthing, “No use! All’s lost!” ‘

Image: The image of the fallout shelter sign pans out to reveal a pair of hands and a screwdriver. The hands are fastening the sign onto a wall.

Dialogue: “I mean, I see the signs, read the headlines, look things inna face, y’know?”

3.1.3 – Text box: “The waves about me were scarlet, foaming, horribly warm, yet still the freighter’s hideous crew called out, “More blood! More blood!”

Image: The image pans out further to show a man in a white uniform bearing a big red apple and a “NY” logo on his back. He is the man attaching the fallout shelter sign to the wall furthest from our perspective. Now we see another wall to the left. On it is a magazine displayed on what appears to be a clipboard with the image of a white-haired man. The text below his image reads: “Missing writer: Castro to blame?”

Dialogue: “I’m a newsvendor goddamit! I’m informed on the situation! We oughtta nuke ‘em till they glow!”

3.1.4 – Text Box: “Its tar-streaked hull rolled over me. In despair I sank beneath those foul pink billows, offering up my wretched soul to Almighty God, His mercy and His judgment.”

Image: The image pans out further to reveal a portion of the city landscape. The signpost man is returning his tools to his toolbox in his pickup truck filled with nuclear fallout shelter signs, containing the same red apple logo as his jacket. A black strip of

asphalt separates the signpost man from the newsvendor and a young man reading a comic book. The newsvendor is seated right of center next to his newsstand where the magazine clipboard sits among many other magazines on display. The vendor is facing away from the boy who is sitting left of center against a fire hydrant. A leaflet for the Gunga Diner is strewn on the floor at the feet of the newsvendor.

At first, it becomes uncertain whether the text box is referring to the sign itself, since the narration is referring to war and the colors yellow and black and refers to things that are happening in relation to the images on the panel. However, we learn as the panels pan out that the text box is coming from the comic book that the young man is reading. The comic, *Tales from the Black Freighter*, is the story within the story in *Watchmen*, a harrowing tale of a man stranded on a desert island who does terrible things to return home on a ship that contains the souls of the damned. As we shall see a bit later, this story utilizes many of the vital literary elements discussed in the last chapter to great effect at crucial points in the narrative. Here, the text is already used to great effect to parallel the paranoia of nuclear war. Furthermore, the image of the white haired man on the magazine cover, the "missing writer," is the author of the comic book being read by the young man. We later learn that this writer has been sequestered by the main villain to imagine a hideous sea-creature that would become the doomsday device used at the end of the story to scare all nations to give up their authority to a new world order.

It is unclear to the reader whom the newsvendor's dialogue is directed towards. By the end of the panel sequence, one could either assume that he is talking to someone not visible on the panel or to the young boy in a casual but familiar way that doesn't require they face each other. In fact, the image deliberately makes these characters face

away from each other to obscure the intended audience, which suggests that the reader itself is the intended audience. The newsvendor's dialogue appears throughout the story as a cynical expression of national politics. His "nuke 'em all" attitude reflects the messages he receives in the form of the newspapers he sells every day. Most every newspaper in the Watchmen contains at least one headline that describes a nation in a state of crisis or on the brink of engaging in war (3.25.8; 5.12.9). The newsvendor becomes a supporting character of great importance to the narrative, as his friendship with the young man reading the comic books reveals the vulnerability that lies beneath their cynical behavior, and the great faith that people have in heroes to save them from the fearful international politics expressed in the media. In effect, these characters become subtle gestures in the text of a different social reality. The young man is consuming a story that I have already argued is part of a global literary heritage. The newsvendor is the access point for media that is obsessed with national and international issues.

It could be argued that the two are constantly represented as facing away from each other, or having nothing to say directly to one another because they are participating in two very distinct social realities. The story that the young man is reading, *Tales from the Black Freighter*, is part of the tradition of seafaring stories and isolated geographies that we discussed in Chapter 3. Thus, he represents the kind of person who is socially aware of global culture. But the newsvendor's values are heavily biased by the same sensationalism that scandalizes nations and forces his readers into a sense of insecurity. It is possible that the media biased present in the newspaper headlines throughout the text influence the newsvendor to react with a sense of fear and paranoia, the sort of thing that

would authorize nations to retain their prominence. Consequently, the two media, the *Black Freighter* comic book and the newspaper have divergent effect on their readership, producing a sense of social disjuncture along global and national lines.

To add further nuance, the newsstand is situated next door to a cryptic building called "The Institute for Extraspatial Studies" (3.3.3-6). The graphic novel takes great effort to ensure that the images of the global are not only visible in the text, they are somehow tied into the plot in one way or another and try to convey a series of complex messages about the way that global social realities intervene in local life. It is the complexity made possible by the full exploitation of the graphic novel medium that helps make the machinery of global legibility so sophisticated. Thus, Watchmen is more kindred to texts such as *One Hundred Years of Solitude* or *Midnight's Children* which compress figures and aesthetic features with such frequency that they present an almost divine or ecstatic quality to their composition. Like great books of the magic realist genre, the aesthetics of the global are myriad, and they are present in so many different forms. By looking at a minor and casual example in the text, we can see that there is a systemic cohesiveness to the use of aesthetics within the narrative, each of which contributes to the greater sense of intelligibility in the text. When reading *Watchmen*, the presence of a global social reality appears real and believable. The narrative and its constitutive elements (i.e. the stories told by the situation of objects in the text in particular ways, or the headlines and messages printed on newspapers and walls) appear with a general cohesiveness that strikes awe in the reader. This cohesiveness gives the story a sense of authority derived by the way the text appears to tie everything together so well. In short, we are able to trust the text with the way that it measures the social reality

in question because it appears to have it worked out at a level that exceeds common sense and engages our understanding of reality on multiple levels at once. It's all well and good that a story can make me think about the world on a planetary scale. But if it does so while also showing the points where global consciousness engages the particulars of local life, and if it imagines our daily transactions as having resolved or negotiated some disjuncture between living as a national creature or a global creature, then it demonstrates how sophisticated its literary machinery is in relation to the form of social legibility in question.

One mechanism that demonstrates the complex and fruitful aspect in the narrative is the degree to which each character defines the limits of national ideologies. The son of a watchmaker, atomic physicist Dr. Jonathan Osterman[35] becomes the near omnipotent Dr. Manhattan after a freak atomic test goes awry scattering his atoms. Narrating his own encounter of his accident (which takes place in 1959 on the site of a classified nuclear power research facility), Osterman suggests that he was able to will himself back together because of his training as a watchmaker. First a nervous system appears; then a circulatory system, and a muscular and skeletal system. He recalls, "really, it's just a question of reassembling the components in the correct sequence (4.9.7). Upon his re-constitution as a humanoid being, it becomes clear that Osterman has the ability to manipulate all matter, and the ability to shift in and out of space and time, rendering him immortal and nearly omnipotent. Of all the masked adventurers in the graphic novel, Dr. Manhattan is the only character with superhuman abilities.

[35] Not coincidentally "Easter Man" in German. The role of Dr. Manhattan as a messianic figure is noteworthy.

Aesthetically, Dr. Manhattan becomes a character outside of his own body. Although he has a basic humanoid shape, he does so only out of social necessity. This suggests that he chooses to retain his irradiated blue hue because it makes him more comfortable to exist in that state. Being the only blue person on the planet, he becomes a human outside of a traditional identity politics. Instead of a uniform, Dr. Manhattan chooses to walk around without clothing, and only wears clothing when engaged in formal social events. This makes him a sexually threatening creature and throughout the text, his physical attributes are commented on humorously as making others, including his friends, feel inadequate (7.19.7-8). This parallels the powerlessness felt by all who encounter Dr. Manhattan. Because he can manipulate matter, he serves as a figure that deterritorializes any sort of body whether it is the political body of a human subject or an entire landscape. Instead of wearing a hero's costume, he chooses to etch the symbol for the hydrogen atom, the most abundant element in the universe, onto his forehead (4.12.5). It does not go unnoticed that the symbol of the hydrogen atom resembles the symbol of the monad, the Greek representation of the god-like figure, the "all in one." Like the sphere, the monad represents the perfect circle, the unity of all things in harmony, a concept that Borges writes is the pre-eminent metaphor of the global (Borges, CNF, 352). Although his name is chosen by the U.S. government "for the ominous associations it will raise in America's enemies," he prefers to refer to himself as John, a common name and one that escapes the "gaudy and lethal" character of his government sanctioned persona (4.12.8-9). Aesthetically, Dr. Manhattan is portrayed as the Nietzschean superman, the immanent figure whose association with man depends less on his physical features but more on his manifestation as a creature of supreme will. As a literary figure,

he creates landscapes that exist outside of heavily charged political spaces, and allows the reader to think outside of the social realities determined by nations. His body is like a *tabula rasa*, one that creates a vertical kinship (one between an individual and a new political structure) and a horizontal one (between one human body and another). Thus, Dr. Manhattan serves an aesthetic purpose in the text. He makes it possible for us to think of a universal human being while at the same time seeing through his eyes the difficulty in living as a subject to national interests and also as a subject in relation to others in his private relationships.

His power makes him a vital element of the storyline, and he serves as a global figure primarily because his powers make him impossible to contain. In addition to being a scientist working in the service of the U.S. government, and a member of the group of masked adventurers that frames the story, Dr. Manhattan worked in the service of the U.S. government to end the Vietnam War decisively (4.20.1). This victory ensures that Nixon would win the presidency in perpetuity. Furthermore, it makes Dr. Manhattan the ultimate nuclear deterrent and the focus of much international controversy. Notice that throughout the text, the newspapers are either discussing the threat of nuclear war, the participation of one nation or another in world affairs, or the potential threat that Dr. Manhattan represents to all people (1.18.4). In the fictional appendix to Chapter 4, Professor Milton Glass, Osterman's former co-worker writes that the United States achieved military superiority by accident. He notes, "[w]e have discovered Superman, and he is American" (4.31).

Much of the delicate balance of world order that exists in the text depends primarily on the fact that Dr. Manhattan still feels some nostalgia or loyalty to being a

U.S. citizen. As the narrative continues, he becomes increasingly removed from the sentimentality of his daily circumstances, unable to sustain intimate relations with his girlfriend and former adventurer, Laurie, and increasingly disinterested in the significance of events as they take place (since he can see events unfold before they happen). By the time he is untruthfully exposed as a cancer causing agent and a threat not only to nations but to those he loves, he teleports himself off the planet entirely. At this point, Dr. Manhattan has nearly divorced himself from his life as John Osterman and has literally recreated an entire time and space wherein he exists solely as the immanent figure of Dr. Manhattan. While on the surface of the planet Mars, he contemplates his old life in an attempt to understand the significance of his exile:

> Gone to Mars. Gone to a place without clocks, without seasons, without hourglasses to trap the shifting pink sand. Below me, in the sand, the secret shape of my creation is concealed, buried in the sand's future. I rise into the thin air. I am ready to begin. A world grows up around me. Am I shaping it, or do its predetermined contours guide my hand? 1945, the bombs are falling on Japan, the cogs are falling on Brooklyn, seeds of the future sown carelessly… Without me, things would have been different… if the Fat Man hadn't crushed the watch, if I hadn't left it in the test chamber… am I to blame, then? Or the Fat Man? Or my father , for choosing my career? Which of us is responsible? Who makes the world? Perhaps the world is not made. Perhaps nothing is made. Perhaps it simply is, has been, will always be there… A clock without a craftsman…Above the Nodus Gordii Mountains, jewels in a maker-less mechanism, the first meteorites are starting to fall (4.27-28).

The image of the crystal clock emerging from the Martian landscape lies in stark contrast to the simple machines that Dr. Manhattan recalls. The "Fat Man" he refers to is a reference to the Atomic weapon of the same name dropped on Hiroshima. The broken watch is in reference to a time magazine article that depicts the image of an old pocket watch frozen at the time of the blast (4.24.7). For Dr. Manhattan, the era of the atomic weapon ushers in a new frame of time, one constructed by the anxiety of total annihilation. Unlike his ruminations on "simpler times" the "carelessly sown" era indoctrinated by the Atomic bomb becomes a period of perceived impotence, where everything going on in the world appears beyond human control. For Dr. Manhattan, the era of the pocket watch was the era of an easily schematized life. The era of the atomic weapon is beyond the capabilities of human diagnosis. With this new power, nations do not understand their powers, and throughout the narrative, the perceived failure of nations to maintain a sustainable order highlights Dr. Manhattan's primary question: who makes the world? Dr. Manhattan serves as the vessel used to make relevant this question throughout the text. In a sense, Dr. Manhattan represents the part of us that was born into an era of atomic power, a very legible consciousness about the effects of nuclear war, made real through the images of Hiroshima and the way that the paranoia of nuclear war affects the minute details of our daily lives. He also represents the power of the atom itself, and the sense of fear that he evokes in his government and in its citizens becomes a way for us to understand the human legacy of the atom bomb. While it produced the sobering reality of destruction on a planetary scale, it is also used to create a new sense of

belonging, the “jewels of a makerless mechanism” used to create a social reality outside of nations.

No character understands this more than the primary antagonist of the story, Ozymandias. Known throughout the story as the “world’s smartest man,” Ozymandias serves as a megalomaniacal villain similar to something from a James Bond movie. His alter ego, Adrien Veidt, is not unlike Mr. Bond himself. He is the CEO philanthropist, whose former life as an acrobat marks his history as a celebrity invested in the developing world. As an agent of capital, Adrien serves as the quintessential counterpart to national interests. This is represented elegantly in the graphic novel through the use of the media, particularly the aesthetic produced by discarded newspapers. Each time Adrien appears in the text, a newspaper clipping detailing the conflicts of the Cold War, told as a war between nations, lies somewhere in the background as Adrien contemplates issues of planetary importance (1.18.4). While Ozymandias is revealed as the mysterious and faceless destroyer of nations, Adrien the man is the caricature of a hegemon, his smooth movements and sharp acrobatics complicate the boyish innocence hewn on his face by his golden locks. In many respects, Adrien takes the image of the classical Western Hero and inverts those properties as the threshold of tyranny. If Ozymandias is the national villain in the story, it’s only made possible through the rich play Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons make in portraying him as a classical hero.

Later, Rorschach and Night Owl discover that Adrien is the head of Pyramid Deliveries and Dimensional Developments, which, much like the Gunga Diner, appear as a component of the visual narrative written alongside the plot (11.21.3). The former is no small aspect of the aesthetics used to define Adrien’s character. As Ozymandias, the

Greek transliteration of Ramses II, Adrien evokes the Egyptian aesthetic of the great civilization. He names his base of operations Karnak, a reference to the Egyptian ruins whose significance is deeply rooted in the transition from a polytheistic culture to monotheistic culture conceived under the rule of Amenhotep IV, championed by Alexander the Great as an expression of the potential for mankind to realize a unified, civil society. During his "confession" for the Comedian's murder to Rorschach and Night Owl, Ozymandias says:

> The plan Blake (Edward Blake, a.k.a., The Comedian) had uncovered was this: to frighten governments into cooperation, I would convince them that earth faced imminent attack by beings from another world… a solution Alexander understood… two thousand years ago in Gordium. Blake understood the portents, knew a dazzling transformation was at hand for mankind. The brutal world he'd relished would simply cease to be, its fierce and brawling denizens rushing to join the mastodon in obsolescence... in extinction. (11.25.4-7)

Adrien's analysis of his own plot reveals the purpose of his own imagery throughout the text. He is obsessed with cultures that celebrate and represent the unification of mankind. Whether it is Egyptian, Hellenistic, or Alien, he is aware that certain images serve as adequate ideological containers for his global vision. His obsession with ancient civilization advertises a period in human history that predates national governments, which he perceives as the problem that necessitates his intervention. Moore uses the images of an ancient, pangeaic civilization heavily, and much like the example of the Gunga Diner, Pyramid Deliveries and Dimensional Developments are plastered upon walls and billboards throughout the text. Additionally, Adrien makes fun of those who

"rush to join the mastodon in obsolescence." His famous perfume, "Nostalgia by Veidt" is an image used liberally in the text, often used to mark our sense of nationalism not only as obsolete, but as egregiously sentimental, and consequently, savage and violent (9.1). At each turn, the imagery that Adrien produces as a capitalist is juxtaposed with condemnations of a national-oriented world system and valorizations of a unified global society. Like any good member of a transnational capitalist class, Adrien understands the benefit of having limited national spaces, and his many corporate investments may benefit from a removal of national regulatory systems. For this reason, it is important to recognize that Adrien's plot, while surely grounded in some sense of self-righteous behavior is also motivated by the self-interest of corporate greed. Regardless of his motives, it is no small coincidence that Veidt bases his version of Karnak in the snowy isolation of Antarctica, a landscape owned by no nation whose sole purpose is devoted to research, a value Adrien perceives as pure as the snow that envelops his utopian palace (11.1). The use of Antarctica as the site of Ozymandias' plotting connects him to the long tradition that Antarctica bears as a literary figure. Like stories that have preceded the watchmen, the use of Antarctic wasteland connects the reader with a sense of planetary urgency. Whatever is happening in Antarctic somehow has implications throughout the rest of the world. Ozymandias' palace, Karnak, is similar to those mystical representations of the ultimate archive, like the Borgesian labyrinth or Poe's ice Sphinx. It is meant to retain the history of great civilizations while evoking something Pangeaic. Adrien's vision for the world is cultivated by his quest to learn about those people and places that Alexander the Great encountered only to discover that "he'd not united all the world, nor built a unity that would survive him" (11.10.5). His search for a

solution to the failings of his ancient predecessor gradually turns Adrien into a man with no nation until he ultimately finds solace in the places, people, and things capable of reckoning with the entire globe as its aesthetic point of reference. He travels throughout the world "to apply antiquity's teaching to today's world" (11.11.2).

This solution required an aesthetic that could adequately unite all human beings on the planet. Adrien believes that the only way for Alexander's failed project to work is to find a way to build a unity that would survive him. He turns to the idea of an alien invasion. In the tradition of H.G. Wells and the many science fiction writers that followed him, Moore, through Ozymandias conceives of an alien invasion as a way of making conscious the existence of a horizontal kinship among all human beings. As an added nuance, Adrien hires the illustrators of the comic book within the comic book, *Tales of the Black Freighter*, to design the alien's features (8.11). Adrien's use of the creators of that comic book to design the alien recognizes the pirate story as a literary tradition rooted in the same spirit of his own project[36]. What pirates did in the abyss of the ocean in the 19th century, similar to Captain Nemo's disavowal of his nationality, or Ahab's obsession with conquering the sea, parallels what Adrien does in the isolated fields of Antarctica in the late 20th century. The alien, like many representations of alien life, bears the traits and qualities of a massive sea creature, appealing to the cthulhu-like aesthetic present in many representations of the alien in popular science fiction. In the climax of the story, the "alien squid" destroys Manhattan, and the image of the doomsday clock at midnight violently ends the national tensions at work throughout the story.

[36] Not so ironically created on the same desert island that inspired the *Tales from the Black Freighter* series.

The squid itself is a manifestation of Plato's "noble lie," a "sort of Phoenician story" that will convince the most powerful in the city (the greatest of the guardians) to serve the city and nothing else. As Reeve indicates in his translation of the Republic, the Phoenician story Plato refers to is related to the story of Cadmus and his creating the earth with dragon's teeth, which produced the giants who cultivated the earth into what we now mark as civilization. In essence, the Phoenician story is the grand narrative -- cosmic in scope -- that would propel its listener to think beyond itself with awe and wonder (Reeves, 99). As Ozymandias explains, the squid is intended to unite the world and "all who keep its wonders." In effect, Ozymandias is motivated by the same thing that concerned Plato and Glaucon in their discourse on the guardian. In order to unify mankind a story about an alien threat would produce an ideological reference capable of dismantling national interests in favor of the more pressing urgencies of a global threat. We learn two things from Plato's explanation about the guardians. First, and most practical, is that stories emerge as the determinant factor in the ideology of guardianship. In order for civil structures to run properly, a high-order narrative must instill in its constituents a sense of belonging, one that supersedes personal interest, and encourages guardians to remain loyal to a higher ideal. *The Republic* is consumed by this idea, and as Bernadette argues, "the beautiful, the good, and the just must be conferred on citizens with a grand narrative, where potential rulers have to love the city in order to care for it" (76). Second, these narratives are not merely the noble lie. They serve as the measuring stick for what exactly is being guarded. Ozymandias is not concerned with guarding our nations' capitals. He genuinely believes that national capitals no longer encourage the guardians to love them. He believes a new capital exists, one he has forged in accord

with a heritage much older than the nation-state. If national capitals help mark the heritage of its nation, Ozymandias' Karnak, built on the wastelands of Antarctica marks the heritage of its global counterpart. What it contains becomes a veritable museum of moments in human history where world conquest was an explicit feature of daily life. Equally important is the new narrative he uses to correct the errors of his ambitious predecessors. The squid, the ultimate sea-life creature, primordial in nature, serves as threshold for a new grand narrative. The sea-life creature humbles the guardians of nations because one cannot imagine a creature of the sea being owned by any nation. The myth of the sea creature is something recognizable to people everywhere on earth. It is part of a global heritage, and as such, it evokes the kind of kinship necessary to unite the planet. Again, our fear of the depths of our own oceans taps into a long lasting literary tradition, and like Antarctica, it generates a sense of planetary belonging. Moreover, as an alien threat, the squid taps into a classic tale of planetary solidarity by way of a supreme alien threat, one told by H.G. Wells at the end of the 19th century, and made popular by science fiction writers of the 1940s and 1950s, particularly Harry Bates whose story, "Farewell to the Master" became the inspiration for the classic film *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. It is no coincidence that the climactic scene where the squid destroys Manhattan includes an image of a theater where *The Day the Earth Stood Still* was featured (12.3.1). The *Watchmen* understands its heritage quite well. Both the characters in the story are invested in a history specific to the planet, as is the visual medium used to supplement the primary text.

One might ask: is Adrien successful in his move to create a global utopia? He successfully deploys his squid creature, destroying most of New York City, and he

appears successful in drawing authority away from nations. The carnage that begins the final chapter of the novel ends with imagery of a city that proposes "one world, one accord" plastered across the streets, where nostalgia is replaced by a sense of optimism and possibility. The old, run-down businesses that littered the streets of Manhattan have new signs that say in bright lettering "under new management" (12.31). The moral ambiguity present in the text comes to a second climax, where the omnipotent Dr. Manhattan is convinced by Adrien's argument to keep the details of his plot a secret. As his friends look on, Rorschach, the only representation of the Kantian moral imperative in the text, is eviscerated, and his death makes us believe that perhaps the sacrifice was too great. If Ozymandias is marked as a villain, and a terrible one for destroying so many lives, the narrative leaves us with a pyrrhic sympathy for both the nations that suffered and the global utopia conceived by the main antagonist. While world unity seems to win the day, the ending suggests that Rorschach's journal (which reveals Adrien's plot) will eventually dismantle the grand narrative that has prompted nations toward peace. Adrien's plot to create unity hinges upon the noble lie that Plato called for in *The Republic*. In order for that lie to be convincing, it had to contain "perfect musicmanship" (Benardete, 76). In other words, it had to draw upon aesthetic traits that were capable of making such a story believable. While we do not know how the story will unfold, we do know that the aesthetics produced by the story are working on the reader as much as they are the characters in the text. While Adrien's Utopia is as fragile as the eponymous theater destroyed by the squid (12.3.1), the images produced by the overarching dystopian narrative are still valuable. As Jameson argues "the value of the failed utopia… [is] to break with the political drives conventionally understood as necessary…

to create value out of its emergent properties (Jameson, Utopia 91). Thus, Ozymandias' fantasy is one way that the text makes the global legible. *Watchmen* takes advantage of the perceived failings of nationalism so a global social reality can rise to the surface of a text. In the end, it's less important that we have a perfect picture of a global society, but instead that a global society is a conceivable alternative to the anxieties wrought by nationalism. In this manner, the political economy of the text rearranges the cultural landscape in such a way that it is possible for the reader to know how we are susceptible to incorporating a sense of planetary belonging into our lives.

The text continually takes advantage of the contradictions inherent in living in a world that is interconnected with each other but that is delineated arbitrarily by national interests. The text makes legible that international politics, whether consciously or unconsciously has produced a form of global social interaction that has taken on a life of its own. Herein lies the problem of the Comedian, who serves as the unlikable, shadowy anti-hero (or sympathetic villain if you prefer) of the narrative. He reminds us of the emergence of a new wave of military operative born out of the policies of the Cold War period. While he is charged with serving the national interest, he looks, acts, and thinks as anything but a national actor. This may be why the Comedian takes on the persona of the person who knows the "great joke of it all." Normally, he mentions this "great joke at moments in the text where people evoke the national interest as a means of securing some form of order, ensuring obedience to the state.

Whether he is sanctioned by the government or not, the Comedian (a.k.a., Edward Blake) is a person in a perpetual state of exile. In every major sequence where a group is involved, he is carefully placed at a distance from others within the group (2.9.5). He is

the quintessential outsider, and his dealings with people are most often ambiguous and double-jointed. People can't help but despise his behavior, but they somehow find him a necessary component of the team dynamic. To have his murder serve as the driving force of the plot indicates that there is some community out there that cares about his death. Despite his unsavory personality, the Comedian belongs to a community of people who exist outside of the law. They are people without a country, and because of this the text allows us to understand how nationalism itself produces a global social reality.

The literary figure of the global enemy often captures the anxiety of a civil society based on nations or kingdoms unable to cope with the presence of non-national characters. These non-national characters often absorb those anxieties, becoming villains persecuted for their lack of allegiance to prevailing social borders. The gypsy, pirate, terrorist, and clandestine soldier often receive similar treatment to varying degrees – they are perceived as threats to national institutions, and as a result are misrepresented as international actors in the global political economy. Yet their distinct participation in a global civil society receives little attention. Analyzing how the global enemy is a global hero and an international villain at once produces a nuance in the study of globalization as it relates to transnational subjectivity.

A now classic feature of armed conflict reveals that the assassin, the clandestine officer, or the soldier lost behind enemy lines must look, act, and appear just as its enemy would in order to survive. These concepts are as old as Sun-Tzu or Marcus Aurelius -- military counterparts forced into battle without their coat of arms have been a common trait of war throughout history. While these actions can be perceived as an undisclosed, even forbidden feature of warfare, the Western tradition of storytelling has emphasized

these features as essential to understanding the tensions between individual and community. For example, Odysseus' Trojan Horse, or Diomedes' nighttime exploits in the Doloneia are attempts to characterize the difficulties produced by the terms of war when conventional warfare proves insufficient (Buchan, 117). The rules of warfare produce what Zizek calls the universal exception, a concept produced by the inherent splitting of the law:

> Where does the splitting of the law into the written public Law and its "unwritten" obscene reverse come from? From the incomplete, "non all," character of the public Law: explicit public rules do not suffice, so they have to be supplemented by the "clandestine" unwritten code aimed at those who, although they do not violate any public rules, maintain a kind of inner distance and are not truly identified with the "community spirit." (63)

As a legal concept, war is determined by the formal engagement of traditional civil structures. However, war is seldom merely between parties whose allegiances are easily identified. The idea of soldiers and leaders meeting on the battlefield with their flags neatly representing the stakeholders of war is little more than a fantasy constructed to make war appear civilized, or more accurately, to make civilization appear rational. But the narrative of war cannot help but reveal these concepts to be far more complicated.

Modern warfare has to contend with this problem as a function of globalization. As enemies have become increasingly post-national or transnational, the idea of war conducted by nations has proven insufficient. Much like Agamemnon had to contend with Achilles and his Myrmidons as a third party with their own agenda and with their

own “community spirit,” strategists of modern warfare have developed the category of “grey area phenomena” (conveniently called GAP by military intelligence analysts) to explain non-national actors in the battlefield. An excellent example of GAP in the cold war was the inclusion of Mujahideen as an integral function of the Afghan-Soviet conflict. As part of the larger “Reagan Doctrine” GAP was considered a necessary aspect of war, and any actors engaged in a battle against Soviet and Communist aggression was seen favorably by the United States in order “to contain and over time reverse Soviet expansionism[37]". In this fashion, the Contras of Nicaragua or the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan were recognized as elements in a war waged on a battlefield that encapsulated the entire world, with a far more complicated cultural landscape than was understood at the time. Military strategists produced during the cold war had to contend with this concept, as clandestine soldiers practiced a complete disavowal of the things that make them appear as national subjects in order to obtain a strategic advantage over their adversaries. In order to do the business of nations, military operatives had to become GAP themselves, and were forced to act as mercenaries, pirates, and profiteers instead of soldiers. Military covenants were seldom made by the state department. Instead, they were made between individuals who perceived one another as members of a different kind of civil society, one made possible by the evolution of communication technology and the emergence of latent capital as its own stakeholder in foreign affairs.

The cold war, more than any war in modern history recognized the world as its own distinct social and political field, whose actors most often played as members of global civil society. As mutually assured destruction loomed as a plausible result of

[37] National Security Council, NSC National Security Decision Directive 75.

armed conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, national agents and military officers had to avoid the sort of military engagement that would force institutions to elevate the status of their formal military responses. Of all the characters in *Watchmen*, the Comedian represents this problem best. Other than the superhuman Dr. Manhattan, the Comedian is the only other masked adventurer allowed to retain his identity. In the words of Dr. Manhattan:

> Blake is interesting. I have never met anyone so deliberately amoral. He suits the climate here (Vietnam): the madness, the pointless butchery... As I come to understand Vietnam and what it implies about the human condition, I also realize that few humans will permit themselves such an understanding. Blake's different. He understands perfectly... and he doesn't care. (4.19.6)

Dr. Manhattan is referring to the same condition that Benedict Anderson refers to in his book *Imagined Communities*: why is the cultural bond of nationality so powerful that it encourages the massive brutality made possible by large scale war? (Anderson, 14). The Comedian's morality is so skewed that he makes it possible for the reader to see the illusory power of nationalism. It is interesting to note that this is one of the many purposes of comedy, to expose the truth by imitating life with hyperbole. If there is truth in humor, the Comedian's ferocious willingness to kill on behalf of his country and the humorous cynicism he uses to criticize his peers becomes a stark truth upon his death. Despite how many people hated the Comedian, none could deny that he was partially right: "It don't matter squat because inside thirty years the nukes are gonna be flyin' like maybugs… we still kill for our precious causes, and there isn't anyone who can deny that we do it because we love it" (2.11.5-9). This may be why so many people are in

attendance at his funeral. Even though he is universally reviled, he becomes the awful caretaker of the secret business that nations conduct on behalf of its people. Two communities are sustained as a result of this activity – those who don't get the Comedian and his "joke," who continue to live their lives believing in the false consciousness produced by their own nationalism, and those who get the joke, and somehow find a sense of kinship in the fact that in order to do their work, they must be exiled from the very community they have sworn to protect.

Thus, the cold war could not help but produce a sense that the global community was imminent. As media permeated the globe in new and multi-faceted ways, the image of a global cultural landscape, filled with people, places and things that had no national affiliation or appeared as having no national affiliation emerged as part of the narrative that expressed the confluence of the global and the national civil sphere. The nuclear missile and its network of navigational satellites were not merely features of national armed conflict; nuclear technology measured war on a planetary scale and changed the lives of everyone on the planet in countless ways. Soldiers and military analysts employed the conventions of the world map, with coordinate planes that measured in a globally appropriated system of latitude and longitude. Additionally, the narrative of the clandestine military agent emerged almost as a re-visitation of the swashbuckling pirate of the 19th century. At least on the surface, these people appeared like men and women without nations, whose home was located in places that were owned by no one sovereign, and whose appeal was cosmopolitan in the various ways in which that term has evolved

over the past two centuries[38]. These characters were shedding their passports, and any identifiable national features to conduct the secret, plausibly denied business of governments. What mutually assured destruction and their globetrotting agents did to the nation was not merely to undo the strategy that reinforced national ideologies, it produced distinctly global traits. The image of the nation at risk was trumped by the image of the entire world collapsing under the thumb of national actors. Soldiers no longer required their uniform to do their work, especially in the stories told about them. Ian Fleming's James Bond was doing his majesty's work only as much as he was able to gallivant as an international playboy. The Comedian served as the clandestine aspect of those masked adventurers even when they had to "unmask" themselves at the time of their formal exile. In time, especially following the collapse of the Soviet Union, these characters were national actors in name only. They had become a different breed altogether, and their enemies, as was the case for James Bond or the Comedian were a rogues gallery of gray area phenomena once seen as necessary aspects of the cold war. Each character, including Mr. Bond himself, was a caricature of an emergent transnational capitalist class – the billionaire playboy whose loyalties were bound to the forces of capital more than to the ideals of his nation. His tuxedo and vodka martini were more than trivial luxuries that made him interesting, they were aesthetic traits of characters whose "community spirit" did not rest entirely on the structural charters that constituted a national allegiance. His enemies were caricatures of megalomaniacal fantasies of world domination, and they often acted as creatures beholden to none.

[38] In particular, the ways that cosmopolitanism has been determined by Marx and Kant, and those who have later categorized that concept as a moral, political, and cultural category (Habermas, Scheffler, Ignatieff, Appadurai).

The Comedian, like many of the characters in Watchmen, heralds a new period of global belonging. These characters predicted the desire for a life outside of their self-imposed exile. Much later, after the fall of the Soviet Union, these spies who did not come in from the cold took on a far more explicit post-national space. The narrative of the spy registered as a group of exiles whose uses were outdated. Characters like the recently popular Jason Bourne existed solely in a non-national space, and the narrative, when taken to its extreme, proposed that nations were the enemy, hell bent on destroying their own in order to erase any memory of their clandestine, unspeakable history. As a result, the concepts of hero and enemy have been extracted from their national ideologies, and their stories are involved in the production of a global aesthetic. Unlike their classical counterparts, heroes, antiheroes, and villains of this era have access to a wide array of images and processes that emanate from an increasingly crystallized global civil society. What the Myrmidons shared with the pirates of the 19th century was the image of the sea as a political and territorial abyss. Their counterparts after the cold war shared this quality, but could also use disposable cell phones in a nearby rural town or access a satellite network wirelessly to elude their enemies. The emergence of latent capital compounded by the development of GAP as a part of our social, political, and cultural vocabulary has turned into a different narrative, whose heroes and villains exist not merely transnationally, but excluded from national spaces altogether.

Dr. Manhattan, Ozymandias, and the Comedian are only a few of the many examples of characters who isolate themselves from nationalism, re-imagining our cultural landscape to familiarize with the elements of our own lives that cannot be contained by a national social reality. Rorschach is the quintessential vigilante. He is

socially awkward, and his mask, which contains a material transfigured by Dr. Manhattan, changes its pattern much like the ink-blot test from which he derives his name. He is the prime investigator of the plot, writing down his thoughts about the contemptible human race in his journal, trying to defend a moral imperative that he derives from his traumatic childhood as the son of an abused prostitute. But unlike every other character in *Watchmen*, Rorschach is the pure embodiment of local intelligibility. For Rorschach, everything is grounded in the immediacy of the people or places he encounters or cares about. Unlike Ozymandias' who is obsessed with a global heritage, Rorschach relies on a Kantian universalism as his way of understanding the world. His world is pure anarchy, represented by the infinitely changing patterns upon his face. In Chapter 6, we learn about how Rorschach became the cold arbiter of justice he is famous for throughout the story. It is discovered during his psychological evaluation that he was witness to the killing of several children, and upon discovering their murderers he discovers the heinous manner with which the missing children were killed[39]. Something in him changes from that day forward, and as he notes, he became Rorschach, and the persona of Walter Kovacs became a façade from that day forward. After viciously burning the child killers he recounts this crucial moment in his moral development:

> Stood in firelight sweltering. Bloodstain on chest like map of violent new continent. Felt cleansed. Felt Dark Planet turn under my feet and knew what cats know that makes them scream like babies in night. (6.26.1)

[39] The imagery in those passages suggests that the children were sexually assaulted, beaten, and then fed to dogs (6.26.1-5)

What becomes obvious about Rorschach's grammar is that he is reluctant to refer to himself as a subject. The word "I" seldom appears when Rorschach speaks. Instead, he refers to objects in relation to one another, or the "I" is implied in his speech. When he speaks about himself, he instead refers to landscapes. The bloodstain on his chest from killing the child murderers is described as a "violent new continent." He refers to a "Dark Planet" as a proper place with tangible sounds and a specific, violent history. Through Rorschach's eyes, the world only has meaning as a meaningless, morally vacuous place. He continues:

> This rudderless world is not shaped by vague metaphysical forces. It is not god who kills the children. Not fate that butchers them or destiny that feeds them to the dogs. It's us. Only us… the void breathed hard on my heart, turning its illusions to ice, shattering them. Was reborn then, free to scrawl own design on this morally blank world. Was Rorschach. (6.26)

Rorschach's encounter with his exile is more visceral than others because his morally uncompromising attitude speaks directly from his past trauma, and he produces a sense of injury about everything he encounters. As a result, he often finds himself alone, and for the majority of the graphic novel, he is depicted alone in a dark landscape, searching for answers to the Comedian's death. On the surface it appears ironic that the anti-government Rorschach would be the primary investigator in the jingoist Comedian's death. But their commonality lies in their exile from the rest of the world. Their perspective is similar, and the bond that every masked adventurer shares is due in part to how they all engage in global social behavior. Rorschach is at odds with all cultural paradigms, with all ideologies, and his language is marked by the obscurity he perceives

institutions have in relation to truth and justice. Rorschach is consumed with images of death, and the way that death marks the world around him. This may be why every moment in the text where Rorschach reveals an element of the secret plot to destroy the city of Manhattan is paralleled by the imagery of the doomsday clock, which in each issue, ticks one step closer to midnight. Through the Comedian's death, signified by the bloodstained smiley face that appears throughout the text, Rorschach is able to navigate the world around him. He sees everything in relation to impending doom, which makes him one of the most tragic characters in the entire story. Even in death, Rorschach's blood stains the pure Antarctic snow (12.24.5). If every character contains a symbolic imagery that reinforces his role in the text, Rorschach's is the bloodstain, the violent reminder of the inadequacy of rules and the tragedy of moral absolutism.

Although they appear as minor characters in the story, the Night Owl and Silk Spectre share their exile through their special relationship to one another. Each is a successor to masked adventurers from a previous era – Laurie succeeds her mother as the Silk Spectre, and Daniel Dreiberg succeeds Hollis Mason as the second Night Owl. Furthermore, they are two of the only characters who do not reveal their identities after the Keene Act[40]. Thus, they share a certain vulnerability that the others do not have to deal with, because they must deny their true identities in regular life. This vulnerability becomes a prominent feature of their belonging to a global social reality, because they are very sentimental characters, forced to live vicariously through their pasts. Dreiberg, for example, keeps regular visits with the first Night Owl, who ironically has published a book that chronicles the lives of the first group of masked adventurers, The Minutemen.

[40] Because Rorschach is incarcerated, his identity is revealed by force.

Through their interaction, Dreiberg gets through the day by re-reading the pages of Mason's book *Under the Hood*, which is interspersed in the graphic novel as a supplement to the main story. Laurie Juspeczyk refers to herself as Laurie Jupiter, possibly because her mother changed her name to keep their identities as Polish immigrants a secret. Laurie's relationship with Dr. Manhattan becomes increasingly difficult as he distances himself from human interaction, and Laurie finds comfort in the lifestyle that Dreiberg has created for himself. As creatures of habit, both Dreiberg and Laurie find themselves torn between their desires to live out their old lives as masked adventurers. For this reason, they become potent reminders of the dangers of nostalgia, a trait that the text continuously reminds us is the primary vehicle of nationalism. The imagery in the text supports this problem, as everywhere they go, they represent the nostalgia for the old minutemen, whose credibility came from the perceived moral clarity of World War II, particularly the role that nations had in dealing with global issues. Like other recurring imagery in the text, the image of the perfume, "Nostalgia," appears frequently in relation to Daniel and Laurie's struggle to rediscover a sense of purpose. However, both of them awaken from their stagnation in a particularly brutal way. After deciding to relive their lives as outlawed heroes, Dreiberg returns from helping others to learn that the original Night Owl is killed because he is mistaken as the current Night Owl (8.28). Laurie is forced to confront her mother about the Comedian, whom she hates because she believes he raped her mother. Laurie later discovers that the Comedian is her father, and that her past is not as simple as she wants to remember. Both characters must suffer because of their inability to let go of their version of the past, which continually parallels the people walking on the streets, the billboards, newspapers, and images on the

television that reinforce a sense of national solidarity, which the text expresses as a dangerous thing.

One could argue that Dr. Manhattan is easily the most powerful entity in the entire story, and it would also follow that Ozymandias could be considered the most dangerous of all characters. However, Night Owl and Silk Spectre represent a very strong and unspoken element within the text. Their sense of nostalgia, combined with their constant insecurity, represents the banality of evil that so dangerously sweeps the text. The unnamed characters in the city – the mob, the passersby, and the nameless politicians – embody the sort of complacency that makes the nation so dangerous in the first place. It is not the threat that Dr. Manhattan poses that motivates Ozymandias to execute his nefarious plot. It is the complacent citizens who evoke their sense of nationalism when faced with dramatic consequences, but who also do nothing during times of prosperity to ensure the security of their fellow citizens. The final pages of the novel are chilling in this regard, because the vast celebratory nature of their false utopia (false in the sense that once Rorschach's journal is publicized, it will either be short lived or delusional) is indicative of a civil lethargy, the kind that produces dangerous forms of nostalgia, and which motivates people to brutal and violent ends when the happiness provided for them slips away as quickly as it was bestowed upon them. Throughout the entire narrative, the text illustrates the awful power of nostalgia and complacency, and for this reason, we return to the image and the script that serves as Watchmen's creed: *Quis custodiet ipsos custodies*? Who watches the Watchmen? Who Guards the Guardians? The masked adventurers in this text carry the burdens of their citizens in times of tribulation, and in times of prosperity, they are cast aside and forced into obscurity. This

is the problem of legibility at its most profound, because everywhere around the nameless, faceless masses are signs and symbols calling out the end of the world, soliciting a response from its citizenry. Everywhere there are signs of imminent danger and the threat of the end of the world. Everywhere there are hints that we live in a different world, we participate in them, and we even consume global culture as part of our daily activity. But we are unaware of it in large part because we fail to read the signs that are right in front of our faces. We are blinded by any sense of security, even the false kind, and the resulting complacency hands power over to nations by default. In *Watchmen*, the tyranny of the nation, the kind that beckons Ozymandias to carry out such terrible acts, is based solely on the thoughtless actions of the nameless masses. It is, ultimately, the most profound expression of illegibility that the text has to offer. It highlights exactly why illegibility is such an urgent political problem, and why the signs and figures needed to orient ourselves to global scale phenomena are based in fantasy and spectacle.

The cohesiveness which marks the functionality of the entire text, like the timepiece serves as its own measurement – in addition to measuring different frames of time, the entire timepiece produces another measure altogether, the sense that every distinct measurement somehow works together in a complex but cohesive way. Even to the most skilled watchmaker, the completed whole of a grand complication cannot help but be seen with a sense of awe and wonder even if it can in fact be taken apart piece by piece. The same is true for a novel, film, or epic poem. It is this combination of heuristic logic and perceived cohesiveness that makes the grand complication a fantastic metaphor for the way that we perceive our daily lives and the way we construct our social realities.

By extension, it is a useful way of looking at a text, which itself mirrors the complex arrangement of our own subjectivity and the way we choose to identify with our myriad experiences. Like a watch, the metaphors, tropes, and narratives that constitute a given text refer us to an equally complex, but particular measure of time and space. When we read a text, we read for aesthetic devices, metaphors, and narratives that relate our experiences to broader complex social, political, and cultural schema. Thus, to read a text is like reading a complicated watch. We learn from reading *Watchmen* that literary figures are ways of connecting complex social negotiations with a planetary sense of belonging. They mediate what we perceive as the most tangible part of our social realities into a form of global consciousness. They do this by creating an adequate imaginary landscape, an ideological container that can funnel what is lived experience but unknowable as the global into something that is legible and knowable.

Chapter 5: Rethinking the World Polity: the Literary Element of Global Textual Production

So far, we have discussed the way that certain literary figures orient us in relation to global social realities. We then discussed how a single literary text creates a political economy whereby that social reality becomes legible on the surface of the text. How does a global sense of belonging become real to us and how then does it materialize as a relevant expression of global society in our daily lives? These questions are leading us toward an expanded perspective concerning the literary properties of global culture and the social realities produced by global culture. I have consistently referred to this process as legibility, because I am interested in how any textual expression produces an understanding of the world-making process. In other words, global legibility is the property of a text that maps out the system of political actors and produces a literary contribution to what we perceive as the world system. It is a way of saying "these are the actors on the world stage, and this is what they do." The intention of this chapter is to rethink the world polity by addressing several ways the literary function of the world polity makes the world system legible. Herein I will address how every document has a literary quality. Then I will demonstrate how the literary qualities of "non-literary" texts utilize the same global figures that "literary" texts do.

What distinguishes my analysis from other studies of world literature is that I organize my analysis under the assumption that each actor within the world system performs a literary function and this function is an essential element of what produces a schematic for the way the world system works. NGOs, corporations, courts, artists, scientists, engineers, doctors, writers, political action groups, terrorists, religious groups,

online forum moderators, video game communities, provinces, kingdoms, and nations all share at least one thing in common in relation to the world system, whether they are aware of it or not. Their relationship to the world system must be imaginary, because the social schematic implied by such a relation is too complex to take into account. Thus, whatever conception of what the world system looks like and how it works must be mediated by an imaginary space that is constructed to make sense of any given social, political, or cultural relation. This happens any time a document, a manifesto, an agreement, or a novel, is produced. It is very similar to what Alice does when she sees the grand chessboard during her encounter with the Red Queen in the Looking Glass World:

> It's a great huge game of chess that's being played – all over the world – if this is the world at all, you know. Oh what fun it is! How I *wish* I was one of them! I wouldn't mind being a Pawn, if only I might join—though of course I should *like* to be a Queen, best. (Carroll, 126)

Alice is aware that if what she is seeing is indeed a view of All-the-world, if she has somehow gained access to a perspective of the system of actors that make up the world, she would like to be one of those actors, and she would like to play the game. She wouldn't mind being an upstart or an entry-level unit, but she "wants in" on the world making process, she *wishes* to play, and would *like* to have some power in making the world into something. In Alice's case in *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*, that global relation is expressed to a very high degree. The literary use of the chessboard as a metaphor for the world system sets the stage for all other actors within the remainder of the story to be seen as elements within a world polity.

Furthermore, Alice is referring to her relationship in terms of figures that already have an established set of power relations. To understand the power dynamics of the landscape she has just described one must know what a Pawn does and what a Queen does. They have become rationalized figures that can be used to represent her transformation from an uninitiated and vulnerable subject in the world system to a conscious and powerful geopolitical actor. And just as *Alice in Wonderland* imagines a schematic expression of the world system, so too does every other document produced by actors who imagine themselves as part of the world system. Thus, the way that global actors write themselves into the world system becomes a problem of legibility, and the degree to which each actor influences the social imaginary of the world system is precisely what is referred to as the process of world polity.

Actors within the world system produce countless variations of text. They write treaties, they craft compacts, and they draft mission statements. They dole out advice, and promote values and principles, and they generate data and metrics to support their agendas. Depending on who "they" are, any number of things produced in writing could help us understand how a world system is schematized. This work is achieved most explicitly by the formal arrangement that produces the text in the first place. If nations, for example, administer a great part of foreign relations by creating institutional similarity, primarily through some standardized agreement, the formal function of the treaty constructs much of the imaginary landscape produced by a document. As a formal document, a treaty's primary function is to generate a framework whereby actions can be taken with a certain level of liability. This liability represents the desire for a standard that is capable of administering the behavior of complex social structures within a

relatively anarchic system (Chase-Dunn, 45). The formal function of a text, then, is the manifestation of a desire for standardized values, what Myers, et al. refer to as "institutional similarity." No two nations are expected to act in the same way, especially when the rules that govern such behavior are not easily enforced. Even with the presence of an international system of governance, like the United Nations, nations and IGOs still rely on the formality of written documents to accumulate points of reference that generate the institutional similarity needed to create a legible, systematic space.

But, in addition to the formal function of a text, the literary element is vital to the construction of a systematic space. Regardless of what kind of text is produced, a literary element is present. Felman argues, for example, that a legal system contains both literary and legal functions, where a trial itself can be compared to a text. The comparison, as Felman writes is "between the intricate legal reality and the imaginative literary vision" of a given trial (94). Her focus was on the O.J. Simpson Trial, where generally speaking, the legal parameters of the case, the adjudication of pre-meditated murder, was taking place at the same time that the literary production of race relations, domestic violence, and celebrity were being produced by spectators inside and outside of the courtroom. Felman claims that this is one way that the massive attention paid to the trial manifested itself, because the imaginative literary vision of the trial was constructing an alternative space wherein the claims of the trial were being understood. The formal function of the trial, to adjudicate upon a question of established case law (murder), also contained a literary function, one filled with a speculative imaginary of race, gender, and domesticity, whose jurisdiction spread beyond the courtroom and captured the attention of an entire nation. In this manner, a text has many productive capacities, and regardless of its formal

function, there lies an "imaginative literary vision" that is responsible for reifying complex social relations. One essential aspect of this concretization is the manner whereby abstract concepts and social relations become legible. Consequently, among all the things that the literary function of a text provides, it brings to the surface some navigational coordinates that make it possible to understand where authority (who makes the rules and has the power to enforce them) is perceived to exist, and just as importantly, where imaginary productivity (who or what are the political visionaries) is perceived to exist.

The Antarctic Treaty System and the global scientific community

The Treaty of Antarctica [41](also known as the Antarctic Treaty System or ATS), for example, produces a global schematic similar to literary works that utilize the Antarctic figure as a global ideological container. The treaty was initially drafted and signed by twelve nations (Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, The Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States) on December 1, 1959. It was constructed for the purposes of designating Antarctica as a special scientific region which granted broad freedoms regarding scientific research and restricted military activity anywhere south of 60 degrees latitude.

It is important to note that nowhere in the treaty is there an explicit designation of Antarctica as a non-national space. In fact, seven of the initial signatories (Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway, and the UK) and one later signatory

[41] Full text available at http://www.nsf.gov/od/opp/antarct/anttrty.jsp

(Germany[42]) had already made territorial claims to Antarctica, and two signatories (the United States and the Soviet Union) reserved the right to make a territorial claim as a condition of signing the treaty. Article IV of the treaty explicitly states that "[n]o acts or activities taking place while the present Treaty is in force shall constitute a basis for asserting, supporting or denying a claim to territorial sovereignty in Antarctica." These claims and reservations within the treaty demonstrate the sensitive circumstances whereby the treaty was constructed in the first place. The preamble of the treaty states:

> Recognizing that it is in the interest of all mankind that Antarctica shall continue forever to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and shall not become the scene or object of international discord;
>
> Acknowledging the substantial contributions to scientific knowledge resulting from international cooperation in scientific investigation in Antarctica;
>
> Convinced that the establishment of a firm foundation for the continuation and development of such cooperation on the basis of freedom of scientific investigation in Antarctica as applied during the International Geophysical Year accords with the interests of science and the progress of all mankind;
>
> Convinced also that a treaty ensuring the use of Antarctica for peaceful purposes only and the continuance of international harmony in Antarctica will further the purposes and principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations;

[42]West Germany and East Germany signed onto the treaty separately, on March 3, 1981 and October 5, 1987 respectively. Although the territorial claim to New Swabia is ascribed to Germany, the claim was initially made by the West German government. Like all other claims to Antarctica, Germany's claim was disputed and there is no universal recognition to the claim made by way of the New Swabia expedition.

Formally, the treaty reinforces the structure of a nationally-oriented system of authority, particularly in relation to the rights of nations to make territorial claims, to serve as the high administrative authority of the entire region, and to maintain the treaty system, which includes several other documents that define which nations are able to have consultative authority (which means for the ATS system that they have decision-making authority) and which have acceding participatory status. But its literary vision rests on phrases such as "international discord" and "international cooperation," "international harmony," and finally, "progress of all mankind." The text itself is reminding us of the great difficulty and complex nature of international structures. It is no mistake that with each new clause, the words move away from discord to harmony. The transitions at each paragraph also make a similar movement toward more commanding words, from "recognizing," to "acknowledging," to "convinced." Albeit subtle, the figural language of the text is moving away from the image of a nation to something entirely different.

In order to do so, the nation must be replaced by another kind of figure. It is here that the text selects the scientific community as a special epistemic community. The "scientists" in the ATS, become a very important figure, because even though certain logistical problems are addressed in the treaty, such as wildlife conservation and hydrocarbon charting, the text is also concerned with projecting a utopian vision of scientific exploration, associating scientific research with a harmonious and productive global community. For the purposes of the pre-amble, it is less important to know what kind of "science" is taking place, and little work is done to explain what constitutes "scientific research and exploration." Is it biological or geological study? Is it anything that requires a lab coat? The language here is intentionally ambiguous because the

scientific community serves as a placeholder for groups of exceptional, co-operative thinkers and actors that produce information that we perceive as requiring a harmonious environment. It might remind us of the scenes in the 1951 version of the *Day the Earth Stood Still*, where the scientific community convenes to hear Klaatu's climactic appeal for planetary solidarity. The film does little to specify the kind of scientists present at the climactic convention. But that is not really the point of having the "scientist" in the story. The point seems to be that there exists a group of like-minded human beings whose exceptional skills remove us from the politics of "international discord" and force us to imagine actors within the world system capable of solving issues of global importance.

This problem is consistent throughout the many literary figures we have examined. The global literary figures in *Watchmen* are all exceptional beings, each of which addresses the cultural disjuncture produced by global problems that are administered by international systems. This is a prominent way in which the mechanism of global cultural production becomes legible. Scientists are among a few of the many actors capable of containing the global ideological machinery. Documents such as the ATS gain much of their global currency, not necessarily because of their formal function, but because they gravitate toward figures that can adequately contain the transitional language the text makes from "international discord" to "progress for all mankind." To summarize, the ATS turns Antarctica from a disputed international territory into a global figure by making legible the role that "the scientific community," plays within the world polity. While the ATS reinforces the position of nation-oriented authority within the world system, it also projects a vision of those actors who are perceived as having potential outside the sphere of influence of nations, or who at least have the ability to

"think outside" the nation when it is apparent that nationalism either creates global problems or significantly inhibits potential solutions to global problems. Consequently, this diversifies the way that the world system is schematized. While nations are perceived as having a broad set of authority within the world system, this treaty constructs a particular limit to that power. It also creates a specific imaginary space for scientists as participants in a global culture, in this case, with language that casts scientists as having a redemptive idealism capable of protecting the world from the worst practices of nations.

But unlike a statement that can more easily read as a misguided, pie-in-the sky utopianism, this is no great leap of faith to the reader, because the text is referring to a set of social practices (e.g. the conservation of natural resources, the unencumbered benefit of scientific collaboration without military intervention) that have significant aesthetic value -- aesthetic because the figure of the scientist has accumulated a strong set of characteristics regardless of where its appears. The image of scientists collaborating on the Antarctic landscape, even if it is far removed from the majority of human experience (like Poe, Verne, or any other person who has thought about but never visited Antarctica), appears real and believable because the imagined social space has a sound cultural logic. I can imagine that scientists can solve problems, and when nations step back, can produce more or do more good when left to their own devices. Note that Article V of the treaty strictly prohibits the use of nuclear activity but does not associate this with scientific research. The scientific community in this treaty is not the same community that created the atomic bomb. Nor is it the scientific community that created biological weapons or technologies that produce carbon emissions. The scientific

community here is a literary figure, one that is isolated from the awesome technological consequences of scientific research. It is Marie Curie standing in her laboratory constructing her theories on radioactivity. It is Galileo sitting before his telescope postulating the relationship between the heavens and the earth. It is Einstein standing before a chalkboard solving a herculean equation. As Isabelle Stengers notes in her examination of "cosmopolitics," the figural speech that often characterizes science disassociates the scientific community from the political usage of its own research. Science then, is converted into a project for all mankind, whose cultural practice is seen as socially disinterested from the possibilities of destructive power like that found in the production of the atom bomb. Unlike *Watchmen*, which involves the scientist in the social anxieties related to Mutually Assured Destruction (most directly in the figure of Dr. Manhattan), the ATS employs language that protects scientists from such associations. The emphasis is clearly made to sanction the activities of the scientific community as actors within the world system who are not complicit in the historical trauma that produces "international discord" in the first place. The idea of an objective, apolitical, and disinterested community[43] becomes the material that makes the scientist in the ATS flexible enough to contain the principles of mankind while also making legible certain social practices consistent with a concept of global stewardship, like biological preservation and geological mapping.

These observations help balance out the idea that there is less magic in magic realism (or literature for that matter) than we would expect and there is something

[43] A characterization often used to characterize the history of science by a colleague, Jeanpaul Cauvin whose present dissertation, *A New Machine for Thinking: Rhetorical and Conceptual Transformations in 20th Century French Epistemology*, addresses some of these issues.

particularly fantastic about the figural construction of the scientist in a document like the ATS. Those who have explored the spectrum of those properties, like H.G. Wells, who began his career writing about alien invasions, only to find himself writing political treatises[44], understood that the literary function of any text can be both speculative and empirical. Wells produced stories that were almost entirely about global legibility, and most were about the naïve concept of a utopia being crushed by the realpolitik of massive world-ending forces, as was the case in *War of the Worlds*. He wrote in his treatise, the *War to End all Wars*, that our "imaginations cannot avoid the awful effects of the destruction of human beings, but can hope to retain foreknowledge of a better future" (15). For Wells, this foreknowledge relied upon the constant re-imagination of global social realities. In *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, the production of laws, of social codes was a necessary component of narrating his fictional world of mutated beings. "Man does not eat flesh" and "man does not crawl around on four limbs" are speculative legal codes, but within the text, they are an empirical reality. They function as the evidence of social circumstances that produced those codes in the first place. In *A Modern Utopia*, Wells writes about a group of utopian beings (coincidentally all of whom are scientists) from another world known as "the Samurai," who abide by a strict code (part of which is made possible by scientific exploration) that they refer to as the "lessons of all worldly knowledge" (35). They visit Earth, and the crux of the anxiety in the novel is whether or not our society measures up to the codes and values that make these celestial beings able to live the perfect society. Within each fictional universe, sets of empirically grounded rules and institutional values form the imaginary borders that define the social realities

[44] Most notably non-fiction works such as *The War That Will End War* (1914), *The Idea of a League of Nations* (1919), *The Way to a League of Nations* (1919), and essays and lectures such as "Democracy Under Revision" (1927), and the "Common Sense of World Peace" (1929).

within the text. Wells understood that both his political writing and his fictional writing contained the same properties that we are able to extract from the ATS and other documents. On the one hand, the literary function of a text has the ability to think beyond what is known in order to re-imagine the world or contain new events or phenomena that are transforming the world (like the planetary vision of climate change). On the other hand, the rules articulated in a given text serve to formalize institutions and give social systems a set of metrics that can organize actors within the world system (like studies of carbon emissions or other scientific evidence used to prove climate change exists and the rules that regulate carbon emitting technology).

Language similar to that in the ATS can be found in any of the core documents that deal with internationally owned or non-national territories, such as the Law of the Sea, the Outer Space Treaty, and the Moon Treaty. Because these documents open up spaces for a broad concept of science, research, and technological progress, they create a space for a new kind of world authority made up of standards and practices. Loya and Boli argue that:

> Technical standardization is a domain of activity whose structure, operations, and self-proclaimed rationales are highly revealing about the global social organization. The unique characteristics of standardization shed light on such issues as the constitution of world authority, world-cultural conceptions of human purposes, and the limits of coercive power in a decentralized global polity. In short, these organizations are a constitutive part of world society. An analysis that treats them as such can teach us much about the transcendent level of social reality. (170)

We seldom think of the International Organization of Standardization (ISO) or the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (IBWM) when we think of world culture. They don't appear grand enough nor do they appear to carry a sense of world-making

gravitas that we commonly associate with the idea of a global structure. But these are organizations whose primary function is to create the "institutional similarity" that is central to the process of world polity. They organize local, national, and regional authorities, including engineers, businesspeople, and politicians for the purposes of directly influencing the way we interact socially. How far is it from Bonn to Rome? Hong Kong to Seattle? How is steel measured in Guangzhou before it is delivered to Rio de Janeiro? In pounds? Tons? Metric tons? Why is the atomic weight of Cobalt 58.93320? We wouldn't know if it weren't for groups of researchers who confer on the uses of such vocabulary. The International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) has a Commission on Atomic Weights and Isotopic Abundances that was responsible for determining the standard of atomic weight[45] of Cobalt. These questions briefly accentuate the profound impact that "scientific research" has on our social realities. One cannot walk ten feet, or meters, here or there without benefiting from the shared vocabulary created by these types of institutions. As Alice indicates as she falls down the rabbit hole on her way to Wonderland: "I wonder what my latitude and longitude are, if I even know what that meant?"

In this sense, the ATS's construction of a scientific community has a consistent literary value, because the conceptualization of a broadly conceived space for scientific exploration outside of national interest is the sort of imaginary space needed to allow technical standardization to emerge beyond the grasp of nations into an essential component of world society. The treaty demonstrates that national interests have a way of obstructing the kind of social interactions, in this case by the scientific community,

[45] which is the relative atomic mass of an element in the local environment of the Earth's crust and atmosphere, which like latitude and longitude relies on the body of the planet to derive its meaning.

that create standards and benchmarks that fill a need to mark the emergence of global society. The literary value, then, is the way that these treaties imagine a global reality that already exists, but that is being concealed by internationalism. By making legible a schematic for how the world system "limits coercive power" and directs "human purposes" that are globally-oriented, the literary function of a text allows one to open spaces for world-making communities such as the ISO, the IUPAC. This applies as much to sectors other than the sciences, such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which helped standardize economic indicators such as GDP or Inflation rates. Any of these ways of measuring our daily lives have an enormous influence on the world polity, and how we understand and believe in the social realities we encounter every day.

UNESCO world heritage and the common heritage of mankind principle

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (or for purposes of shorthand, World Heritage Project or WHP) convened from October 17 to November 21, in 1972[46]. The convention proceedings constructed the terms whereby places of great importance to the heritage of humanity are identified, indoctrinated as legitimate heritage sites, and preserved. Like the ATS, the WHP organizes its language in response to a perceived threat, one that is coded in ambiguous language:

[46] The primary text of the conference was ratified on November 16, 1972.

> *Noting* that the cultural heritage and the natural heritage are increasingly threatened with destruction not only by the traditional causes of decay, but also by changing social and economic conditions which aggravate the situation with even more formidable phenomena of damage or destruction[47]…

This passage represents a constant recognition of the political antinomy of nations as part of the world-making process. Such antinomies are further complicated by the management of administration of world heritage sites. For example, in order to construct a practical system of conservation, preservation, and administration, the UNESCO World Heritage fund was constructed in order to address the logistical aims of cultural preservation:

> *Considering* that protection of this heritage at the national level often remains incomplete because of the scale of the resources which it requires and of the insufficient economic, scientific, and technological resources of the country where the property to be protected is situated…

What this portion of the convention implies, and is consistently sensitive to throughout, is a scenario often referred to as a "tragedy of the commons" scenario, which in part means that the public good that is preserved by the protection of a world heritage site becomes owned in proxy by wealthy, more developed nations (Frakes, 230). For this reason, the language of the convention proceedings retains the same ambiguous qualities that the language of "international discord" does in the ATS. On the surface, the text acknowledges the high cost of preserving a world heritage site. However, the language in

[47] http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/

the text also implies that the "social and economic conditions" which aggravate the "traditional causes of decay" are based on very sensitive "North-South relations" (232). Because developed nations have the economic and political means to control the agenda in international relations, and because developed nations have profound military and technological advantages in the world system, undeveloped nations (or members of the Global South) are often perceived as being at the mercy of the agendas made by wealthier nations. Thus the threatening "social and economic conditions" (i.e. the disparity of wealth among nations, the rise of superpowers within the world system) that the document refers to are implied as being both a part of the problem and part of the solution. Nations, particularly wealthy nations (or core and semi-peripheral powers, to employ that vocabulary) are constantly poised as generating the Janus faced problem of international politics in global affairs. Scholte offers that as human social relations continue to expand and cultural and political needs continue to evolve into irreducibly global problems, the presence of internationalism will continue to play a double-jointed role, at once needing to preserve its place within the decision-making hierarchy of the world system, while also having to acknowledge its role as an obstruction to the clear alignment of global authority with global phenomena (191).

Like the ATS, and like many other texts we have seen thus far, the text of the WHP must avoid addressing the power of nations within the world system directly. Instead, it produces ambiguous language regarding the dual role of nations in the construction of global heritage. It does so in at least two ways. First, it rationalizes and organizes nature as a distinct category in world culture. Frank, Hironaka, et. al., argue that INGOs and NGOs generate a language of criteria and metrics that distinguish nature

from man-made structures (Boli and Thomas, 81, 83). In the case of the convention this is achieved first by separating the "traditional causes of decay" such as natural disaster, from man-made destructive forces, such as war, or economic exploitation (privatization or the exploitation of natural resources). It also makes this distinction in the construction of the initial criteria for a heritage site, which were separated into "cultural criteria" and "natural criteria."

Second, and following directly from the first point, the language in the convention characterizes the concept of a world heritage site as having the same pangeaic, edenic qualities we encountered in many of the literary figures identified in Chapters 3 and 4. In *Watchmen*, the anxieties of nuclear war and the politics of international discord are dealt with by escaping to edenic spaces, like Ozymandias' utopian fortress in Antarctica, the Martian terrain, or the desert island in *Tales from the Black Freighter*. The WHP makes global culture exceptional in the sense that it appeals to the idea that civilization is not dependent upon the civil structures we are most readily acquainted with, but also with a sense of planetarity beyond the scale of human intervention. In order to make the prospect of a world heritage area legible, the language used to define these sites employ the literary vision of a time and place that precedes the nation-state, and that appeals to all of us beyond our sense of nationalism. Criterion VIII, for example, defines a given site as having "outstanding universal value" if it proves to "… [represent] major stages of Earth's history, including the record of life, significant ongoing geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features." Much like the figure of Macondo in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, sites that are selected according to this criterion must somehow contain a sense of hyper-compressed

histories and social pluralities, and must do so through the aesthetic representation of landscapes as they have changed through thousands if not millions of years.

For each set of criteria outlined in the WHP, there is an aesthetic value that is necessarily produced literarily. These landscapes, the Franklin River, the Grand Canyon, or even the fictional, prehistoric jungle that surrounds Macondo are filled with unique ecologies that somehow mark the distinctiveness of the planet and somehow turn our attention to a period of great antiquity, a period where we can, at least from our perspective, believe in a common heritage and imagine a solidarity that existed long before our differences made the world illegible. This must be so, because as Benedict Anderson asserts, even the smallest community must be imagined because no one person will be able to account for every possible member of that community. Thus, these cultural values must be figural, and must have an aesthetic value that can evoke an image consistent with our understanding of what defines us and how we are bound together (12). The WHP criteria are designed to create ideological placeholders that can be used to organize actors within the worlds system under principles of global belonging. Observe the language used to construct the criteria for a world heritage site:

I. To represent a masterpiece of human creative genius

II. To exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design.

III. To bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared

IV. To be an outstanding example of a type of building architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history

V. To be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or se-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change.

VI. To be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria).

VII. To contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance

VIII. To be outstanding examples representing major stages of Earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features.

IX. To be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals

X. To contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-site conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened

> species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

The language used in these criteria is inundated with words that are consistent with the genealogy of figures we have already discussed. Words such as "outstanding," "vulnerable," and "genius" are associated with people, places, and things that are suited to orient us globally. Much like Ozymandias, Dr. Manhattan, Antarctica, Dr. Frankenstein, or Macondo, these sites are being designated as figural because of the exceptional ability they have to contain the broad and complex cultural legacies, including the disjuncture that takes place between the national and global, the local and the regional. This is what Karp and Kratz refer to as a "Museum Friction," because these are landscapes that have a global reach, but must also somehow contain the points of contact with the social realities produced by a myriad network of social groupings (18-19). Furthermore, a world heritage site is expressly judged on the level to which their aesthetic features (as is the case in Criterion VII) make legible the distinctiveness of the planet as a unified consolidated object. In effect, the WHP is almost entirely about global legibility, because it organizes itself around the construction of objects that connect us to a society based on the way we imagine ourselves as belonging to the planet.

Before I continue, I find it important to distinguish between the exceptionalism of the figures we have discussed thus far and the proposal that members of a global community are exclusively a group of elite people. The distinction is important because it is inaccurate to say that only elites are members of a global community. This somehow privileges people with certain capabilities, and can easily slip into a proposal that a global

community is the same thing as the globetrotting cosmopolitans we describe as members of a transnational capitalist class, civil cosmopolitans, or geniuses (see Sklair and Ignatieff for good examples). Each of these texts which we have examined has somehow articulated a sense of exceptional behavior that allows us to think about the world as a part of our social realities. In this sense, the idea of exceptional people, epochal landscapes, and planetary scale phenomena are not the franchise of a privileged few. Anyone, anywhere can access the idea of a superhuman, a genius, and a landscape that tests the limits of human exploration. What makes these cases active as part of the world-making process is that they construct legible social spaces. Surely, an Olympic athlete can be seen as a member of a global community, but not any more than a person in Wichita or in a person in Wales who uses the figure of an Olympic athlete as a way of understanding how they belong to the world. And surely, a corporate CEO can be seen as a member of a global community, but not anymore than someone in Cairo or someone in Calcutta who views the figure of the transnational corporate person as having global characteristics. In this, it is important to separate the people we view as elite from the figural elements that make global belonging legible.

Thus, my argument that the literary function of any text -- whether it is "literary" or "political" in its respective, traditional usage -- is essential to understanding how the world polity organizes and constructs a system of values and rules that govern the world-system. For example, a world heritage site *both as an idea and as a real place that requires care and maintenance* produces a complex system of global actors who organize themselves around the practical and figural elements of the 890 properties currently designated as world heritage sites. In a more practical sense, the curators, caretakers,

managers, and stewards of a given site become an easily identifiable group of people who actively participate in the world system. Like, NGOs that attend to global populations, like Doctors Without Borders or the Red Cross, these people become part of what Morawa refers to as the "practicalities of global belonging" (27). In other words, the material evidence that NGOs, INGOs, or "global action groups" are significant actors within the global polity is characterized by the physical work they do within that system. Artists restoring paintings in the Louvre, nurses giving vaccines to children in Minsk, scientists evaluating nuclear facilities in Tehran – each of these people can be associated with a type of work that makes legible the social realities driven by higher global values, but only to the extent to which they are associated with polities that are conceived as world making. We are made conscious of the nurse as the global actor when WHO nurses emerge from the literary presentation of the pandemic and the emergence of actors who respond exclusively to a pandemic as a world-scale phenomenon. Scientists, like those in the ATS, are conferred a level of global authority because the literary figure of a nuclear apocalypse makes the scientist legible as a global actor. The artist in the Louvre who is restoring a DaVinci painting is made legible as a global actor because she has participated in the figure of a common world heritage, and is charged with preserving a work of human genius that is elevated to the status of an artifact of world culture by the WHP.

But there are also institutions that do an invisible type of work, what Appadurai would call stewards of "ideascapes" or people, places, or things whose work depends upon defending the abstract concepts of global belonging and converting them into other features of the world system (85). For example, the case of the Franklin Dam is a

particular situation where the idea of a global landscape was just as important as the landscape itself, because it allowed a court to employ a legal principle in international law known as the "Common Heritage of Mankind Principle." In 1982, the dam was proposed for construction on the Gordon River, in Tasmania, Australia. However, the dam was determined to have a detrimental environmental impact upon the Franklin River, which was designated a world heritage site in the same year. This created a series of tensions which culminated in protests to the construction of the dam. Eventually, these tensions led to a legal dispute which reached the Australian High Court, *Commonwealth v. Tasmania*[48]. The court determined that the World Heritage Preservation Act of 1983 (the committee act that designated the Franklin River as a World Heritage Area) was a valid legal agreement. Although the Commonwealth of Australia was given sovereign authority to determine between development and environment (section 21 of the decision), it was also subject to the "common heritage of mankind principle," which stated that the stakeholders in the preservation of the Franklin River were members of a community beyond the jurisdiction of the Australian court system. Section 28 of the decision identifies nations, interests groups, and concerned individuals from all over the world who had sent letters of support and amicus briefs evoking "international concern" that the court viewed as having a legitimate stake in the outcome of the case. For this reason, as expressed by Justice Brennan, a member of the high court, Australia's signing onto the terms of the World Heritage Convention activated an "external affairs" clause which required the national court system to recognize the "international significance" of the case (section 51). Ultimately, the case was decided in favor of preserving the Franklin River and that ruling recognized that the cost of eroding the Franklin River was

[48] http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/cth/HCA/1983/21.html

not merely an ecological cost, but an ideological one, a cost that would have had incalculable effects on those who derived a sense of global belonging from the pangeaic story it was able to tell about the planets distinctiveness.

This case is particularly compelling in our present discussion because it highlights the way that world heritage sites become ideological containers utilized to organize people, even national sovereigns, under globally-oriented principles. The Franklin River, not so coincidentally named after Sir John Franklin, a Tasmanian explorer who died searching for the Northwest Passage in the Arctic Circle, tells a complex story about the world and humanity's relationship to the planet, that if lost could never be fully recovered. Thus, the literary function of the Franklin River, the Taj Majal, the Eiffel Tower, or Taos Pueblo is in part characterized by the work these places do as figural elements within the world polity. These sites, represented in text, serving as metaphors, or abstract containers for highly codified relations of global belonging, have an intimate relationship with the people, places, and things that we consider of global value. In effect, the world heritage sites, as both physical landmarks and as literary figures, *are themselves actors within the world polity*. The judges, lawyers, doctors, researchers, curators, and consumers of these figures are organized by the institution of the figure itself.

Human Rights and the Construction of the Sacred Body

In the case of the Franklin River, the figure of a pangeaic, distinctive landscape influenced a nation (represented by the High Court of Australia) to act globally and encouraged the global cultural enactment of other groups (cultural preservation groups,

environmental NGOs). In total, this constellation of global actors makes legible the presence of people, places, and things which depend on the ability to imagine a global social reality to define and preserve a sense of global belonging. The literary figure produced by a document, which in turn was produced by an INGO or an NGO, is an important and relevant actor within the world polity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a document that has broad implications for the global community is just as important as a literary document in the sense that it makes us imagine the human body as a vulnerable and sacred body. Formally, the document does little to resolve anything legally, nor does it have any real authority in the sense that it creates a system of liability. For even though most nations have signed onto the document, the primary problem with documents such as the UDHR is that they are non-binding documents that are not easily enforced. But part of the documents value is its ambition – its literary vision – whose purpose is organizational, and in this sense, the literary function of this document is to create figures out of vulnerable human subjects in order to allow their story to be told in relation to a set of core human values and well-articulated transgressions against the human subject. The human subjects that appear in the UDHR are no more real than Alice as she traverses the fictional universe of Wonderland, or the tragic Sufiya Zinobia in Rushdie's *Shame*, but both participate in a complex articulation of what it means to be vulnerable in a changing world, and both do so with a highly sophisticated system of historical and spatial referents. Legal scholars such as Martha Fineman argue that the identification of vulnerable subjects are the "conceptual anchor" that helps any number of peoples, from nations to political action groups to small families participate in a common vocabulary of human dignity, made possible by a well-defined vision of the things that

make human beings vulnerable (247). The same goes for any other expression of rights organized at the global level, like the International Covenant on Social, Cultural, and Economic Rights (ICSCER) or the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). All of these texts contain figural characters that serve as the organizational crux whereby a common consciousness can be approximated, if not fully realized. American Red Cross workers are pulling children from the rubble in Haiti not because they consciously perceive themselves as hegemons reinforcing the authority of the United States as world caretaker[49], but more directly as actors who perceive themselves as serving a globally disseminated idea that each human body is sacred. This space is broadly deterritorialized, and because the human body is subject to a myriad of political incarnations, it becomes one of the most heavily contested spaces within the world polity. Each day new vocabularies are being generated that attempt to address and standardize a fundamental question of civilization: what is human? I make no claim to answer this question, for it is a largely illegible term. What is legible is the process whereby that concept is reckoned with, and how it is tested in the imaginary spaces of texts. The Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights (UDHGHR) recognizes that "the human genome underlies the fundamental unity of all members of the human family, as well as the recognition of their inherent dignity and diversity. In a symbolic sense, it is the heritage of humanity[50]." The genome becomes the literary figure whereby

[49] Although, one could make that argument, particularly in relation to a history of using human rights work as an evangelical tool, which was seen most recently in Haiti in Feb of 2010 with the jailed missionaries accused of child abduction. The point herein is that there is a claim to a global standard that is being culturally enacted, and regardless of how it is interpreted by any one group or person, exemplifies how a world polity negotiates and distributes difficult conceptual vocabularies, such as "human" or "rights."

[50] Article 1 of the UDHGHR http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13177&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

we can articulate a vocabulary of commonality, far removed from the color of our skin, or the shape and size of our bodies, the genome becomes an elemental figure. This is similar to Dr. Manhattan in *Watchmen*, whose only signifying mark is on his forehead, the symbol of the Hydrogen Atom, the most abundant element in the universe. This type of language makes us think more broadly about the things that connect all human (and also non-human) subjects. The UDHGHR also "solemnly recalls" the history of violence to human beings, particularly the holocaust and the act of genocide whose massive scale led to the creation of legal standards in the ICC and the Rome Statute. The production of a standardized, sacred human subject becomes the literary landscape that produces the language that prohibits genocide legally, and renders transgressors subject to a system of liability that although imperfect culturally enacts the principle that defends human suffering through an idea of humanity that can manifest itself globally.

Thus, the UDHGHR and all other human rights documents share something in common with the figure of the human isolated in the desert island, the encounter with the post-human monolith of Frankenstein's monster, or characters suffering from infestation of mind-eating zombies are all stories that orient "what is human" into spaces where the vulnerability of the human body to world-scale forces make it apparent how we organize ourselves politically within the world system. The human family mentioned in the UDHR is not a "real" human family, nor does it refer to a particular person in a particular circumstance. It is a fictional representation of the idea of a human family, a concept that is imbued with complex qualities, including "dignity," and "sacred." The use of the "human family" is entirely literary in the sense that it creates an imaginary landscape, a human body that can be coded as a place where complex and highly-relative concepts can

reside. In this sense, it is not a code of liability, nor is it a legal reference that can be applied literally. It is a document that is to be used *literarily*, to distribute the image of families in relation to the planetary-oriented concept of humanity. This is no different from the Franklin River, which was used as a literary image of planetary belonging, used to contain the principles of the human species, to defend the uniqueness of the planet's landscape as an idea that can be deployed and mobilized socially, encoded as an idea that is grounded in a social reality, that the presence of the river is somehow a mark of global belonging. World Heritage Areas are complex ideas, and they are as much fictional as they are real. When the Franklin River was employed in the Gordon Dam dispute, it performed the same work that a witness would do if he or she were seated in a courtroom. In a sense, the Franklin River provided testimony on behalf of the planet and those who are conscious of and participate in a globally derived social network. The scientific community performs a similar task. There is no specific scientific community in the ATS. There is only a literary one, an imaginary space that mobilizes a vast network of very real scientists and engineers to act as global actors within the world polity. At each step, these images make the world legible. They do the work necessary to connect the concept of a crystallized world culture with the social realities of those who encounter these figures in written form.

It is true that global actors influence the world system to varying degrees and serve different functions. And those relations cannot be neatly summarized in a project whose scope is as small as my present endeavor. However, it suffices for our purposes, and for the purposes of understanding a fruitful and fundamental element of the world polity, to at the very least appreciate the literary function of texts produced within the

world system and at best introduce a literary diagnostic tool to an analysis of world polity.

Conclusion: Diagnostic Tools, Potential Trajectories and Contributions

It is challenging to propose a set of contributions I feel have compelled this project without taking too many liberties with my analysis, but it is equally dynamic and rewarding to propose what I believe are fresh perspectives on very important debates on globalization and the study of global structures. I began this discussion with a claim that by configuring a literary analysis of global figures to serve a systems analysis of world polity, one can understand one small but significant way that global culture is understood. It is clear that the literary function of any text that is distributed within the world system plays a vital role in the production of global consciousness, and moreover, it serves as a means of mapping aspects of the world system by paying attention to cultural expressions that are globally oriented. To summarize:

World culture has in fact crystallized in a way that marks it as a distinct cultural category. Our genealogy of global figures has demonstrated that through the breadth of literary works from the 19th century to the present, certain figures have emerged as being capable of telling a story that orients us to the planet. Furthermore, they have dynamic properties. For example, the landscape of Antarctica and the Polar regions is able to both contain the images and scope of world making processes, like the exploration of the Northwest Passage, or the search for the eternal, mystical archive that precedes all humanity and unifies all human life under a common heritage. But the dynamic element of Antarctica is that it serves as a mediator between an emerging global society and the hierarchy of nations within the world system. Ozymandias' plan to dethrone the power structure of nations and replace it with a world government is made possible through the use of Antarctica as an aesthetic feature. It is also made possible with the use of the sea

creature, another figure that has consistently been used to mark the departure from the nation-state to a new way of life, a global one, as Captain Nemo does in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. These literary figures appear with great consistency, and not only do they represent a part of a distinct and common global heritage, they make it possible for global heritage to be understood.

We also learned that the value of reading a text closely, as we did in *Watchmen*, illustrates how the precise machinery of literary figures helps make our global realities legible. A global figure doesn't merely appear in a text and make a direct statement about the presence of a global realty. Its machinery is complicated, connecting with the tensions of a story in complex ways, negotiating with the most subtle tensions to produce profound and articulate statements about how global culture has emerged. Thus, a text is a political economy unto itself, and by studying a piece of world literature, we learn how complicated the language in the world system must be in order to produce a sense of global legibility.

One important contribution that emerges as a result of this analysis is a renewed value in the use of the fantastic and the magical in literature. Two points come to mind immediately. First, the fantastic is an important part of the cultural heritage of the world at this moment in its history. Why? Because global structures are always evolving, and in some ways, many essential structures aren't fully crystallized, and it is uncertain whether they will or whether people believe they should. Thus, a tension between our sense of nationalism or localism, and the nostalgia we feel for the places and civil structures that provide us with a sense of security are at odds with the emergence of new phenomena that make us insecure. It is no coincidence that the spread of the H1N1 virus

and the fear of a global pandemic can be expressed through a story about zombies or vampires. Those stories mediate our fear of losing the security provided for by familiar civil structures – that our local way of life will be unable to protect us from pandemics, from nuclear holocaust, or from any other kind of global catastrophe. For this reason, many of the literary figures retain uncanny, supernatural, or fantastic qualities. This claim lies in direct support of scholars and writers who argue that there is more realism in magic realism than there is magic. As such, alterity plays a strong role in the global heritage I have articulated in this project. What comes to mind when I think of alterity after the 20th century is the emergence of newly empowered populations whose recognition as a significant political enclave corresponds with the end of colonialism and the rise of the "Global South." For this reason, people who had been traditionally marginalized within the world system have also been ignored as having anything to say about the way the world has developed. However, the rise of magic realism and its close connection to the cosmologies of folk tales of developing nations tells another story.

This project has demonstrated that the use of the magic realist literary mode is a highly sophisticated machine of global legibility. The use of ghosts or vampires doesn't mean that people who tell these stories are unsophisticated. The opposite is actually true. These stories often contain the most sophisticated ideological containers, figures that are able of carrying multiple histories into new political horizons with great clarity and in some cases with confounding eloquence. Thus, I give great credence to the idea that folk tales and oral traditions were global before the term was fashionable, and constructed the groundwork for world literature as it is being developed. I also believe that future studies can take advantage of this trajectory, because there appears to be a relationship between

the vulnerability that we perceive developing populations to suffer and the way that we deploy the narratives of the vulnerable. What is earned by being represented as a vulnerable subject on the world stage? Surely, every character in *Watchmen* suffered from a profound vulnerability, as do every character in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* or as Alice feels in *Alice in Wonderland*. What then, is the relationship between the vulnerable subject and the idea of a developing population in the world system? Furthermore, how does a "developing population" refer to vulnerable people beyond the North-South paradigm? It has become abundantly clear that every situation of illegibility we have discussed renders us vulnerable. The financial crisis of 2008 illustrates the stark vulnerability of every person to a global political economy that is misunderstood and measured as an international phenomenon. The H1N1 pandemic or the anxieties related to climate change challenge the security of developed nations as well as those in developing nations. Global culture reveals the vulnerability of all human subjects to large-scale phenomena. Thus, the zombie film, or the post-apocalyptic imagery of a nuclear holocaust has a close connection to the "magic" of the developing world, and brings us closer to understanding why the images and objects that frame our global consciousness employ similar literary modes across cultural or political categories. This type of study would benefit from the diagnostic tool I have developed in this study, and would further illuminate the role of world literature and global figures within the world polity.

And finally, this project was able to make a small but important transition that identified a literary function of a global text regardless of how that text registers. A legal document, a treaty, and a novel all produce global literary figures, and these figures help

to schematize the world system in a particular way. Most of the time, they are the essential transitional tool needed to distinguish an international system from a global system. This was the case in the Antarctic Treaty System, which used the figure of the scientific community and scientific research as a means of conferring global institutional authority unto scientists and their research. The authority of nations and the authority of scientists were distinguished form one another in such a way as to demonstrate the limits of the nation-state and the organizational potential of scientific communities. Again, this is a consistent literary figure, which can be seen in novels and films as much as it is seen in treaties and mission statements. To this end, this project has developed a diagnostic tool that can be applied broadly to any number of problems. Here are a few.

Recalling our discussion of the global financial crisis, I described money as a highly signified form of language. Part of the frustrations felt by economists and financial analysts is that "international monetarism" impeded the development of a currency that can be used to measure the value of the global economy. Herein, global currency isn't merely transactional problem, nor is it merely an issue of the practicalities of having a global currency. Those are important considerations. But this is also a literary problem. How can we build a vocabulary that can make the global economy legible? It is becoming increasingly clear that we cannot do so with national or regional currencies. As figural elements, those currencies have their own ideological baggage. They measure value differently because their concerns are grounded in the political urgencies of nations. The desire for a global currency is the desire for an institutionalized standard of measurement that can measure what is distinct in the global economy. Until we evaluate this problem from an ideological and figural perspective, we will continue to

run into the same problems that made understanding the financial downturn of 2008 so difficult. Future studies can take advantage of this diagnostic tool as a way of schematizing the imaginary landscape that global currency would make possible.

I described how the process of judicial review is a very sophisticated process whereby a case creates an imaginary landscape. The people and circumstances of a case have a great effect on the consciousness of the court system and the people under its jurisdiction. For this reason, a study of global legibility within the process of judicial review would yield tremendous benefits. Why are certain cases heard within the ICC or the ICJ? What effect do those cases have on determining a body of global common law? By viewing a court case as a narrative, similar in logic and spirit to Felman's study of the juridical unconscious, then how are the literary figures a means of conferring global authority to certain political bodies, and how does that make the emergence of global civil society more legible?

And finally, for those who study world literature, who teach it and who participate in the culture of the humanities, the problem of legibility is in part a means of understanding how literary critique in its many forms – the journal article, the classroom lecture, the archive, or the museum exhibition – can express, explore, and celebrate the distinct figures of global heritage in relation to its influence on the world system. World literature as I understand it and as I have performed it in this project is not Goethe's project, who was concerned with international literatures and the exchanges between nations. Nor is this project about the perfect deterritorialization of the literary from all civil structures. Both are noble and important projects, and intersect with my own conception of world literature. But this project worked in concert with the machinery of

the world-making process in an attempt to connect the literary with the social in a way that was meaningful to scholars in other fields, to connect the concept of polity and literature with an emphasis on efficacy and strategy.

This project was never intended to be a comprehensive history of world literature, but it provides a fresh perspective on the way that world literature contributes to world heritage and the study of globalization. World literature is in part, the study of textual reproduction within world culture, and as such, this project helps to temper the trajectories of scholars such as David Damrosch, Franco Moretti, Emily Apter, Frederic Jameson and other luminaries in the field of world literature who are interested in world systems and on the role the political economy plays in literary theory. I have identified ways that world literature suffers from the same illegibility that other fields and other structures encounter. The emphasis on nation and on national literatures, even in fields that portend to have emerged out of the nation's fragmentation (like post-colonial literature) can utilize the frame of analysis constructed herein; furthermore, studies of national literatures benefit from the clarification I pose in relation to globalization, and to universalization vs. the global particular. Thus, this project introduces a new perspective on the global political economy, on publics that engage the world system, and on institutional-oriented analyses that are sometimes concealed by the gravity of the nation that is present in most literary critique.

Similarly, this project does not intend to manipulate the discourse of world polity and world systems analysis. But it does expose those studies to a very important way in which literature and methods cultivated from the humanities inform the models that are produced in the social sciences. And much like my contributions to world literature, this

study takes seriously the idea of culture and more particularly world culture in the study of the world system. Culture is not merely some amorphous, relativistic construct that is relegated to "postmodern bliss." This study demonstrates how the social sciences can benefit from understanding the patterns that literary figures produce and how legitimacy and authority are derived from cultural practice, and just as importantly from the critical practice cultivated by the literary scholar. Finding clear and consistent perspectives on globalization has been problematic in contemporary studies of the world system, but world polity theory and other robust theoretical approaches are contributing to a more rigorous model of the emerging structures of world culture within the world system.

Global figures will continue to emerge as mediators between the international and the global, and they will often serve as figures in a state of exile, or must speak as outsiders to a system that is either unwilling or unable to distinguish between the world-making processes of nations and the world-making processes of planetary oriented beings or structures. For this reason, the process of understanding legibility is also the process of understanding how we prescribe non-national actors as legitimate stakeholders within the world system. These figures will also emerge by evoking the heritage of an ancient past and an ancient geography to form a clear connection between the planet and what the planet represents as a distinct landmass and our sense of belonging. This project has achieved a small but significant contribution to the study of global structures. Literary figures are ways of connecting complex social negotiations with a planetary sense of belonging. They mediate what we perceive as the most tangible part of our social realities into a form of global consciousness. They do this by creating an adequate imaginary landscape, an ideological container that can funnel what is lived experience

but unknowable into something that is legible and knowable for anyone, anywhere on this Earth who is willing and able to read the writing on the wall.

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