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Mariano Siskind

THE GLOBALIZATION OF THE NOVEL
AND THE NOVELIZATION OF THE
GLOBAL: A CRITIQUE OF WORLD
LITERATURE (2010)

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In the article here included Siskind considers the novel, which in many ways has been the favorite genre of scholars discussing world literature, from various points of view. To begin with, he looks at the novel as indeed a world genre, spreading the idea of an originally European bourgeois order of things around the globe, especially so in the nineteenth century, and thus imaginatively paralleling the effective spread of such order as chronicled and/or projected philosophically, historically and economically by Kant, Hegel and Marx. It is precisely in this idea of a bourgeois order that the attraction of the genre lay also outside of Europe, whence it originated in its modern form. Siskind then looks at how the novel itself at the same time imagined the world as available to the European bourgeois, thus literarily appropriating the world for the consumption of its European, or by extension Western, readers. Finally, he reads recent theories of world literature, such as those of Moretti, Casanova and Damrosch as attempts to overcome the identity politics of preceding approaches such as postcolonialism or multiculturalism. Siskind closes with a warning, though, that pedagogical practice—at least in the United States—is not necessarily in step with these theoretical concerns and may in fact re-appropriate world literary texts for identitarian purposes. With its unusual breadth of reference, its firm but unobtrusive grounding in philosophy, economics and literary theory, and its level-headed discussion of what the contribution of "world literature" may be to the bringing into being of a more cosmopolitan world, Siskind's article usefully summarizes where the world literature debate was at when this volume went to press.

Mariano Siskind, "The Globalization of the Novel and the Novelization of the Global: A Critique of World Literature," *Comparative Literature* 62 (2010) 4: 336–60.

Kant and the global novel

In "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose" (1784), Kant drafts the historiographic parameters for a re-conceptualization of a human history narrated from the point of view of the actualization of freedom in a cosmopolitan political formation that he imagines as a world-republic (*Weltrepublik*).¹ In this crucial essay, Kant articulates the passage from the conceptual universality of reason to its universal (that is, global) actualization in concrete cosmopolitan political and economic institutions, inaugurating what I have called elsewhere a "discourse of globalization." The discursive construction of globalization is a highly ideological operation that consists of naturalizing an assumed universality of reason that is in fact the result of a universalization of the cultural particularity of the bourgeoisie. More importantly, Kant's discourse of globalization translates the abstract and philosophical concept of the universal into its concrete geopolitical actualization in a world structured as a totality of meaning governed by modern reason. Kant's narrative of the global realization of bourgeois freedom (soon after perfected by Hegel through the concept of "world history") opens up, on the one hand, the interpretative horizon of globalization as the necessary spatial dimension of the project of modernity and provides, on the other, the epistemological structure for the economic, political, and military discourses of globalization that surround us today.

Here I am interested in underscoring, in addition to the cosmopolitan narrative of Kant's essay, an idea that, to my knowledge, has been overlooked by the many literary critics interested in the relation between literature and globalization. Towards the end of "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose" Kant suggests that the novel could play an important role in the production of the discourses of globalization by imagining the world as a totality mediated by bourgeois culture. He concludes that "it is admittedly a strange and at first sight absurd proposition to write a *history* according to an idea of how world events must develop if they are to conform to certain rational ends; it would seem that only a *novel* could result from such premises" (51–52).

What I find striking about Kant's admission is his implicit disciplinary comparison between philosophic and novelistic discourses as he attempts to determine which one is the more adequate to tell the story of a modern world that should march towards the global actualization of rational freedom. He seems to be saying that although it might look like the novel is much better suited to accomplish this task it is a philosopher's job. But even if Kant considers that it is the philosopher who must *conceptualize* the process of globalization, his formulation concedes that the challenge of *imagining* the world as a reconciled bourgeois totality of freedom could fall to the novel²—the novel as the cultural formation that, during the nineteenth century, renders the historical process of globalization visible; the novel, or at least the imaginary potential of discourse contingently embodied in the novel form, as that which makes the process of globalization available so that reading audiences can work through the transformations they are experiencing at home.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, when bourgeois reason (through its economic, political, and cultural institutions) was thought to occupy every single region of the planet, the novel produced privileged and efficient narratives of the global formation of a bourgeois world. Because the novel was the hegemonic form that bourgeois imagination adopted in the nineteenth century, and because of the aesthetic and political force of the social totalities it was capable of constructing, most novels dealing with distant places produced powerful images of the globalization of bourgeois culture.³ This is the specificity of the relation between the novel and the historical process of globalization vis-à-vis modern philosophy: if philosophy conceptualized the transformation of the globe as the realization of a totality of bourgeois freedom (Kant, Hegel, and Marx), the novel provided this

philosophical concept with a visual reality, a set of images and imaginaries that elevated the fiction of bourgeois ubiquity to a foundational myth of modernity.

My goal in this essay is to propose two different but complementary models with which to think about the relation between the novel and the discourses of globalization. The first—*the globalization of the novel*—works not with particular textual formations but with the historical expansion of the novel-form hand-in-hand with the colonial enterprise of Western Europe. This concept will allow me to review the historical and theoretical parameters that have been used to study both the historical spread of the novel from Europe to the peripheries and the constitution, at the end of the nineteenth and throughout the twentieth century, of a global system of production, reception, and translation of novels.

The second model—*the novelization of the global*—focuses on the production of images of a globalized world as they are constructed in specific novels. I will read these figures, primarily, in novels by Jules Verne and a novel by Eduardo Ladislao Holmberg. As might be expected, the kind of images they create of travelers spreading modern bourgeois culture throughout the world and beyond, reaching even into outer space, are entirely different. While Verne was a professional novelist working in France and surrounded by imperialist discourses and a reading public imbedded in its state's mission *civilisatrice*, Holmberg was an amateur writer (whose first occupation was in the natural sciences) living in Buenos Aires, a large village (a *gran aldea*) at the threshold of becoming a city. Verne lived and breathed the experience of modernity; Holmberg's Latin American context was constituted by a desire for modernity itself.⁴ The point I try to make is that the particular geopolitical determinations that marked each of these writers produced dissimilar imaginaries of the global reach of their bourgeois characters and plots. In Verne's novels, omnipotent bourgeois characters (based on the *topos* of the *bourgeois conquérant*) travel adventurously, around the entire world and beyond: the bottom of the sea, the center of the earth, the moon, Mars, and the sun. In Holmberg's *Viaje maravilloso del señor Nic-Nac al planeta Marte* (1875), however, the social position of the Argentine (and Latin American) bourgeoisie within the global economy of the discourse of adventure allows only for spiritual/immaterial/imaginary travel: the body of Nic-Nac never leaves his home, and only his soul (!) travels to Mars. I read these novels, which take their materials from discourses of adventure, science fiction, and spiritism, in relation to the hegemonic protocols of realism in order to try to broaden the concept of representation as it pertains to the world historical globalization of the European bourgeoisie.

Finally, in a coda to the main argument, I connect the interpretative models of the *globalization of the novel* and *the novelization of the global* that I'm putting forth here with the *rentrée* of the concept of world literature. Recently re-introduced to academic debate by Franco Moretti, Pascale Casanova, and David Damrosch, among others, this restored notion of world literature can be understood as an attempt to conceptualize the global ubiquity of the novel since the mid-twentieth century. In the final part of the article I analyze what could be called the cultural politics of world literature and the critical and pedagogical practices that are derived from this concept. I also examine its underlying claim to address, in academic practices, cosmopolitan expectations related to the production of a discourse about the world based on respect for cultural difference. In other words, my question in this closing section is whether world literature, as a concept and as a practice, is capable of becoming an effective cosmopolitan discourse.

The globalization of the novel

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the novel traveled from Europe to Latin America, as well as to other peripheries of the world, through the colonial and postcolonial

channels of symbolic and material exchange.⁵ Novels were appealing to a Creole class torn by the contradiction between its cultural and economic attachment to Europe and its desire for political autonomy. Local elites found in those narratives of subjective freedom the possibility of imagining and modeling identities independent from the colonial metropolis. Specific to the Latin American consumption of novels was the opportunity to grasp an experience of modernity that, for the most part, was not available to the reading Creole class in its everyday life, despite liberal aspirations that were beginning to be articulated as a political and cultural project.

Because of the kind of experiences that the novel afforded to the readers of the colonial and semi-colonial peripheries, Latin American intellectuals immediately realized the important role that the consumption, production, and translation of novels could play in the process of socio-cultural modernization. The Argentine Domingo F. Sarmiento was perhaps the most prominent writer and politician to propose that novels were an essential instrument for the modernization of Latin America. In *Facundo. Civilización y Barbarie* (1845) he argued that Latin America could leave its pre-modern backwardness if it imposed over its barbarian, natural being civilized/modern (that is, European) cultural practices and institutions. Modernization was a process of conversion (forced or voluntary—and, in any case, violent) enacted by reproducing European modernity in Latin America. Immediately after the publication of *Facundo*, Sarmiento traveled to Europe, North Africa, and the U.S. Walking through the streets of Paris, Sarmiento reflects that

Las ideas y modas de Francia, sus hombres y sus novelas, son hoy el modelo y la pauta de todas las otras naciones; y empiezo a creer que esto que nos seduce por todas partes, esto que creemos imitación, no es sino aquella aspiración de la índole humana a acercarse a un tipo de perfección, que está en ella misma y se desenvuelve más o menos según las circunstancias de cada pueblo.

(138–39)⁶

The ideas and fashion of France, her men and novels, are today the model and pattern of all other nations; I am starting to believe that this which seduces us here and there, this which we think is imitation, is nothing but the inherently human aspiration to be close to perfection that develops itself according to the circumstances of each nation.

(my translation)

Sarmiento defends a mimetic path to modernization by arguing that imitation is not the post-colonial condition of the periphery, but, in a Platonic turn, an inherently human feature. And he does not hesitate to prescribe precisely *what* aspects of modern European culture should be imitated: namely, discourses (ideas and trends) and cultural institutions, with the novel being the single example that he provides.⁷ The importance of the novel as an effective modernizing institution has been studied extensively by Alejandra Laera in *El tiempo vacío de la ficción*, where she quotes a rare journalistic piece by Sarmiento, “Las novelas” (1856), in which he compares the degree of modernization of a given culture with the number of novels it consumes: “Caramelos y novelas andan juntos en el mundo, y la civilización de los pueblos se mide por el azúcar que consumen y las novelas que leen ¿Para qué sirve el azúcar? Díganlo los pampas que no lo usan” (qtd. in Laera 9; Candy and novels go hand-in-hand in the world, and the culture of a nation can be measured by the amount of sugar they consume and the novels they read. What is sugar good for? Ask the Pampa Indians who don’t use it; my translation). Although sweetness, that surplus addition to the natural taste of food, can be considered a sign of gastronomic refinement, of civilization, its value as an inscription in

networks of modern consumption becomes especially clear, Sarmiento suggests, when juxtaposed to the sentimental and political education the novel provides—the novel as a universal measure of modernity.

Through processes of formal and thematic imitation, importation, translation, and adaptation, the institution of the novel grew roots in Latin America during the nineteenth century, and towards the 1880s novelistic production and consumption had become well established (the same process takes place, with minor temporal variations, in colonial Africa, Asia, and Eastern and Southern Europe).⁸ Due to the global hegemony of modern-bourgeois European culture (produced and reproduced in its colonial, postcolonial, and neocolonial links with its peripheries) the novel was the first universal aesthetic form of modernity.⁹ It is important to bear in mind that the global preeminence of the novel-form among all other discursive genres cannot be explained as the result of a supposedly universal need for narration: narration and the novel are in fact incommensurable cultural practices. The universality of the novel-form was the historical outcome of the formation (through colonialism, trade, and promises of emancipation) of a world in which bourgeois culture was increasingly hegemonic, if not forcefully dominant. Wherever one looked for modern desires (desire for self-determination, for identity, for material development and progress) one found novels. One could thus define the novel in the periphery as modern desire formally enclosed and regulated.

Was there (indeed, is there), however, a difference between the European novel and the Latin American novel, the Asian novel, the African novel, and so on? Well, yes and no. Yes, one could point to the diverse formal and thematic aspects of individual works (something I do in the next section, in which I conceptualize and analyze the idea of *the novelization of the global*), whose difference was informed by, among other things, a geopolitically determined experience of the process of globalization of modern institutions, practices, and values. However, if one looks at the globalization of the novel-form as a modern and modernizing institution, it becomes quite difficult to identify differences in terms of the institutional and political function of the novel in these different locations. In other words, the world system of novelistic production, consumption, and translation reinforces the dream of a global totality of bourgeois freedom with Hegelian overtones—that is, a totality whose internal heterogeneity (the formal and thematic particularity of the Latin American or African or Asian novel vis-à-vis the European novel) is functional to the identity of the *global novel*. I insist that the globality of the novel-form is the result of a historical process of global hegemony—the product of the universalization of its bourgeois and European particularity. In an interesting note in the *Prison Notebooks*, “Hegemony of Western Culture over the Whole World Culture,” Gramsci uses the very category he developed to analyze social formations within national scenarios to consider the processes of globalization as the world history of the West’s hegemony over its cultural others:

Even if one admits that other cultures have had an importance and a significance in the process of “hierarchical” unification of world civilization (and this should certainly be admitted without question), they have had a universal value only in so far as they have become constituent elements of European culture, which is the only historically and concretely universal culture—in so far, that is, as they have contributed to the process of European thought and been assimilated to it.

(416)

In this quotation, Gramsci is at his most Hegelian. He affirms that World Culture—the possibility of proposing the existence of a global cultural field—depends on the universal mediation of Europe. As global *hegemon*, European culture recognizes and incorporates the subaltern aesthetic norms, forms, and practices that are central to the cultures of its others in

order to form a world cultural field structured around the predominant *nuclei* that governed the appropriations that gave it form in the first place—a global cultural field whose universality and relatively stable homogeneity is the result of the hegemonic mediation of European or North-Atlantic bourgeois culture. Thus, the periphery does not merely receive and absorb cultural mandates from the core based on an international division of labor and trade balance that favors the development of the First World; on the contrary, core/periphery relations are culturally mediated by a hegemonic production of consent in the margins of globalization.¹⁰ This hegemonic cultural mediation can be read in the gap between the globalization of the novel and the novelization of the global—between capitalism's creation of "a world after its own image" (Marx and Engels 477) through the global expansion of its aesthetic and cultural institutions, and the local literary reappropriations and reinscriptions of that epochal process.

In this sense, and taking a cue from the way Gramsci understands hegemony, the operation of universalization that constitutes the discursive basis for the globality of the novel should not be understood as an instance of the periphery's cultural subordination to the core. Not at all. That is why I mention notions of "importation," "translation," and "adaptation," instead of thinking only in terms of "imitation," "implantation," or "imposition." The ideas of coercion and consent imbedded in the concept of hegemony presuppose an active agency on the part of peripheral cultures in the enterprise of the universalization of the novel. That is, in the nineteenth and early twentieth century the representation of the particularity of bourgeois European culture and its institutions as universal was an enterprise shared by intellectuals and practitioners both at the center and at the margins of a global discursive field that sanctioned the universality of the novel-form.

It would of course be easy to dismiss the universalization of the novel as cultural form and modern institution simply as a function of colonialism, to see globalization *only* as a new name for the same old colonial relations. But I think this would be a mistake. Although both processes coincide to some extent, the global expansion of modern institutions presupposes the universal realization of the promise of a political and cultural modernity, and—whether in the nineteenth century or today—the peripheries of the world have an intense desire for socio-political and cultural modernization (a desire represented in and by novels). In other words, the globalization of bourgeois modernity and its institutions in the nineteenth century implied *both* the threat of (neo)colonial oppression and the promise of emancipation. Looking at this aporia through the glass of the deconstructive dictum that Derrida first formulated in "Plato's Pharmacy" about the double meaning of *pharmakon* as medicine and poison, one could say that globalization is both the condition of possibility and impossibility of modernity (and of novelistic difference) in the margins of the universal.

The novelization of the global

The model of *the globalization of the novel* serves the purpose of explaining the role the novel-form played in the global expansion of modern culture and its institutions during the nineteenth century. The crisscrossing trajectories of infinite exchanges, importations, translations, and adaptations of novels (what I term *the global novel as cultural form*) make visible the spatial extension and intensity of the process of globalization. However, this explicatory matrix does not provide any insights into the different textual devices, strategies, plots, or characters that can be found in the great variety of novels that gave specific content to *the global novel as cultural form*. It is necessary, then, to formulate a hypothesis capable of accounting not only for the historical spread of a global form but also for the narratives of globalization as a discursive figure produced by a subset of texts usually concerned with lands and peoples far removed

from Europe. If *the globalization of the novel* looks at the world as a global totality of bourgeois culture and makes sense of it as a system and as a world-historical process, *the novelization of the global*—the second and complementary way in which I am trying to conceptualize the idea of the global novel—traces the specific imaginaries of universalism that these novelistic texts forge, putting into circulation effective accounts of the global reach of the bourgeoisie in terms of the production and reproduction of discourses of universal adventure, exploration, and colonial profit.

Jules Verne's novels in particular provide a productive case study of the novelization of the globe. If spatial meaning is discursively produced (an idea Edward W. Said worked through with the notion of "imaginative geography"), or, to put it bluntly, if fiction is the way we apprehend, categorize, and represent the world, then Verne's novels can be said to have provided some of the most radical imaginaries of the transformation of the planet into a totality of bourgeois culture and sociability, producing a textual surplus that exceeded what is usually read as a mere fiction of colonialism.¹¹ The bourgeois characters in his novels travel across the five continents, remapping the world in an epistemology of adventure and exotism (see, for example, *Cinq semaines en ballon*, 1863; *Voyages et aventures du Capitaine Hatteras*, 1864–65; and *Le tour du monde en 80 jours*, 1873). Furthermore, Verne even dares to send his bourgeois men beyond the surface of the earth into the unknown: to the moon (*De la terre à la lune*, 1865; *Autour de la lune*, 1870), to the sun (*Hector Servandac*, 1874–76), to the bottom of the sea (*Vingt mille lieues sous les mers*, 1869–70), to the center of the earth (*Voyage au centre de la terre*, 1864). In the closing paragraphs of *De la terre à la lune*, the omniscient narrator channels the pride and fear J.T. Maston felt for his three friends in space: "ils s'étaient mis en dehors de l'humanité en franchissant les limites imposées par Dieu aux créatures terrestres" (243; they had put themselves beyond humanity, surpassing the limits imposed by the Creator on his earthly creatures; my translation). In Verne's novels there are no limits for the realization of the bourgeois dream of universal freedom: the utmost recondite corners of the universe expect the arrival of Verne's *bourgeois conquérants* (see Morazé). Contemporary readers saw in these novels their own *local* experience transformed into global adventures that underscored the intensity and excitement available to those individuals willing to embrace their bourgeois subjectivity and explore its universalizing potential. As a result, these narratives have to be read not just as performances of the discourses of globalization but also as a recreation and reinforcement of the conditions of possibility for the universal adventure of the European bourgeoisie.

The construction of images and imaginaries of globality, of the transformation of the earth by bourgeois desire, is a symbolic challenge that could not be completed in one novel. Therefore, it has to be reconstructed as a panorama by putting together the pieces found in many (if not all) of Verne's novelistic archive. Here are some of the narrative strategies that opened up the possibility, for novels and their readers, to imagine the earth (in fact, the entire universe) as a bourgeois playing field, ready and available for science, profit, and amusement.

(1) All of Verne's novels involve travels of some sort; in these journeys there is always at least one instance when the novel takes a step back to capture an image of space as a meaningful cultural totality. Because the eye's perception of the real is always fragmented, articulating those fragments to create a larger mental image of something we cannot apprehend except in successive fragments is a complex psychological and intellectual operation that Kant theorizes conclusively in *The Critique of Judgment*. Only an imaginative discourse can produce an image of the earth as a round significant whole that is in fact inaccessible to empirical perception. In *Autour de la lune* (1870), for example, Michel Ardan, the French astronaut of a crew of three (the other two are American), looks at the small window of the rocket and exclaims: "Hein! Mes chers camarades, sera-ce assez curieux d'avoir la Terre pour

la Lune, de la voir se lever à l'horizon, d'y reconnaître la configuration de ses continents, de se dire: là est l'Amérique, là est l'Europe; puis de la suivre lorsqu'elle va se perdre dans les rayons du Soleil!" (94; "Ah! my dear comrades, it will be rather curious to have the earth for our moon, to see it rise on the horizon, to recognize the shape of its continents, and to say to oneself, 'There is America, there is Europe'; then to follow it when it is about to lose itself in the sun's rays!"). This is the same bird's-eye perspective that Dr. Fergusson has in *Cinq semaines en ballon* (1863): "Alors l'Afrique offrira aux races nouvelles les trésors accumulés depuis des siècles en son sein. Ces climats fatals aux étrangers s'épurèrent par les assolements et les drainages; ces eaux éparses se réuniront en un lit commun pour former une artère navigable. Et ce pays sur lequel nous planons, plus fertile, plus riche, plus vital que les autres, deviendra quelque grand royaume, où se produiront des découvertes plus étonnantes encore que la vapeur et l'électricité" (88; Africa will be there to offer to new races the treasures that for centuries have been accumulating in her breast. Those climates now so fatal to strangers will be purified by cultivation and by drainage of the soil, and those scattered water supplies will be gathered into one common bed to form an artery of navigation. Then this country over which we are now passing, more fertile, richer, and fuller of vitality than the rest, will become some grand realm where more astonishing discoveries than steam and electricity will be brought to light). In addition to the clearly colonialist idea that Africa "will offer" its treasures to the new race of explorers, scientists, and colonialists, the view from afar and from above produces a clear hierarchy between the subject and the spatial (humanized) object of observation, producing a symbolic relation in which the latter subordinates itself to the will of the former. In their mappings (of planet Earth in the first example, of a whole continent in the second) Verne's novels represent space as an opportunity available for bourgeois exploration, adventure, and profit.¹²

(2) Given the positivistic inclinations of the French bourgeoisie during the second half of the nineteenth century, the effectiveness of an image of the world or universe as a homogeneous space that can be crisscrossed back and forth depends on its measurability. For example, the eighty days that Phileas Fogg gives himself to circle the earth (*Le tour du monde en quatre-vingt jours*, 1872) signals the philosophical and scientific certainty that the earth can be apprehended in a predetermined amount of time. All that is required is a willful individual. Analogously, *De la terre à la lune* (1865) is a journey that is expected to be completed in exactly ninety-seven hours and twenty minutes, as the subtitle of the book indicates (*Trajet direct en 97 heures 20 minutes*); in fact, the obsessive preparation for the journey and the study of all the variables, scientific and economic, occupies almost the entirety of the novel, which ends right after the rocket is launched. In both cases, the possibility of measuring with scientific precision the course of the adventure reinforces the initial intuition that seizing the earth or the entire galaxy is entirely feasible.

(3) After having produced the images that trigger an imaginary of global availability, these novels also represent the actual process of taking possession of these "vacant" spaces. Verne sometimes invents characters who are straightforward representatives of state colonialism—for example, the members of the Gun Club in *Autour de la lune*, who propose the exploration of outer space "Pour prendre possession de la Lune au nom des États-Unis pour ajouter un quarantième état à l'Union! Pour coloniser les régions lunaires, pour les cultiver, pour les peupler, pour y transporter toutes les prodiges de l'art, de la science et de l'industrie. Pour civiliser les Sélénites" (63; To take possession of the moon in the name of the United States of America! It is to add a fortieth state to the glorious Union! It is to colonize the lunar regions, to cultivate them, to people them, to transport to them some of our wonders of art, science, and industry! It is to civilize the Selenites). But that is not the only path available. A more interesting one is the one chosen by those characters who do not advance their colonial agenda in the name of the nation state but rather in the name of

modernity, the universal and universalizing goal of bourgeois culture. That is why Verne's novels are populated by bourgeois businessmen, politicians, professors, *pater familiae*, scientists, and *bonvivants*—not only from France, but from most of the other Western European nations, not to mention the U.S., Russia, and virtually any country that might have had at the time a growing middle class. The *bourgeoisification* of the world: that is the key to understanding the transnational dimension of the philosophical and literary conceptualization of the process of globalization, even in the nineteenth century—the desire to produce a homogeneous bourgeois totality that eventually would coincide with the surface of the earth (and, in Verne, with the entire universe). That is why *De la terre à la lune*, perhaps the most striking novel within this corpus, closes with a sentence (spoken by J.T. Maston, the secretary of the Gun Club) that pays homage to his astronaut friends, who are venturing into outer space in the name of bourgeois civilization: "A eux trois ils emportent dans l'espace toutes les ressources de l'art, de la science et de l'industrie. Avec cela on fait ce qu'on veut, et vous verrez qu'ils se tireront d'affaire!" (244; "Those three men have carried into space all the resources of art, science, and industry. With that, one can do anything; and you will see that, some day, they will come out all right").

Jules Verne's novels usually have been read as the intersection of science fiction and adventure. Without trying to dispute these generic inscriptions, I would like to propose that, in order to underscore the political relation his narratives establish with the global expansion of bourgeois-modern institutions and practices, one needs to question their relation to the realist novel's hegemonic protocols of representation. In other words, what happens if we think of Verne's novels as a form of *oblique realism*: the construction of bourgeois reality, not necessarily as it appears to be, but *as it could be* if it were to actualize its potential? Unlike the Verne scholars who have spent a great deal of energy discussing whether Verne prophesied technologies that were going to be invented in the next century or simply imagined uses for the technology already available at his time, I propose to read Verne's novels in the margins of the realist novel's representational protocols: that is, as narratives that give us an insight into the world historical, universalizing role of the modern bourgeois subject, an insight that the realist novel, with its frontal attack on the *real* of bourgeois social relations and its fiction of transparency, could not afford to produce as evocatively. Through a fantastic/scientific detour, Verne's *oblique realism* taps into the *real* of the global imaginaries of European modernity: as such, it is a representation of the discursive conditions of globalization.¹³ What Verne's singular realism represents, then, is not (not only, not necessarily) the concrete social formation of the turn of the century's middle classes, but the latent power of the ideology that sustains it.¹⁴ This is the radical and productive ideological potential that the *novelization of the global* opens up for the late nineteenth-century novel: to imagine the world as the global space, determined by bourgeois culture, in which the novel, or rather the global novel, will inscribe itself.

The Latin American novelization of the global

The globalization of the novel and the novelization of the global are not two parallel or alternative critical roads. It is the critic who makes them intersect when reading comparatively novels produced or consumed at different locations on an uneven global field of production, consumption, and translation, thus mapping the ubiquity of the novel-form. In other words, to understand the relations between different aesthetic articulations of the novelization of the global at distant points of a global novelistic field (in this case, the material conditions of production of Verne's novels, on the one hand, and those of Eduardo Holmberg's *Viaje maravilloso del Señor Nic-Nac al planeta Marte*, on the other), one needs to read diachronically the displacements of

"outer-space novels" (the globalization of the novel) together with the actual images of the universe produced in each of these cultural locations (the novelization of the global).

Holmberg began publishing *Viaje maravilloso del Señor Nic-Nac al planeta Marte* as a serial in the Buenos Aires newspaper *El Nacional* on November 29, 1875. It tells the story of Nic-Nac, an aficionado of all kinds of scientific and pseudo-scientific disciplines and gadgets, who makes an appointment with a doctor in spiritism who has just arrived from Europe: "Aquel espiritista se llama Friederich Seele, o si queréis su nombre en castellano, Federico Alma" (39; The spiritist's name was Friederich Seele, or if you want his name in Spanish, Frederick Soul).¹⁵ Nic-Nac develops a "spiritual" crush on the doctor and convinces Seele to teach him the technique of transmigration or *transplanetation* ("transplanetación"), which consists of fasting for extensive periods of time until the soul leaves the body to travel across the universe: "¿y si ahora tuviera la idea de lanzar mi espíritu a visitar los planetas?" (43; how about launching my spirit and visit other planets now?). After eight days of fasting, Nic-Nac collapses and, as his soul leaves his body, he sees from above a doctor trying to reanimate him. Soon after beginning his spiritual journey, Nic-Nac encounters Dr. Seele, who will be his guide in the voyage to Mars, a planet whose natural, socio-political, and cultural features turn out to resemble those of Argentina.¹⁶ After his spiritual adventure, Nic-Nac (or, rather, his soul) returns to his body in Buenos Aires.

The most interesting trait of Holmberg's book is its structure. The narrative Nic-Nac writes to tell his story and authorize his spiritual space travels is framed by two paratexts by the apocryphal editor of Nic-Nac's manuscript. In the "Introduction," his editor refers ironically to the general reading public's relationship with paranormal phenomena and narrates an encounter with two young men who read out loud newspaper headlines stating that Nic-Nac has been admitted to a hospital for mental patients. Moreover, people in the street don't seem to agree on whether Nic-Nac's journey is real or imaginary, "unos negando el hecho, otros compadeciendo a su autor, algunos aceptando todas y cada una de las circunstancias del viaje" (30; some denying the truth of the event, others feeling sorry for the author, and some accepting every single detail of the circumstances of the trip). Similarly, in the apocryphal "Note of the editor"—"El editor toma un momento la palabra" (The editor briefly takes the floor)—that closes the novel, the fictionalized publisher of the book blames the deficiencies of the text on the fact that the author is insane—"¿Pero quién es Nic-Nac? ¿Dónde está? ¡Ah! ¡En una casa de locos!" (179; But who is Nic-Nac? Where is he? Oh! In a loony bin!)—and informs the reader of the psychiatric diagnosis: "manía planetaria" (180; planetary mania).

There are many things to compare in Verne's and Holmberg's novelization of the global (or, perhaps more accurately, of the universal or the *cosmic*)—among them, the huge disparity in the aesthetic quality of the novels (*Nic-Nac* is a poorly written narrative in terms of its style and plot).¹⁷ Rather than focus on the uneven worth of the novels—which could be explained in terms of the individual talent of the novelists or the varying degrees of autonomy within the French and Argentine literary fields—I wish to concentrate on critical questions raised both by the immaterial nature of Nic-Nac's universal spiritual/imaginary journey and by the ambiguity and shadow of doubt that the text itself casts over Nic-Nac's first-person narrative. If in Verne's novels the universality of the traveling characters is determined by the fact that they take real trips with real consequences (within the plot), that is, that they transcend their respective localities (France, the U.S., or the Earth at large) in order to materialize their universal aspirations by making the universe *theirs*, how should one read the imaginary or spiritual nature of Nic-Nac's journey to Mars in Holmberg's novel? Or, to say it differently, how should one understand Nic-Nac's adventure to Mars when the universal predicate of his trip depends, not on leaving his country, but on leaving his own body?

Perhaps the most obvious possibility would be to interpret it in relation to Holmberg's marked interest in spiritism and paranormal phenomena, and his attempt to reconcile these

practices with the hegemonic positivist creed—an attempt that was widespread in both Latin America and in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁸ However, Holmberg's intellectual curiosity about spiritism does not exhaust the differences between his novels and Verne's, nor does it explain his decision to narrate an imaginary/spiritual trip instead of a real one, as in Verne's case. The imaginary nature of Nic-Nac's travel might also be characterized as a novelistic option determined by the conditions of enunciation at the periphery—conditions that did not provide the symbolic and material resources available to Verne. Holmberg's choice would then be attributed to the marginality of a culture defined by the lack of a first-hand experience of the universalizing/globalizing potential of the bourgeoisie. According to this line of thought, Holmberg represented a spiritual voyage because it was all his marginal conditions of enunciation could afford. Nic-Nac's journey would thus have been triggered by a cosmopolitan desire to explore what lies beyond one's own location, but it would have to be considered a less consequential kind of cosmopolitan drive: a spiritual, immaterial cosmopolitanism, aware of its limitations and impossibilities.

But the assumptions behind these interpretations are not historically accurate. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Latin American elites were in fact engaged in worldwide travels and explorations. And even if they were not inscribed in a world historical transcultural imperialistic process, they did not lack the experience of hegemony, since they were engaged in an internal colonization that would soon lead to the reaffirmation of liberal nation states. Holmberg, moreover, could easily have written an account of an actual trip to Mars by an Argentine astronaut in the same way Verne sent to the moon two Americans and a Frenchman. Why not? Verne's *De la terre à la lune* was published ten years before *Viaje maravilloso del Señor Nic-Nac al planeta Marte*, and it seems highly likely that Holmberg, who is usually identified as the first Latin American to write science fiction (see Prieto), would have read Verne's novel before writing *Nic-Nac*.¹⁹

Why, then, did Holmberg write a novel about a galactic voyage made possible by transmigration and *transplanetation* instead of modern technology and science? Was his decision structurally determined by the material conditions of Latin America in the context of worldwide processes of globalization? Or was it the result of his interest and belief in paranormal phenomena? Structural determinations (such as lacking a direct experience of technological modernity, or the cultural authorization of paranormal explanations) play only a limited role in a writer's creative decisions inscribed within the relative autonomy of the literary imagination. I want to suggest that there is no need to explain the nature of Nic-Nac's spiritual voyage by resorting to either subjective or objective explanations, because the novel itself, in its paratexts, defines the main character's travel as a pathological adventure:

No, Nic-Nac no es un loco furioso, es un loco tranquilo. Y es tan cierto lo que afirmamos, que basta abrir el libro de entradas de aquel establecimiento para leer una partida en la que consta que el señor Nic-Nac padece de una "manía planetaria". El director del establecimiento, hombre instruido y observador incansable, ha manifestado que Nic-Nac es un ente original, afable, un tanto instruido, al que se le pueden creer muchas de las cosas que dice, exceptuando, empero, los medios de los que se ha valido para transmigrar de la Tierra a Marte y de éste a aquélla.

(179–80)

No, Nic-Nac is not a raving lunatic, he is crazy but calm. We are certain about this, and the records of the establishment confirm it in an entry stating that Mr. Nic-Nac suffers from "planetary mania." The director of the establishment, a learned man and indefatigable observer, has declared that Nic-Nac is an original,

affable, slightly educated being; one can believe almost anything he says except his references to the means he may have used to transmigrate from the Earth to Mars and back.

By stating that the main character suffers from "planetary mania," the *editor* returns Nic-Nac's experience to the scientific realm of psychiatric taxonomies, within the limits of which *transplanetation* is a mental illness and not the possibility of a journey through the universe. The *editor* sets the record straight: anyone aspiring to reach the stars should develop the necessary technology, just as the members of the Gun Club did in Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon*; paranormal sciences do not lead to the realization of universality but to psychiatric confinement. At the end of the *editor's* note, the rational and instrumental relation with the world that had been broken by Nic-Nac's first person (delusional) narrative has been restored, and literary renderings of the universe as a totality of meaning are again mediated by realist representations à la Verne.

If Verne's novels are capable of producing effective images of the world as a totality of freedom mediated by modern social relations, it is precisely because they are confident about the place they have as novels (indeed as French novels) in the historical process of the global expansion of bourgeois institutions, values, and practices. What determines, in turn, *Nic-Nac's* "radical situational difference in the cultural production of meaning" (Jameson, "A Brief Response" 26)? *Viaje maravilloso del Señor Nic-Nac al planeta Marte* does not even attempt to imagine a world unified under the hegemony of modern social relations. Instead, it puts forth an alternative universalist imaginary, only to negate it later, as if the marginal conditions of production of universality allow only for the demarcation of the limits of its impossibility.

At a historical juncture immediately prior to the inauguration of a new universalist horizon for Latin American culture marked by the discourse of *modernismo*, at a time when Latin American writers were primarily concerned with the exploration of the frontiers of their national or regional particularities (think of Ignacio Manuel Altamirano's *El Zarco*, Lucio V. Mansilla's *Una excursión a los indios ranqueles*, José Hernández's *Martín Fierro*, Francisco Moreno's *Viaje a la Patagonia Austral*, most of Ricardo Palma's *Tradiciones peruanas*, González Prada's first essays, and Machado de Assis's *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*), Holmberg's *Nic-Nac* posed questions about the novelization of the global and the universal that few others in the peripheries of the world seemed to be considering: Can my characters travel the way Verne's characters travel? Can they produce with and through their displacements images of a reconciled and available modern world? Can they be identified as cosmopolitan, metropolitan, or colonial subjects, striving to inscribe themselves in the universal order of modernity? Verne's novels do not need to give affirmative answers to these questions because the answers are presupposed in the texts' confident belief in their universal discursive nature. The "radical situational difference" (Jameson, "A Brief Response" 26) of Holmberg's *Nic-Nac*—and, in fact, of any Latin American narrative being interrogated by questions better suited for a Dr. Fergusson, a Phileas Fogg, or a Michel Ardan—lies not in a hopeful affirmation of those questions, but in the recognition of a limit. It is this epistemological obstacle that might be taken to inform the conditions of enunciation of a marginal space, where the world historical affirmation of a teleological discourse of globalization is decoded as the "planetary mania" of a schizophrenic and the "spiritist fantasy" of a boorish and precarious proto-novel that nevertheless anticipates the cosmopolitan aspirations of the discourse of *modernismo*.

Coda: a critique of world literature

The twofold argument of this paper stems from a double anxiety: on the one hand, a question about how to conceptualize the role of literature—and of the novel in particular—in the

production and reproduction of the discourses of globalization and, at the same time, the ways in which those discourses determine the imagination and its forms in the novel; on the other, uneasiness about the re-emergence in U.S. academic discourse of the concept of world literature as an attempt to address what I have chosen to call in this essay the global ubiquity of literary texts, the universality of the novel as a modern institution, and, thus, the formation of a global field of production, consumption, translation, and displacements of novels.²⁰ In this final part of the essay, I would like to interrogate, not the notion of world literature itself, but rather the critical practices, political implications, and picture of the global literary field presupposed by this concept.²¹ I am not particularly interested in defining whether world literature is a tool meant to classify *world literary texts* and exclude others, whether it is a discipline and a way of reading (and thus the new paradigm for comparative literature), or whether it is the name of the historical formation of a space of symbolic exchange and circulation that exceeds particular national cultures; world literature entails, to a certain extent, all of these critical and pedagogical operations. Rather, I am trying to focus on the cultural and theoretical effects that the revival of the concept of world literature may have on the ways we conceptualize, imagine, and teach the global dimensions at stake in the novel. My concern has to do with the potential of world literature (world literature as the specific name of a field of study, a discipline, a pedagogical practice, and a canon) to illuminate or obscure the global layout of the hegemonic formation of the literary institution—an uneven process that determines both the world literary status of certain texts as well as the discourse of world literature itself. In short, the question I would like to examine in this last part of the essay is whether world literature serves the cosmopolitan purpose that is supposed to be constitutive of its critical and pedagogical horizon.

Behind the *rentrée* of the concept of world literature lies a commendable political goal: to imprint a universalist inclination on a U.S. educational system and cultural ambience that has become increasingly chauvinistic and that is seen (appropriately so) as a symbolic battlefield for the future of global citizenship. This aim of the new world literature, an aim with which it is difficult to disagree, is very much in line with the radical and controversial proposal of a cosmopolitan education for American students that Martha Nussbaum put forth over a decade ago in "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism":

As students here grow up, is it sufficient for them to learn that they are above all citizens of the United States, but that they ought to respect the basic human rights of citizens of India, Bolivia, Nigeria, and Norway? Or should they, as I think—in addition to giving special attention to the history and current situation of their own nation—learn a good deal more than is frequently the case about the rest of the world in which they live, about India and Bolivia and Nigeria and Norway and their histories, problems, and comparative successes? Should they learn only that citizens of India have equal basic human rights, or should they also learn about the problems of hunger and pollution in India, and the implications of these problems for larger problems of global hunger and global ecology? Most important, should they be taught that they are above all citizens of the United States, or should they instead be taught that they are above all citizens of a world of human beings, and that, while they themselves happen to be situated in the United States, they have to share this world of human beings with the citizens of other countries? I shall shortly suggest four arguments for the second conception of education, which I shall call cosmopolitan education.

(6)

When understood as part of the larger project of a cosmopolitan education, the political worth of the concept of world literature becomes undeniable, especially when, as in the case

of Nussbaum's proposal, the notion of cosmopolitanism is articulated as a desire for universal justice.²² But is world literature capable of accomplishing this cosmopolitan goal, or, better yet, which conception of world literature, if any, could produce critical and pedagogical practices capable of accomplishing what Nussbaum proposes? Indeed, at least some discourses of world literature produce a canon of *global great books* that tends to repeat itself in anthologies or in syllabi that, even when paying lip-service to *combined and uneven development* and to the asymmetry of global power relations, too often reinforce romantic essentialisms (a remnant of Goethe's coinage of the concept of *Weltliteratur*) according to which the third world would specialize in the production of hyper-aestheticized national allegories that express their cultural particularities—for example, their frustrated dreams of modernity—while the metropolitan centers contribute truly aesthetic innovations.²³

Some of the field's most prominent comparatists have been working for a decade now on re-defining world literature in relation to the heritage of postcolonial studies—a discursive articulation that has to some extent moved the theory of world literature away from the two major threats that still loom over the discipline: on the one hand, the postulation of world literature as an even playing field in which an idealistic sense of parity among the literatures of the world becomes possible—in other words, world literature as an equalizing discourse that rights the wrongs of cultural imperialism and/or economic globalization; on the other, the *expressive* logic according to which some works convey the historical or aesthetic experience of their cultures of origin and, therefore, become part of the corpus of a world literature comprised of a plurality of global particularities.

In the critical discourses of Franco Moretti, Pascale Casanova, David Damrosch, Haun Saussy, Emily Apter, Shu-mei Shih, and Wai Chee Dimock, among others, world literature has already overcome the menaces of expressiveness and ideological blindness to the political determinations that shape the discipline, thus earning the *post-* prefix that indicates its inscription in a *post-identity politics* discursive field. Their *world literatures* are, indeed, *post-world literary* reshaping of the concept and have, for the most part, begun to take care of the first of the two dangers I have just mentioned.²⁴ In all of these authors, the articulation of world literature with postcolonial concerns, poststructuralist discourses on identity (national or otherwise), and world-system theory results in an account of the global based on the consideration of the constitutive unevenness of social relations across the world or within a given cultural configuration (see, also, Bhabha, *Location* 12).²⁵ But this refashioning of the concept of world literature at the theoretical level cannot modify (at least not soon enough) pedagogical practices that, as all of these theorists acknowledge, seem to be lagging behind in a romantic mood. A quick review of world literature syllabi and most anthologies shows that the logic of representation and expressiveness is still at work, especially when one looks at the aesthetic features of the texts that have made it into the classroom and the canon and the relation that these traits establish with the imagined characteristics of the country or region for which these works are supposed to stand. As David Damrosch puts it, "In world literature, as if in some literary Miss Universe competition, an entire nation may be represented by a single author: Indonesia, the world's fifth-largest country and home of ancient and ongoing cultural traditions, is usually seen, if at all, in the person of Pramoedya Ananta Toer. Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortázar divide the honors for Mr. Argentina" ("World Literature" 44).²⁶ Thus, even though anthologies of world literature have expanded their coverage enormously, a great majority of the texts (especially when they come from peripheries of the Euro-American world) are included because the anthology presupposes an expressive relation between the text and the cultural particularity of its assumed origin.

A fitting example of these facts is the MLA series "Teaching World Literature." When I received the 2007 catalog of this collection in the mail—the series had at the time 95 titles and was planning to reach one hundred volumes during the following year—I read the

brochure from cover to cover and found (not surprisingly) that in terms of its discursive heterogeneity the list did not quite follow the patterns of the post-multicultural global canon that is familiar in university classrooms across the United States (at least in comp lit classrooms). There were an overwhelming majority of nineteenth- and twentieth-century modernist works in English, a handful of the eighteenth-century British novels that mark (according to Anglo-critics) the rise of the genre, a few classics (the Bible, Homer, Euripides, Virgil), and several medieval and early modern canonical texts (Chaucer, Dante, Elizabethan theater and poetry, Molière). Frederick Douglass's slave narrative was the only inclusion that once might have been thought to stretch the limits of the literary institution. Moreover, although the series bears the name "Approaches to Teaching World Literature," there is only one text in a non-Western language (Japanese). Out of 95 titles, 65 are in different intonations of English, fourteen are in French, three in Italian (Boccaccio, Dante and—surprisingly—Collodi's *Pinocchio*), three in German (Goethe, Kafka, and Mann), three in Spanish (Early Modern Spanish drama, Cervantes, and García Márquez), three in classical Greek and Latin (Homer, Euripides, and Virgil), and one each in Russian (Tolstoy), Norwegian (Ibsen), Japanese (Murasaki Shikibu), and classical Hebrew (the Bible).

In his book *What Is World Literature?* David Damrosch puts forth a convincing argument about how much things have changed in terms of the scope of world literature in the U.S. during the last hundred years. If at the beginning of the twentieth century world literature anthologies and course syllabi "defined 'the world' unhesitatingly as the Western World" (124), Damrosch points out that during the 1990s several anthologies (among them, *The Harper Collins World Reader* and *The Norton Anthology of World Literature*) radically changed their approach to world literature, turning it into a truly global field that encompasses the whole world and all historical stages, from pre-1492 indigenous narratives from the Americas to postcolonial and postmodern literatures from every periphery of the Western world. (One should of course also include Damrosch's own *Longman Anthology of World Literature* among the publications that fulfill the postcolonial premise of a newly conceptualized world literature.) I shared Damrosch's optimistic outlook about a world literature that seemed to have overcome its previous conservative and narrow conception of what the *world* was until I encountered the "Approaches to Teaching World Literature" series, which, given the institutional weight of the MLA, cannot be taken merely as the residual presence of an archaic conception of the field but on the contrary appears to make visible the pedagogical practice of world literature in most U.S. universities, in striking contradiction with the way in which most progressive intellectuals theorize it.

Apart from the production and reproduction of the global hegemony of English, in the MLA's list the rationale for the inclusion of the English and French works responds quite straightforwardly to a dynamics of canon reproduction, the constitutive grounds for institutionalization. The same logic seems to apply to the Bible, the Greco-Roman classics, Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Goethe, Tolstoy, Ibsen, Kafka, and Thomas Mann. The three remaining texts included in the list—the medieval *The Tale of Genji*, supposedly authored by Shikibu, García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad*, and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*—speak to underlying assumptions about what the margins of the West can contribute to the discursive field of world literature. What lies behind the choice of *The Tale of Genji*'s eleventh-century account of the misadventures of Japanese courtesans, *Things Fall Apart*'s 1958 history of colonial unrest in Africa, and *Cien años de soledad*'s 1967 magical realist genealogical allegory is the belief that these texts can be taken to express the Japanese, African, and Latin American historical experiences. Each of these cultures is thus reduced to a singular essentialized meaning: a traditional Japan that lives on in the West's imaginary, a tribal Africa that falls victim to the violent social restructuring of colonialism, a Latin America forever doomed to political unrest and the pre-modern identity of private and public domains. In the case of *Cien*

años de soledad, the global best-seller came to represent and express what a large portion of the world's literary public assumed was the essence of Latin American culture and social history—a narrative metaphor for Latin America, and not necessarily Colombia, or tropical South America, or Santa Marta. Thus, the essentialist logic of expression can be read (a) as a romantic ideology that assumes that cultural particularity is contained most perfectly in the indivisible unity of the nation; and (b) as a discourse of globalization based on the coexistence of fixed regional identities and national institutions.

It goes without saying that none of the proponents of a *post-world literary* world literature would subscribe in their theoretical construction of the field to such a logic for the construction of syllabi, anthologies, and research agendas. But what might be an alternative—and presumably more adequate—method of determining the specific textual content for a critical and pedagogical *world literary* practice? In his “Conjectures on World Literature” Franco Moretti provides what I find to be the most convincing, if impractical, answer to this question. For him, world literature must live up to the universal promise implied in its name, and thus he proposes a passage from world literature to the literatures of the world—all of the literatures ever written anywhere in the world.²⁷ This new universal field would transform world literature into a necessarily collective enterprise with a very clear division of labor: on the ground floor, the specialists producing knowledge on particular literatures through close readings of texts and cultural contexts; on the upper level, the meta-discursive realm of *über-comparatists* such as Moretti, tracing, through what he calls “distant reading,” universal trends and patterns that make visible the world system of literature as a global cultural totality. By proposing to read *everything*, Moretti avoids the danger of a world literature comprised of texts that are chosen and isolated because of their supposed capacity to express and represent their respective national or regional cultures of origin. Standing for Latin America, we would no longer have magical realism and *testimonio* only, but the entirety of the immensely heterogeneous aesthetic universe of the region.²⁸

Nevertheless, even if the constitutive threats of the world literary practices were actually taken care of, what I consider to be the most important question at the center of these world literary anxieties remains unanswered: is world literature as a cosmopolitan project that aims at articulating cultural difference in order to foster emancipatory goals even possible? Can a discourse about, and a pedagogy of, world literature produce *the planet* that Gayatri Spivak has proposed, a figure that “overwrites the globe,” a concept characterized by “the imposition of the same system of exchange everywhere . . . In the gridwork of electronic capital . . . drawn by the requirements of Geographical Information Systems” (72)?²⁹ This ethically normative dimension has marked the cultural and political urgency of world literature's historical task since Goethe: an aesthetic formation underscored by the cosmopolitan demand to overwrite unjust social relations on a global scale—be they colonial, warmongering, or generally oppressive—the cosmopolitan desire to overcome the restrictions and limitations of our own particular culture and our claustrophobic experience of it, and to affirm the necessarily universal nature of the promise of the cultural emancipation of the planet. World literature becomes, in short, a discourse capable of leading the way towards global peace, the project of a global culture (as the dialectical negation of the one-sidedness of local particular cultures) in which all the emancipatory potential of “culture” can finally be released. David Damrosch notes that nowhere have these grand expectations been more eloquently stated than by René Wellek, who proposed in “The Crisis of Comparative Literature” (1963) a discipline structured around *world literary* goals: “Comparative literature has the immense merit of combating the false isolation of national literary histories” (282–83). In the last paragraph of the article, Wellek expands this idea and goes on to establish the crucial role played by such a critical discourse in the production of cosmopolitan values and, thus, in the actualization of the abstract construction of the universal subject imagined by the Enlightenment:

Once we grasp the nature of art and poetry, its victory over human mortality and destiny, its creation of a new world order of the imagination, national vanities will disappear. Man, universal man, man everywhere and at all time, in all his variety, emerges and literary scholarship ceases to be an antiquarian pastime, a calculus of national credits and debts and even a mapping of networks of relationships. Literary scholarship becomes an act of the imagination, like art itself, and thus a preserver and creator of the highest values of mankind.

(295)

If the cosmopolitan echoes of Wellek's discourse still seem relevant and even urgent in the context of raging inequalities fueled in part by a process of economic globalization, it is, however, difficult to sustain his optimism about the humanistic potential of world literature. The problem I find with this genealogy of world literature (again: from Goethe to Wellek to many of the proponents of a renewed world literature today) is that it tends to see the literary world—the *world of* world literature—as a field where the different cultural singularities that otherwise define each other through violent ethical and economic antagonisms find a common discourse and enter into a dialogue that, supposedly, serves as a model for a global political agency. A humanistic world literature, in short, is capable of producing a reconciled world that is unthinkable outside of its confidence in the redeeming power of Culture.³⁰

But in this world literature, “informed by a sense of the implicit parity between literatures” (Trumpener 198) and represented as a Habermasian public sphere for global dialogue, what seems to be lost is the opaqueness of cultural otherness and the intermittent failures of communication and global translation at stake in the hegemonic social relations that make up the aesthetic and cultural exchanges of world literature—that is, the hegemonic formation of world literature's disciplinary discourse and object, and the necessary delimitation of what falls in and out of world literature: what gets to be translated (and why, and through what specific institutional articulations), and what, therefore, reaches audiences (particularly in metropolitan academic centers) beyond the culture of origin of a given text.³¹ Thus, a critical reading of García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* with a *cosmopolitan purpose* should not transform the novel into an allegorical sign of Latin America's cultural particularity and so determine its world literary worth precisely in terms of its ability to represent the region, or, even worse, because of the exotic flavor it would provide—with its characters ascending to heaven amidst bed sheets—to the world literary canon. These usually complementary ways of arguing the paradoxical universality of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* depend on the (usually metropolitan) assumption that magical realism expresses something about the pre-rational constitution of Latin American societies that escapes the protocols of modern realist representation and, as such, reify a reductive and condescending perception of the complex aesthetic and political relations between Latin American aesthetics and the region's social structure. Sylvia Molloy lucidly explains this metropolitan fascination: “Magic realism is refulgent, amusing, and kitschy (Carmen Miranda's headdress; José Arcadio Buendía's tattooed penis)—but it doesn't happen, couldn't happen, here” (129).

A cosmopolitan approach attentive to the hegemonic forces at stake in cultural formations would insist that the global status of García Márquez's novel has nothing to do with a supposedly privileged relation to its culture of origin and instead investigate the material production of its globality. For example, it would ask questions about the globalization of magical realism through Africa, South East Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Chicano Southwest of the U.S.: When was García Márquez (and perhaps, also, Alejo Carpentier) translated in each of these locations? And how were his novels and short stories received? What were the existing local aesthetic traditions—as well as socio-cultural relations—that may have contributed to transforming magical realist narratives into a

form of postcolonial interpellation (cf. Bhabha, "Introduction" 7)? How, and in what specific forms and instances, was magical realism appropriated and re-written? Were the traces of these global appropriations of magical realism obscured, or were they acknowledged in order to produce cosmopolitan forms of affiliation? And, in turn, how did García Márquez and other Latin American proponents and practitioners of a magical realist aesthetic respond to the global echoes (cosmopolitan and postcolonial, but also metropolitan) of their discourse?³²

The twofold idea of the globalization of the novel and the novelization of the global that I am putting forth is an attempt to re-inscribe the debate on world literature in relation to these cosmopolitan goals, while also accounting for the historical universalization of novelistic writing, reading, and translation, and for the production of singular images and imaginaries of universality that reduplicate in specific texts the global discursive horizon of modern literary practices. Or to put it in slightly different terms: it is an attempt to apprehend the hegemonic making of the universality of world literature, while resisting the temptation to fall back on particularistic reaffirmations of national or regional cultural identities, and in fact preserving universality as the necessary horizon of cosmopolitan practices with an emancipatory purpose.³³

In spite of their methodological differences, the most intelligent interventions in the debate coincide in thinking of world literature, not as a defined corpus, but as a way of reading, of making relations and imagining unexpected and non-national contexts that may illuminate new meanings in certain literary works. While writing this article and thinking about cosmopolitan discourses, I came to understand the task of the world literature to come in terms of the classical Marxist characterization of class as a social relation, that is, to see world literature precisely as a social relation, a cosmopolitan relation. The model of the globalization of the novel and the novelization of the global, with its emphasis on historical processes at a global scale and the production of global imaginaries, allows us to see world literature as a cosmopolitan social relation, as both a critical discourse and a concrete universal field of cultural exchanges constituted by structural, asymmetrical forces disputing the meaning of the global. In other words, the globalization of the novel and the novelization of the global foregrounds the constitutive tension at the center of the discourse of world literature: on the one hand, the cosmopolitan drive to represent a diverse globe as a reconciled multicultural totality; and, on the other, the equally cosmopolitan mandate to map the asymmetric interaction of hegemonic and subaltern cultural and economic forces that determine the unequal making of the globe, as well as the account of its historical formation. Our challenge is to acknowledge and re-articulate in our pedagogical practices and in the design of our research projects these complex cosmopolitan interpellations that point to opposing ways of symbolizing global differences, assuming that it is impossible to embrace the normative side of cosmopolitan discourses such as world literature before accounting for the global hegemonic relations that shape them. The desires for commodities and discourses "of distant lands and climes" (Marx and Engels 477) that constitute to this day our cosmopolitan subjectivities are at once the symbolic ground on which we hope to inscribe an intellectual emancipatory practice and a domestication of the world that reproduces the hegemonic relations that world literature may or may not address.

Notes

- 1 Eleven years after Kant prescribed the notion of a world-republic in "Idea for a Universal History," he opts in "Perpetual Peace. A Philosophical Sketch" (1795) for a federation of nations (Völkerbund) so as to balance the sovereignty of each singular nation with the ultimate and transcendental location

- of power in the federation as universal and cosmopolitan determination of the global system of international treaties and agreements.
- 2 It has been pointed out to me that I am reading Kant literally here, that Kant was not referring to the novel as a genre, but to the imaginative constructedness of a discourse clearly opposed to philosophy conceived as a scientific disciplinary discourse. However, Kant did choose to refer to "the novel" as that which lies on the other end of philosophy and, in any case, invokes the workings of imagination embodied in the novelistic form as the space where the type of universal history he imagines might take place.
- 3 This is a dimension of the novel mostly overlooked in classical materialist genre theories, which have studied the novel as the aesthetic product of the rise of the bourgeoisie and the consolidation of the national state. This critical perspective is historically determined by a concern about the specificity of national cultures and hegemonic struggles within the context of the nation state (see, for example, Ian Watt or Raymond Williams). Unfortunately, the explanatory power of these theories has blurred the global dimension of the novel, as well as the possibility of thinking a history of the novel that could account for the ways in which the process of globalization has been reshaping the world for the past 200 years.
- 4 See Lucio Vicente López's *La gran aldea* (1884), a *costumbrista* novel about Buenos Aires in the 1860s and 1870s, the period immediately after the civil war and before the modernizing explosion of the mid-1880s and 1890s. That is the Buenos Aires in which Holmberg's novels are set.
- 5 I am referring here to the novel as the aesthetic form historically determined by the rise of the bourgeoisie and its need to represent its own world view and its place in modern societies. Recently, this concept of "the rise of the novel" has been criticized in order to point to a longer history of the novel that extends back to medieval chivalric and courtly narratives. Nevertheless, I still believe that the hypothesis of the novel as cultural artifact determined by bourgeois world views, put forth paradigmatically by Ian Watt in *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (1957), remains the most convincing description of the historical genesis of the novel form (*stricto sensu*) in Europe and in its peripheries. Watt's arguments, however, consider the novel as an institution at work only on a national stage. The point of this essay is to think about the role the novel plays on a larger, indeed global, scale.
- 6 There are many instances in Sarmiento's narrative of his stay in Paris in which he destabilizes the notion of France as the privileged location of the universal. He even depicts most of France's political leaders as excessively provincial. However, Sarmiento always restores France's place in the global order of modernity as the model to imitate. Thus, although Sarmiento arrogantly plays with the idea of his own superiority to one or another French intellectual or official, in the end France remains the center and origin of the modern world to which he aspires.
- 7 Although Sarmiento never wrote a novel himself, he used the compositional strategies of the novel to write *Facundo*: "We do not read *Facundo* as a novel (which it is not) but rather as a political use of the genre. (*Facundo* is a proto-novel, a novel machine, a museum of the future of the novel)" (Piglia 135). See, also, Sorensen, *Facundo and the Construction of Argentine Culture*, especially chapter 2, "The Risks of Fiction. *Facundo* and the Parameters of Historical Writing" (41–66).
- 8 Laera notes that in the decade from 1880 to 1890 one hundred novels were published in Buenos Aires alone, whereas in the previous decade the number of novels issued did not exceed two dozen (19).
- 9 Franco Moretti even goes as far as deducing "a law of literary evolution" (58) out of this process of global expansion of the novel form. Such a law would state that "in cultures that belong to the periphery of the literary system (which means: almost all cultures, inside and outside Europe), the modern novel first arises not as an autonomous development but as a compromise between a Western formal influence (usually French or English) and local materials" (58).
- 10 This cultural mediation complements Franco Moretti's "law of literary evolution" (see note 9) by contextualizing within a cultural-political (rather than aesthetic) discursive frame his idea that the novel of the periphery results from a compromise between Western form and local materials.
- 11 Given the symbolic power that literary discourse held in Western Europe during the nineteenth century, the power of Verne's narratives to promote and reinforce the discourse of globalization must have been huge. Indeed, the importance of the role of literature and, more generally, the world of the "arts and entertainment" of the Second Empire cannot be exaggerated: there was a very specific need in France to produce and consume images of a colonial world beyond the borders of the familiar, not only because of the expansive dynamics of bourgeois-modern society, but also—and most importantly—because of boredom with the economic stability and solidification of (recently instituted) traditions in the middle class (see Girardet, Blanchard and Lemaire, and Compère).

- 12 Another important strategy among the representational operations of appropriation is the *familiarization* of the strange, uncanny, or sublime by means of analogy: the Orinocco is like the Loire (*Le superbe Orénoque*); the moon looks to Ardan, Barbicane, and Nicholl like the mountains of Greece, Switzerland, or Norway (*Autour de la lune*); on his way to the center of the earth, Lidenbrok discovers another "Mediterranean Sea" (*Voyage au centre de la terre*).
- 13 This is the point Roland Barthes makes in his reading of *Vingt milles lieues sous les mers* in *Mythologies*: "Verne appartient à la lignée progressiste de la bourgeoisie: son oeuvre affiche que rien ne peut échapper à l'homme, que le monde, même le plus lointain, est comme un objet dans sa main" (80; Verne belongs to the progressive line of the bourgeoisie; his work portrays the fact that nothing is strange to Man, that the world, even its most remote corners, is like an object in his hand).
- 14 Writing from his prison cell, Gramsci addresses the realist nature of Verne's narratives, explaining that their verisimilar construction of reality is assured by the hegemony of bourgeois ideology: "In Verne's books nothing is ever completely impossible. The 'possibilities' that Verne's heroes have are greater and above all not 'outside' the line of development of the scientific conquests already made. What is imagined is not entirely 'arbitrary' and is therefore able to excite the reader's fantasy, which has already been won over by the ideology of the inevitability of scientific progress in the domain of the control of natural forces" (367).
- 15 Holmberg was himself a physician but never practiced. In his vocation as a naturalist he wrote important works on flora, fauna, geography, and paleontology, in addition to his literary and travel writings.
- 16 Although the complete title with which the serialized novel was published at the end of 1875—*El viaje maravilloso del Señor Nic-Nac/En el que se refieren las prodigiosas/aventuras de este señor y se dan a conocer las instituciones, /costumbres/y preocupaciones de un mundo desconocido*—states that the nature of the planet Nic-Nac visits is unknown, he finds in Mars a mirror image of the changing face of Argentine society at the end of the nineteenth century. As Sandra Gasparini and Claudia Román explain in their edition of Holmberg's *El tipo más original y otras páginas*, "la década del 70 está atravesada, en la Argentina, por una gran cantidad de gestos fundacionales. Se crean academias, establecimientos educativos, museos, observatorios: se echan los cimientos de una modernidad, en cuyo marco se construirá la Nación" (191; the 1870s is a decade of foundational gestures in Argentina. Academies, educational establishments, museums, observatories are created: the grounds of a modernity out of which the nation will be built up).
- 17 Victor Vich has pointed out to me that a possible reason for the qualitative disparity between European and Latin American novels during the nineteenth century is that in Latin America the novel had a marginal place in the cultural and literary fields. Indeed, as Efraín Kristal explains, "In Spanish America poetry was the dominant literary genre, and the essay or sociological treatise was of far greater significance than the novel until at least the 1920s, if not later. . . . One would be hard-pressed to point to a single literary work, other than *María* (1867) by the Colombian Jorge Isaacs, as an example of a nineteenth-century Spanish American novel that was widely read within and beyond the national borders in which it was produced" (62–63).
- 18 Angela Dellepiane describes the circulation of discourses of spiritism in the 1870s and 1880s in Argentina. She documents the presence of books by Allan Kardec (pseudonym of Hyppolite Léon Denizard Rivail), a disciple of the German scientist and pedagogue Pestalozzi, who late in life developed a technique to contact spirits and became famous as a medium; and Camille Flammarion, author of very popular works on spiritism and astronomy, as well as hack science fiction novels. See also, Antonio Pagés Larraya's 1957 edition of Holmberg's fantastic short stories. On the constitutive tension at the core of Holmberg's discourse, see Rodríguez Pérsico (esp. 383, 389), who argues that in Holmberg's novels the positivistic preeminence of scientific imaginaries in Latin America at the turn of the century is met with an ambivalent gaze.
- 19 Dellepiane (220) makes the connection by tracing the publication of Verne's novels in Buenos Aires between 1872 and 1875 in *El Nacional*, the same newspaper that published *Nic-Nac* in 1875.
- 20 For excellent accounts of the different implications of the concept of world literature in Goethe and beyond, see David Damrosch's *What Is World Literature?*, Cooppan's "Ghosts in the Disciplinary Machine," Prendergast's edited volume *Debating World Literature*, and, for a Latin American perspective, Ignacio Sánchez Prado's *América Latina en la "Literatura Mundial."*
- 21 Even though the widespread polemic about the refashioning of world literature in the U.S. was re-ignited by the publication of Franco Moretti's "Conjectures on World Literature" in 2000, Fredric Jameson's "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" (1986) anticipated many of the lines along which the debate would be organized almost two decades later.

- 22 For a full account of the debate and different interventions that took place around Nussbaum's piece, especially in relation to her goals of cosmopolitanism and patriotism, see Nussbaum, *For Love of Country?*
- 23 There are exceptions, of course. For example, in two fairly recent and very interesting texts, Vilashini Cooppan and Katie Trumpener give detailed accounts of the creation of world literature and culture courses at Yale. However, I believe that the MLA series "Approaches to Teaching World Literature," which I analyze below, exceeds in its institutional weight any particular attempt at creating world literature syllabi that challenge reified notions of the world and the hegemonic forces that shape it.
- 24 In spite of her Franco-centrism (clearly an imperialist residue that tends to resurface when the French intellectual field thinks about the structural function of France in a network of global relations), Pascale Casanova's use of Bourdieu's theory of social spaces organized in (only) relatively autonomous fields structured by specific institutions and practices makes clear the uneven formation of a global literary and cultural field constituted by asymmetric symbolic power relations. At the same time, because her understanding of Bourdieu is overly rigid, her division of a world into a single core (Paris) and several peripheries, with the structural function of the periphery being the production of innovation and the role of the core the recognition and consecration of such innovation, is another way of essentializing the periphery. In fact, the idea that the third world produces aesthetic innovation and revolutionary ideas seems to be a common fantasy (in the Lacanian sense) of metropolitan cultures.
- 25 It is also important to note that the political economy of the transnational publishing world (what sells, what does not) determines in almost absolute terms what gets translated and so what is read in world literature courses. In other words, European and North American publishing presses translate, more often than not, works that tend to respond to the expectations of *northern* reading publics about what, for instance, Latin American or African literature is and should be. *Cien años de soledad*, as a global best-seller, has in particular come to represent what a large portion of the world literary public sphere assumes is the essence of Latin American culture and social history. See Denning.
- 26 For a commentary on world literature anthologies and the recent inclusion of García Márquez and Chinua Achebe in some of them as a result of the globalization of the canon of world literature, see James English (306–7).
- 27 I take the idea of a critical differentiation of *the literatures of the world* from *world literature* from Djelal Kadir's essay "Comparative Literature in the Age of Terrorism," although Kadir uses the concept to indict all proponents of world literature, Moretti included.
- 28 The two volumes of *The Novel*, Moretti's gigantically ambitious attempt to rethink the history of, and the theoretical perspectives on, the novel—a project he undertook after having proposed his "Conjectures on World Literature"—can be read as the practical application of Moretti's ideas in his famous article. Here, Moretti attempts to establish the novel as a site where a community of critics can produce a concrete and well-grounded discourse on world literature. Damrosch, on the other hand, sees in this infinite and absolute expansion of the horizons of world literature not the elimination of world literature's worst stigma, but the dissolution of the discipline's specificity and value: "If the scope of world literature now extends from Akkadian epics to Aztec incantations, the question of what is world literature could almost be put in opposite terms: What isn't world literature? A category from which nothing can be excluded is essentially useless" (*What Is World Literature?* 110).
- 29 *Planetarity*, as Spivak defines it, would be a possible specific content to the new comparative literature she envisions, a comparative literature based on a form of reading that recognizes in the opacity and the undecidability of the figure the contingency of each particular dis-figuration, never giving in to the hegemonic demand of transparency and full comprehensibility. Planetarity is the figure that needs to be dis-figured, that is ethically and politically deciphered. The planet, then, is the site where, perhaps, we will be able to inscribe a form of community ethically different from that figured by the globe of globalization. "When I invoke the planet I think of the effort required to figure the (im)possibility of this underived intuition" (72). This is the first challenge with which the category of planetarity presents us: that the planet does not yet exist in the hegemony of the discourses of globalization. World literature, then, could be thought of as the comparative critical study of the symbolic that would deliver *the planet* to us.
- 30 One of the most effective critiques of this totalizing paradigm is the idea of a globalization of difference put forth by Emily Apter in "Global *Translatio*: The 'Invention' of Comparative Literature, Istanbul, 1933," where she traces Leo Spitzer's construction of discourses of comparative and world literature based on "untranslatable affective gaps" (108) during his exile in Turkey: "Spitzer's explicit

- desire to disturb monolingual complacency" (105) produces "a paradigm of *translatio* . . . that emphasizes the critical role of multilingualism within transnational humanism . . . a policy of *non-translation* adopted without apology" (104).
- 31 See in this regard Diana Sorensen's remarkable study of the institutions that made up the materiality of the 1960s *boom* of Latin American literature, a study that charts a possible future road for a world literature mindful of the importance of material exchanges and hegemonic relations.
- 32 Commenting on this proposal to read the universality of García Márquez's novel in cosmopolitan terms rather than in relation to its capacity to express Latin American culture in a global market of cultural commodified particularities, an anonymous reviewer of this essay noted that "*Cien años*, and magical realism more generally, can make us critical of such universalizing moves (the United Fruit Company is nothing if not cosmopolitan) but only if we read it figurally as a planetary novel." This approach to the novel at the level of its plot and rhetorical construction adds a dimension I had not included in my argument and, I believe, complements my attempt to reject a globality based on the politics of cultural expression.
- 33 Roberto Schwarz has written, along these same lines, that if the intention of unearthing the idea of world literature "is to question the universality of the universal and the localism of the local, then it could be a good starting point for further discussion" (98).

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