THE GLOBAL NOVEL WEEK ONE

Current discussions of globalization often focus largely or exclusively on contemporary literature and culture, yet the global penetration of regional culture is not at all a new phenomenon. As a case in point, I would like to take the case of literary production in medieval Iceland. [...] As a writer from a peripheral region of Europe, Snorri [Sturlusson, writer of the *Prose Edda* (c.1240)] was well aware that his traditions are in danger of being overwritten by the global traditions that entered Iceland in Christianity's wake. As a result, a concern over cultural memory pervades the *Prose Edda*
[...]
It is a rare country that develops its own script and its own literature in fundamental independence from other societies; ancient Egypt and Shiang China are more the exception than the rule. Most literatures – from Latin and French and from Hebrew to Icelandic – have been formed with broad systems grounded in the power of cultural traditions to cross the boundaries of time, space, and language. Arising within a transcultural context, a local, or national literature must negotiate a double bind: the new influences that can help shape a people's traditions also brings them the threat of the local culture's absorption into a broader milieu.
David Damrosch, 'Global Regionalism', *European Review*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 135-143 (2007)

To the neo-liberal new cosmopolitans, globalisation signifies the transnationalization of capitalism, the breakdown of national economies, and the creation of a more interconnected world economic system. It also describes the emergence of new technologies of communication such as satellite, fax, and e – mail, which, along with the possibility of rapid intercontinental travel, alter the relationship of time and space. This spatial compression and temporal acceleration allow people, ideas, and goods to move with great speed, while also making it possible for individuals, however far apart, to witness events simultaneously.
Gregory Jusdanis, 'Culture, culture everywhere: the swell of globalisation theory', *Diaspora* (Vol. 5, no. 1, 1996).

It is widely asserted that we live in an era in which the greater part of social life is determined by global processes, in which national cultures, national economies and national borders are dissolving. Central to this perception is the notion of a rapid and recent process of economic globalisation. A truly global economy is claimed to have emerged or to be in the process of emerging, in which distinct national economies and, therefore, domestic strategies of national economic management are increasingly irrelevant. The world economy has internationalised in its basic dynamics, it is dominated by uncontrollable market forces, and it has as its principal economic actors and major agents of change truly transnational corporations, that owe allegiance to no nation state and locate wherever in the globe market advantage dictates.
Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson, *Globalisation in Question*

SUMAN GUPTA GLOBALIZATION AND LITERATURE

miles away and vice versa' (Giddens 1990, 64) is useful in this fashion. So is Martin Albrow's observation that 'globalisation effectively means that societies now cannot be seen as systems in an environment of other systems, but as sub-systems of the larger inclusive world society' (Albrow 1990, 11); as is Roland Robertson's understanding that 'Globalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole' (Robertson 1992, 8); and as is David Held's attempt to present the manifold aspects of globalization as 'a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in their spatial organisation of social relations and transactions – assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact – generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power' (Held et al. 1999, 16). These definition-like attempts to characterize the *nature* of the processes ('intensification', 'compression', 'transformation', at levels of 'extensity', 'intensity', etc.) denoted by 'globalization' are supplemented by numerous succinct attempts at emphasizing the connotative *content* of 'globalization'. Martin Albrow's example can serve here as representative:

GLOBALIZATION

1. Making or being made global:
   (a) in individual instances
      (i) by the active dissemination of practices, values, technology and other human products throughout the globe
      (ii) when global practices and so on exercise an increasing influence over people's lives
      (iii) when the globe serves as a focus for, or a premise in shaping, human activities
      (iv) in the incremental change occasioned by the interaction of any such instances;
   (b) seen as the generality of such instances;
   (c) such instances being viewed abstractly.
2. A process of making or being made global in any or all of the senses in (1).
3. The historical transformation constituted by the sum of particular forms and instances in (1). (Albrow 1996, 88)

The emphasis in the latter is obviously more on the range of meanings embraced by the term 'globalization' than on the description of processes alluded to by it.

Such definition-like statements give the term 'globalization' a tractable and definite quality, without thereby restricting its superlative reach. They convey the enormity of globalization's geographical and disciplinary border crossings and the transgression of different linguistic registers and areas of application and usage. The elaborations that surround these (and such) definitions both recognize the enormity of thinking about globalization and build upon that foundation of tractability and definitiveness that such a

Table 1.1 Three waves in globalization theory

	Globalists	Sceptics	Transformationalists
Globalization	Globalization; globalization as causal.	Globalization is a discourse; internationalization as effect of other causes.	Global transformations, but differentiation and embeddedness.
Method	Abstract, general approach.	Empirical approach.	Qualitative rather than quantitative approach.
Economy	Global economy; integration, open; free trade.	International economy; triadic, regional, unequal; state intervention and protectionism.	Globally transformed; new stratification; globalized but differentiated.
Politics	Global governance or neoliberalism; decline of nation-state; loss of national sovereignty.	Nation-states, regional blocs, international; power and inequality; political agency possible.	Politics globally transformed; nation-states important but reconstructed; sovereignty shared
Culture	Homogenization.	Clashes of culture; nationalism; Americanization; globalization differentiated.	Globally transformed; hybridization; complex, differentiated globalization.
History	Globalization is new.	Internationalization is old.	Globalization old but present forms unprecedented.
Normative politics	Global governance or neoliberalism; end of social democratic welfare state.	Reformist social democracy and international regulation possible.	Cosmopolitan democracy.
Future	Globalization	Nation-state, triad, conflicts, inequality.	Uncertain, agency; left or right; continued, stalled or reversed.

empirical evidence or unevenness and agency in globalization. Third-wave theorists try to distance themselves from both more radical globalists and outright sceptics. They defend an idea of globalization, and so distance themselves from the sceptics. But they do so in a more complicated way than put forward in the first wave. However, in doing this they add qualifications and complexities that actually bolster second-wave sceptic arguments. This is not always the case and there are some differences between third-wavers and sceptics. But if it transpires that third-wavers are confirming the second wave, intentionally or not, then it is important that the sceptical view is validated rather than seen as less adequate. Getting a correct understanding of what the third wave is actually saying is important to understanding globalization properly.

Susie O'Brien and Imre Szeman

Introduction: The Globalization of Fiction/ the Fiction of Globalization

The idea for this special issue of the *South Atlantic Quarterly* emerged out of a question posed by one of our students: Does it make sense to speak about a literature of globalization? This question seems easy enough to answer, or rather, a whole host of possible answers offer themselves right away, which may not in fact be the same thing as coming up with a simple, satisfactory response. First, one could suggest (as a number of other scholars do) that though we have discussed it almost exclusively in national terms, literature has in fact long been globalized. Writing at one of the key moments of European nationalism, Marx and Engels already pointed to the existence of a world literature produced out of the constant revolutionizing of bourgeois production, and discussed its spread across national and cultural boundaries.[1] Without question, one of the first elites linked globally—materially as much as imaginatively—was a literary elite able to sample exotic narrative confections produced outside of their original national and local contexts.[2] But glimmers of a "world literature" appeared long before the explicit formulations of Marx and Engels or Goethe in the nineteenth century.

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Forms such as the fabliau, Mennipean satire, and autobiography provide evidence of cultural migrations dating as far back as the medieval period; literature was global, then, before it was ever national.[3] And as Stephen Greenblatt points out, "English literature was always an unsteady amalgam of Scottish, Irish, Welsh, Cornish, and other voices of the vanquished, along with the voices of the dominant English regions, and the English language itself, so securely and apparently imperturbably at the center of the field, is revealed, under the pressure of examination, to be a mixed, impure, and constantly shifting medium."[4] It seems reasonable to suggest, then, that literature in general, and Anglophone literature in particular, is—and perhaps always has been—globalized.

It should be clear immediately, however, that this response does not take up the real demand posed by our student's question, which seeks to understand a more fundamental entanglement between literature and the phenomena most commonly associated with globalization—transculturation, the various forms (from cultural to economic) and periods (from the time of Columbus to the present) of imperialism and colonialism, the violent and uneven impact of socio-cultural and economic systems on one another as they come into contact, the eclipse of traditional ways of life, the temporal (modernization) and spatial (nationalism-internationalism-transnationalism) demands of European modernity, the global spread of capitalism and Western liberalism, and so on. How are these processes expressed through, facilitated, and/or inhibited by literature? To ask this question is to think not just about how globalization is reflected thematically in fiction, for example, but also about literature's role in the narrative construction of the numerous discourses or "fictions" of globalization. One of the first things to realize about globalization is that its significance can only be grasped through its realization in a variety of narrative forms, spanning the range from accounts of the triumphant coming-into-being of global democracy to laments about the end of nature; literature no doubt has a role to play in how we produce these often contradictory narratives about globalization.[5] Whether one sees globalization as a contemporary phenomenon that defines the character of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, or merely as an extension of a process initiated millennia ago, there can be no doubt that the generation of narratives about globalization has assumed particular urgency over the last few decades.[6] While the historical purview of our student's question is open to debate, it is clear that the

question itself could only be asked in the context of contemporary social, political, and cultural conditions and preoccupations.

Thinking about narratives and their determining contexts highlights another, less obvious but equally important part of the question: to ask whether it *makes sense* to talk about a literature of globalization is to raise questions not just about globalization, but also about processes and practices of literary theory and criticism that frame discussions of the literary. For the most part, the institutions of literary study still have not managed to develop a life beyond those sites at which the discourses of national culture and identity are produced and reproduced: the nation has remained the frame (in the last instance) within which the meaning and significance of a text are thought to be spatially located. To ask the question of whether there is a literature of globalization is thus also to ask whether it is possible to think of literature outside the framework of national literatures, and correspondingly, to try to imagine what critical tools might be used to make sense of such literatures, and what in turn might be learned from and about them, in ways that open up new perspectives on the problems and possibilities that we face at the present time. A cursory survey of contemporary literary critical discourses suggests that some of the tools to address these issues are ready-to-hand: the (messy, unwieldy, heterogeneous) critical discourses of postcolonialism and postmodernism each address, more or less explicitly, the relationship between literature and globalization.

Postcolonialism, in particular, has arguably yielded the vocabulary that enables us to ask questions like the one that prompted this collection, while speaking to the globalization of (Anglophone) literature in a more substantial way. When Simon Gikandi suggests in his contribution to this volume that the emergence of postcolonial literature marks the emergence of global culture, he articulates the widely shared if generally unspoken belief that postcolonial novels are "novels of globalization."[7] If the postcolonial and the global are not imagined in this way as being one and the same, then the postcolonial often seems to be the name for the critical practice that precedes and provides the foundations for global or transnational cultural studies.[8] At the same time, globalization denotes what might be described as the "noncultural logic" of late capitalism that has produced the cultural logic hitherto named "postmodernism." Given the ever-increasing interrelation between the cultural and the economic, it now seems for most critics pointless not to call this cultural logic "globalization," too, and to see postmod-

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 cosmopolitical 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 novel[2]—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.
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> (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 exoticism (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 Sevandac*, 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

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).

John Galt, *Annals of the Parish* (1821)

"What happened in my parish was but a type and index to the rest of the world." (Ch. XLV, 1804)

1. a) Galt called *Annals* 'a kind of local theoretical history'. What kind of narrative technique does he use to convey this? (see Costain [handout] text end 1765; end 1779; end 1783; beg 1801). Read also what Bohrer 101 and Esterhammer 174 have to say about the "chronicle" and "theoretical history" and its narration.

   b) What kind of narrator is Balwhidder? You might ask this question another way: as what kind of narrator does he *present* himself? (See opening pages (and end 1768; 1st para 1776)

2. Why is this a 'Global Novel'?

a) Three groups, reading opening paragraphs of years 1762; 1763 (first 3pars) & 1765. Try to answer the above question by referring to examples from the paragraphs that denote (or perhaps delimit) a global condition and/or perspective. (See also quotes from Gupta from last week's handout)

b) Chapter XXIX – 1788. Why is this a central chapter of the novel?

c) Re-read Jusdanis and Hirst and Thompson quotes (last week's handout). Does the novel support a negative or positive outlook on global/local change?

3. Read Franco Moretti's diagram of the novel's 'spatiality' in his vigorous essay *Graphs, Maps, Trees*. Does this strike you as a feasible way to read the novel?

4. Could this novel be written in the same way now, making similar points about the way that the world changes? Would the plot/outlook be much the same?

"Thinking locally: novelistic worlds in provincial fiction" — Cambridge Companion to Fiction in Romantic Age

MARTHA BOHRER

White and Mitford privilege the paradigm of a resident's specialized perspective gained by industrious observation over many years. As resident monographers they find a worthy and complex subject in their immediate neighborhood.

White marks an early stage and Mitford a later (and more sentimental) stage of a major shift in epistemological and aesthetic values during the Romantic period that brings various kinds of rural locales (villages, towns, coasts, marshes, and other waste places) and a new conception of place as a specific kind of locality, into the literary landscape. The very term "locality," instead of the more ancient British term "parish," has empirical connotations designating specific material conditions that usefully differentiate it from the place as determined by church and state.[3] In natural-historical writings from the late eighteenth to the end of the nineteenth century, locality is synonymous with the less commonly used scientific term "habitat," derived from the Latin *habitus* or *habitatio*, which arrives in English in the 1790s as botanical guides shift from scholarly Latin to vernacular English.[4] Both terms designate the kind of environment where a species commonly thrives.

Mitford's suggestion that natural history played a central role in the development of the taste for new forms of representations of village life as localities is demonstrated by three provincial authors' reliance on the empirical discursive forms of natural history to achieve the major change in rural perspective and taste outlined above. This chapter examines Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800), George Crabbe's *The Borough* (1810), and John Galt's *Annals of the Parish* (written 1813, published 1821) which adopt the scholarly paradigm of the local parson–scholar and take a provincial locale as their main subject. These exemplary fictional monographs experiment with form, combining non-fiction conventions from local histories such as White's with fictional inhabitants or specimens. The texts illustrate how natural history's quest for comprehensive knowledge of all forms of life and their economies, its method of habitual *in situ* observation, and even its forms for reporting its findings structured representations of provincial novelistic worlds in provincial fiction by initiating changes in narrative perspective, persona, and form. Calling themselves, respectively, a domestic biography, a local history, and a theoretical history, they imagine a new kind of British rural world, not chorographic, topographic, or pastoral, but one consisting of diverse provincial localities, each worthy of study because of their unique environment and local society. The imagined localities of Edgeworth, Crabbe, and Galt represent historically situated environments constituted by a particular assemblage of inhabitants. Their tales all exhibit a deep interest in the economy of the locale and in the individual domestic economies of the various inhabitants.

The segregation of Crabbe's work from discussions of fiction because it is verse, and the usual categorization of Edgeworth's and Galt's earliest fictions as national tales of the Celtic periphery, have isolated all three texts from critical analysis within the larger context of rural fiction throughout Britain. Local tales and village anecdotes are not merely a product of the Celtic periphery, they are part of a very broad range of variously flavored, but distinctively rural literature in the Romantic period: didactic tales on the domestic economies of cottage life by Hannah More, Mary Leadbeater, Elizabeth Hamilton, and Alexander and John Bethune, didactic morality tales of provincial middle-class and gentry life by Maria Edgeworth, George Crabbe, and Amelia Opie, folkloric tales by Robert Bloomfield and James Hogg, and tales for children by Harriet Martineau. Cross-fertilization between natural history and fiction, as between rural Ireland, Scotland, and England, produced more complete and complex descriptions and analyses of rural localities and their socio-economic systems than are found in eighteenth-century fiction.

The emergence of these provincial perspectives was due in part to the new economic power of industrializing provincial towns and the concurrent growth of provincial intellectual communities that included the Lunar Society near Birmingham and circles in Bristol, Edinburgh, and around Manchester near the Warrington Academy for dissenters. These circles of entrepreneurs, teachers, doctors, and clergy with shared scientific interests reflect the increased economic and cultural capital of the rapidly industrializing rural periphery, and begin to diffuse the intellectual dominance of the southern Oxbridge–London center.

Amidst the variety of rural fiction, Edgeworth's, Crabbe's, and Galt's rural tales stand out. Like scientific monographs, they are narrowly focused and clearly exhibit the well-researched basis for the information that they deliver to a national and largely metropolitan audience, which, presumably, does not understand the diversity and difficulties of provincial life in Britain. Their anecdotal narratives capture the reader's interest through the characteristic idiosyncrasies and life cycles of specimen inhabitants instead of the mysteries of plot and complications of romance. *Castle Rackrent* and *Annals of the Parish* are widely recognized as the comedic masterpieces in their authors' œuvre. Together with Crabbe's unjustly forgotten satiric verse monograph *The Borough*, they must be understood as leading examples of a particular kind of British realism that is rooted in the ability of early nineteenth-century provincial writers to imagine their local novelistic worlds with the help of the practice and discourse of natural history.

> Fences are form'd of Wreck and plac'd around,
> (With tenters tipp'd) a strong repulsive bound;
> Wide and deep Ditches by the Gardens run,
> And there in ambush lie the Trap and Gun[20]

In the borough, a highly visible ditch filled with man-traps separates upper and lower classes. The noxious urban ditch of mingled brine and sewage is the antithesis of the ha-ha that seamlessly incorporates the sanitized pastoral scene into the garden view (and the bubbling stream surrounding his correspondent's country house). In Crabbe's imagined rural world, upper and lower classes and nature and society cannot be either invisibly or painlessly separated or intentionally oblivious of each other.

Writing in 1813 only three years after *The Borough* was published, Galt, like Crabbe, also creates an imaginary village in a very specific part of Britain – Dalmailing in western Scotland. Like Edgeworth, Galt publishes anonymously and, like both predecessors, he too utilizes a local inhabitant as a narrative persona: Reverend Micah Balwhidder, originally shunned as an unwanted outsider to the town that he describes, has earned his right to narrate its history by fifty years of service as its resident pastor. Unlike the cunning insider Thady Quirk, whom the reader suspects of withholding crucial information about his own role in the fall of the Rackrents, Balwhidder is a mild reactionary, adapting unwillingly to local socio-economic pressures, whose account reveals the relations between his locality and the British economy and empire. Galt offers no editorial apparatus to create a truth effect. Instead he aligns his authorial point-of-view with his audience: both are assumed to be more knowledgable and cosmopolitan than the narrator and therefore able to interpret events (and Balwhidder) within a broader explanatory historical context than his simplistic providential explanations provide. By 1813, when *Annals* was written, Galt no longer needs personae to function as Janus-like characters facing both the city and the country, or center and periphery, because the readership for provincial monographs, didactic tales, and memoirs has been thoroughly developed by White, Edgeworth, Crabbe, and other provincial authors. In addition, Galt's social location as an established London writer is quite different from the provincially located Edgeworth and Crabbe.

Without an editorial apparatus like Edgeworth's, Galt turns this seemingly naive account into a sophisticated analysis of a small community's progress from a subsistence agricultural economy to a diversified economy based upon commercial agriculture, mining, and textile manufacture. This Whiggish history, told through the eyes of a conservative Tory, imagines the development, not of the wealth of a nation, but of the wealth of a parish

gained through increasing intercourse with the larger world. Although initially the parson's means are limited and his knowledge of the world is quite circumscribed, over the course of fifty years both his income and his knowledge are enlarged through the influx of energetic entrepreneurial strangers (including his two wives) and by the export of inhabitants into the merchant marine, the navy, and the army and their periodic returns. Balwhidder's strong Christian beliefs enable an occasional critique of the moral and social ills that accompany economic development. Except when facing sectarian competition, Balwhidder has, by the annals' end, become a conciliatory, mediating figure between the social classes, helping to ease the transition to a cash economy for the poor and mediating the rise of impoverished families such as the Malcolms into the middle class through his contacts with the aristocracy.[21] Galt's stance with respect to Dalmailing is clearly that of an outsider casting an affectionate backward glance toward an earlier time, but ultimately supporting the industrial and social advancements from the face-to-face village community to a modern socially heterogeneous industrial town.

Thinking locally

Do these long-vanished local worlds matter as more than a source of nostalgic laughter and sighs? They offer ways to think locally in a world increasingly enmeshed in a global economy and culture. In *Annals of the Parish*, local worlds do not persist in unchanging isolation from the global; economic development and social change are intimately tied to exchanges with the broader world. Dalmailing's youth leave as sailors and soldiers and return with the goods of the world: parrots, limes for the pastor's tropical punch, and tea, the commodity so vital to the impoverished Malcolm family's return to middle-class standing. Emigrants from America and Ireland threaten the hegemonic church and gentry power structure with their entrepreneurial and radical activism, but they also enrich the community with their books and newspapers. *Castle Rackrent* demonstrates that a class's refusal to change old exploitative ways that failed to consider the land and all its inhabitants leads eventually to its own demise.

In Crabbe's borough, where the sea's water, sound, and smell penetrate every corner, poorer inhabitants are constantly reminded of their human vulnerability to nature's powerful forces and to the power of the richer classes. *The Borough* insists upon the brutalizing influence of a poor and polluted environment where "reformers come not" and "Infant-Sailors" pretend to be Nelsons in the ponds of effluent between cottage "ash heaps."[22] In *Annals* such middens are the signs of present squalor and instruments of future

and dialect, credibility of characterisation and the authentic representation of the repercussions of historical events, led many readers to accept it as the actual chronicle of a retired minister – and encouraged Galt to perpetuate the fiction of the chronicle's truth through intertextual references to the world of Dalmailing in several later novels. Yet *Annals* represents his extended performance of a fictional narrator, in this case a conservative but pragmatic elderly pastor who observes and interprets the history of his parish.

Balwhidder's retrospective narrative and his maturing psyche both work against the strict linear chronology suggested by the 'Annals' structure. The narrative begins proleptically with an introduction in which Balwhidder quotes his farewell sermon of 1810, before jumping back to begin his history with the year 1760. In the process of introducing characters for the first time, he often flashes forward to anticipate their death or their present state. When he brings his first wife home, they are accompanied by 'her little brother Andrew, that died in the East Indies';[13] at the birth of his daughter Janet, he thinks of her 'now in the married state [as she] makes a most excellent wife' (p. 54); when the first Mrs Balwhidder dies, he anticipates the shifting of her headstone at the time the second Mrs Balwhidder is buried in the same grave, and then stops himself: 'But I must not here enter upon an anticipation' (p. 24). Local temporal disruptions of this kind create a tension between the chronological order of history and the achronological patterns that emerge when memory records events in terms of their causes, consequences and affective associations. Later in the *Annals*, Balwhidder becomes increasingly aware of the achronological perspective he developed even at the time events were occurring. He refers increasingly to his 'prophetic powers', which is to say his mature ability to reflect on his observations of parish life and extrapolate from the local to the global level. This partly recollective, partly proleptic narrative serves to express Balwhidder's faith in divine providence as well as Galt's more secular interest in Scottish Enlightenment concepts of the progress of civilisation or 'theoretical history'.[14]

Galt's more strictly historical novels, those that portray epochs and episodes in Scottish history, also experiment with different narrative perspectives and chronologies. These three-volume novels include *The Spaewife* (1823; about the early-fifteenth-century assassination of James I of Scotland), *Rothelan* (1824; set in the fourteenth century under Edward III) and *Southennan* (1830; depicting the first four years of the reign of Mary, Queen of Scots), but the best known of them is *Ringan Gilhaize; or, The Covenanters* (1823). *Ringan Gilhaize* achieves its powerful and disturbing effect from the I-narrator Ringan, who relates how three generations of his family – his grandfather Michael, father Sawners and he himself – fought for the Presbyterian cause during the religious wars in Scotland from 1558 to 1696. Ringan's heavily biblical, sectarian idiom betrays his partisan rendering of historical events:

becoming increasingly fanatical and intolerant as he tells his story, he borders on being an unreliable narrator. Yet he is also a credible product of the familial, national and religious history he experiences and recounts. Thus, while Ringan Gilhaize is a (tragically) sincere narrator, on Galt's part this historical novel represents the performance of a psyche formed by indoctrination on the part of his forefathers, his religious faction and his historical moment. Even when deliberately imitating a genre – the historical novel in the style of Scott – because it had proven so successful in the literary marketplace, Galt did so in an innovative manner. 'Excellence is his [Sir Walter Scott's] characteristic', Galt commented when comparing one of his own historical novels to Scott's, 'and, if I may say so, originality is mine, and the approbation of time is required to the just appreciation of that quality' (*Literary Life*, I: p. 262).

Like Ringan Gilhaize, the narrator-protagonist of *Bogle Corbet, or The Emigrants* (1831) is the product of performative discourses, particularly economic and colonial ones.[15] The character of Bogle Corbet reflects a good deal of Galt's own background, from his father's role in trade with the West Indies to his own recent experience as (failed) land agent in Canada. Once again, the novel's framing devices blur the boundary between truth and fiction: an epigraph from Thomas Gray's *The Bard* on the title page of each of *Bogle Corbet*'s three volumes reads 'Truth severe by fairy fiction dressed', and after its notably inconclusive ending the narrative segues into an appendix consisting of a statistical account of the physical geography of the Upper Canadian townships. This elision of the novel with a scientific gazette is evidence of Galt's intention to include actual 'truth severe' about settlement in Canada for the information of prospective emigrants. The truth/fiction boundary gets pushed in the other direction as well: within the novel, Corbet's decision to emigrate to Canada is influenced by the advice of Mr Lawrie Todd, 'a shrewd Scotchman, recently from America'.[16] 'He has since published some account of himself, and of his adventures and experience as a settler in the woods of the Genesee Country' Corbet adds (II: p. 181) – that is to say, Galt's novel *Lawrie Todd, or The Settlers in the Woods*, which appeared the year before with the same publisher.

Corbet's narrative about his apprenticeship and unsuccessful business ventures in Glasgow, his trip to the land of his birth, Jamaica, and his return to Scotland and subsequent emigration to Canada generally lacks plot and direction; instead, it is loaded with coincidences and with what the narrator himself calls 'accidents'. These include actual physical mishaps, such as an overturned carriage that leaves Corbet with a cut on the forehead. 'This accident coloured the tissue of my subsequent life', he reports (I: p. 257), because he is taken into the nearby house of a Mr Ascomy and meets his daughter Urseline, who will later become the second Mrs Corbet. While 'accidental

(from | Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Romanticism

KEITH CAITHNESS

world and such lessons as we take from it—that crawling before one's social superiors pays dividends, or that native wit exercised in the appropriate company can bring one a gratifying position of power and influence—are hardly edifying. Galt is more concerned with the 'metaphysical anatomy' of Andrew Wylie, his most successful accomplishment in a work that ought to have been a 'self-told' tale, than with using him as a mouth-piece for any moral scheme.

Most of Galt's novels are set in a circumscribed locality which he enables his readers to imagine clearly and to see as a microcosm of a larger society. The sweep of Galt's imagination, however, can not be fully appreciated unless one reads his Scottish fictions as he meant them to be read—as parts of an inter-connected series. The series forms a complex tableau of a society which could not be encompassed within the limits of a single work, nor understood from a single point of view. By deliberately writing his works in this manner Galt anticipates such later writers as Trollope and Hardy.

Galt had the idea of a series in mind from the beginning of his career as a successful novelist. After the warm reception accorded *The Ayrshire Legatees* in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, and when Blackwood was thinking of republishing it as a volume, Galt recommended to him that 'if you determine on republication perhaps it would be of some use to take the title of a general work and call it *Tales of the West*, the Parish annals would belong to the series and also Mr Duffle's travels' (i.e. *The Steamboat*[15] MS 4006, f. 225). Blackwood did not accept the recommendation but Galt thought of his works as parts of a series, one novel tending to beget another for the sake of balanced interpretation, historical depth and comprehensiveness of thematic development. He writes in his *Literary Life* of 'that series of fictions of manners, of which Annals of the Parish is the beginning' (I, 270), and he did not exclude his novels, novellas and stories of the 1830s, until relatively recently ignored by critics of Galt's work. His linkage of *The Ayrshire Legatees* with 'The Dean of Guild' in the introduction to the latter story suggests continuity and in fact the fictions of the 1830s are extensions or further explorations of the fictional world which Galt first depicted in his novels of the 1820s. Even *Lawrie Todd* (1830) and *Bogle Corbet* (1831), although their central characters leave Scotland for North America, may be read as extensions of the earlier *Tales of the West*.[16] In these novels, as in *Sir Andrew Wylie*, the central characters leave home to find an environment in which unfettered by tradition or by current prejudice, social or political, they may put their talents freely to use.

Tales of the West as a series has been praised for its historical accuracy. In recent years, however, Galt's fidelity to fact has been questioned although as Christopher Whatley points out in an essay which exposes some of the

an actual geographical region and its notable history, ultimately is a region of the mind. In this region (as in Shakespeare's *Histories*) historical fact is at the service of dramatic imperatives.

Just as Galt's characters transcend their 'models', and his appeal to the reader's moral sympathies is dependent upon his effective management of form, so in his fictional world myth transcends and helps to interpret history. Galt's portrait of his age and of the forces that helped to shape it strikes the reader as accurate not because of his strict adherence to observable fact but because the myths which order the world of his fiction are, we feel, faithful imaginative expressions of the antitheses of thought and feeling of a period of radical change.

Galt's fictional world is characterised by a tension between opposing myths, one a myth of progress and the other a pastoral myth.[18] The myth of progress, the basic terms of which he derived from the Scottish theoretical historians, expresses the aspirations of the commercial middle class—aspirations which Galt, a businessman as well as an author, himself shared. His pastoral myth, presented in Romantic terms, expresses the doubts which Galt the artist felt about the worthiness of these aspirations. The first of these myths is dynamic yet essentially amoral; the second moral but static. Galt suggests that it is possible to reconcile the two.

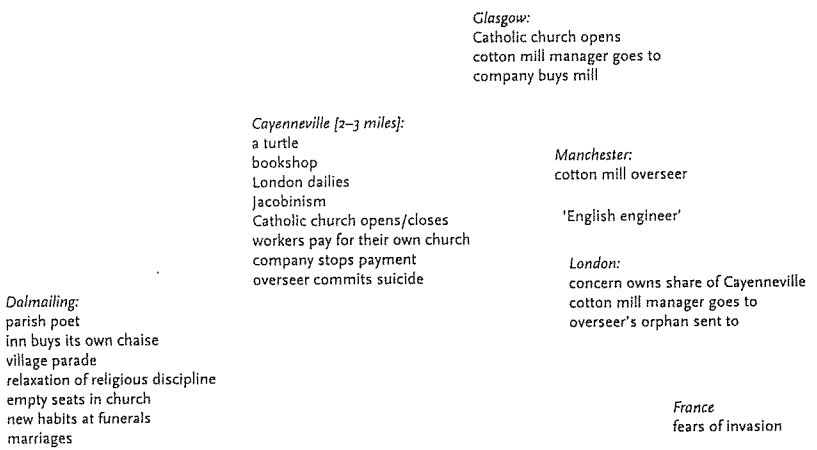
The basic premise of Galt's myth of progress, as of the theoretical history, is that history has an intelligible structure. Peoples, Galt and the theoretical historians hypothesised, by a process of 'improvement' move through a series of identifiable stages from simple, primitive origins to a complex, civilised and superior present, though not at the same pace. In the society which Galt depicts the pace is steady. *Tales of the West* dramatises the process whereby one form of what M H Abrams calls 'Christian prospectivism'[19] evolves into another—the process by means of which the religious idea of salvation turns into the secular idea of progress.

Ringan Gilhaize portrays the Reformation as a liberating series of events which begin the process of the secularisation of the modern world. The Reformation is shown to free the Scottish people from their bondage to a corrupt medieval church dependent upon arbitrary monarchical authority for its continued existence. Ringan and his immediate forebears are guided by the idea of salvation but when the state refuses to permit either the preaching or practice of Ringan's form of Covenanting Christianity he is forced to take political action. Remembering 'the hero-stirring times of the Wallace wight' (Vol I, Chapter VIII) he confronts the doctrine of 'the divine right of kings' with his fervent belief in 'the divine right of resistance'. Claud Walkinshaw of *The Entail*, who 'early preferred the history of Whittington and his Cat to the achievements of Sir William Wallace' (Vol I, Chapter I) is a more secular figure than Ringan. Ringan thinks in terms of martyrdom and self-sacrifice whereas Claud thinks of self-aggrandisement, and follows the path suggested by the Whittington story in raising himself, by his own efforts, from peddler to merchant to landowner. Claud, however, is descended from

the Dalmailing idyll goes on as it always has, 'not linked in any intrinsic way to other places'.

But in 1788 a cotton-mill is built—'nothing like it had been seen before in our day and generation'—and with it the manufacturing town of Cayenneville, and the parish's spatial coordinates are forever changed. If one compares the first decade of the book with the last, charted in figure 20, it's impossible to miss the dramatic *re-centring* of social life induced by manufacture: the sense of the 'region', so strong a generation earlier—Dalmailing's daily life, the Irville where children went to school, the villages where spouses came from . . .—is gone, replaced by a 'web of commercial reciprocities' (Cayenneville–Glasgow–Manchester–London), whose 'every touch

FIGURE 20: *John Galt*, Annals of the Parish: *last decade [1801–10]*



Year 1801: It is often to me very curious food for meditation, that as the parish increased in population, there should have been less cause for matter to record. Things that in former days would have occasioned great discourse and cogitation, are forgotten, with the day in which they happen . . .
John Galt, The Annals of the Parish

or stir [is] felt in our corner' (year 1808). Between Home and the World, a new spatial reality has wedged itself, subordinating them both: the national market, whose intermediate distance is traversed every week, if not day, by those *regular novelties*—books, newspapers, politics: all plurals—which will keep multiplying throughout the industrial nineteenth century. From the old Age of Wonders, only a turtle survives.

VI

One last collection, German this time. Berthold Auerbach's *Black Forest Village Stories*, written between 1843 and 1853, were among the great bestsellers of the century, and figure 21 (overleaf) charts about one third of the *Dorfgeschichten* collected in Cotta's 1940 ten-volume edition. Here, too, three spaces interact and compete for attention. The first is composed by Nordstetten and the other Black Forest villages, and its features should by now be familiar: narrow geographic range, daily needs, basic services—all contained within the same circular pattern we have encountered in Britain. But if the spatial logic of the idyll is more or less the same everywhere (probably because of its extreme narrative simplicity), Auerbach's international space is already quite different from Mitford's or Galt's: instead of sporadic wonders, we find war memories (Germany as 'the battlefield of Europe', in Thomas Mann's words), threats of economic competition, and especially the *basso continuo* of emigration (America, first of all; then Switzerland, France, Greece, Russia, Spain . . .). Except for Switzerland, which is very close, the narrative never actually moves into these foreign countries, but the voices of those who have left echo in almost every story, as if they were a large, hidden chorus. Nostalgic, usually; but in the more optimistic moments—like the letter from 'Nordstetten on the Ohio' ('we'll send for a parson from Germany. And my fields have just the same names

text covers the half century from 1760 to 1810: each year a chapter, where the minister Balwhidder registers the main events in the crowded and often confusing mode of annalistic writing (fires, weddings, wars, births, portents . . .), of which the first ten years of the book—charted in figure 19—offer a typical instance. Here, from the still idyllic daily life of Dalmailing, in the bottom left corner ('birth, labour, marriage, death . . .'), we can follow two possible threads through the figure's materials. The first runs through Irville (Irvine), Glasgow, and Edinburgh, and shows the system of central places at work: school in Irville, university in Glasgow, lawyers and doctors in Edinburgh; second-hand news in Irville, and first-hand news in Glasgow; celebration dinner, honeymoon, marble headstone . . . As services become more unusual, they move 'up' in the urban hierarchy, and further away from Dalmailing; but since Galt's world is still fundamentally one of simple everyday needs, such services are seldom required, and central places like Edinburgh or London remain barely visible.

Extremely visible on the other hand are the many 'novelties' listed in the second column from the left, which reach the parish from the West Indies, the Baltic, and other unspecified places. Behind them is the British empire, of course, but perhaps even more the sheer fact of *distance*: in Dalmailing, a parrot, Rososolus, or a *cocker-nut* (Balwhidder's half-Dutch spelling for coconut) are truly things from another world. Wonders. Or, more prosaically, luxuries; products of long-distance trade which shine for a moment on the horizon of the everyday, leaving behind a sense of incommensurable universes: on the one side birth, labour, marriage, and death; on the other, coconut, Riga balsam, parrot, and Danzig cordial. Home, and the World. But since the world does not really change everyday existence (its wonders are all singular: one donkey, one coconut, one bottle of this and that), the antithesis is at once radical, and totally irrelevant: wonders appear, are admired, and then vanish (except for tea, of course). The world is an astonishing place, but

FIGURE 19: *John Galt*, Annals of the Parish: *first decade [1760–69]*

America: rumours of rebellion

Ireland
'wild Irish seeking work'

Dalmailing. Daily life
arrival of pastor
arrival of Mrs Malcolm
marriages
illegitimate children born
twins born
twin calves born
smallpox
'natural wonder' [a toad]
pastor's patron dies
old schoolmaster dies
pastor's wife dies
distillator of herbs dies
schoolmistress dies
burning of the mill
fire on local estate
school closes/reopens
smuggling
haberdasher's shop opens
king's road mended

Dalmailing. Novelties
tea
pear tree
parrot
coconut
donkey
mantua-making
new names for children
Riga balsam
Rososolus
Dantzick cordial
first Dalmailing sailor
alehouse

Irville [2–3 miles]:
children to school
news [second-hand]
butter to market [regularly]
inn provides celebration dinner
inn provides chaise
dancing master
Belfast coal-bark

Various villages [5–10 miles radius]
finds first wife
finds second wife
smuggling
seamen
shipmaster lost at sea
coalpits sink

gypsies

Glasgow [25 miles]:
goes to university
brother-in-law goes to college
news [first hand]
cheese to market [occasionally]
new schoolmistress
honeymoon
many useful things
mantua-making

London
Lord Eglesham visits his lands

Edinburgh [60 miles]:
medical consultation
old pupil becomes advocate
marble headstone

France
prisoner returns
man returns from war academy
'contrivances of French millinery'

Norway: expansion
of coal trade

India: a nabob

fewer and less specialized services; around each B-centre there are six K-centres of the third rank, and so on, until, at the very bottom of the hierarchy, we encounter . . . *Our Village*: the 'central region of the lowest order', as Christaller calls it, whose radius (2–3 kilometres) is exactly the same as one of the book's country walks. And figure 18, Christaller-like, visualizes the services offered by Mitford's village, and by the other urban centres mentioned in her book.

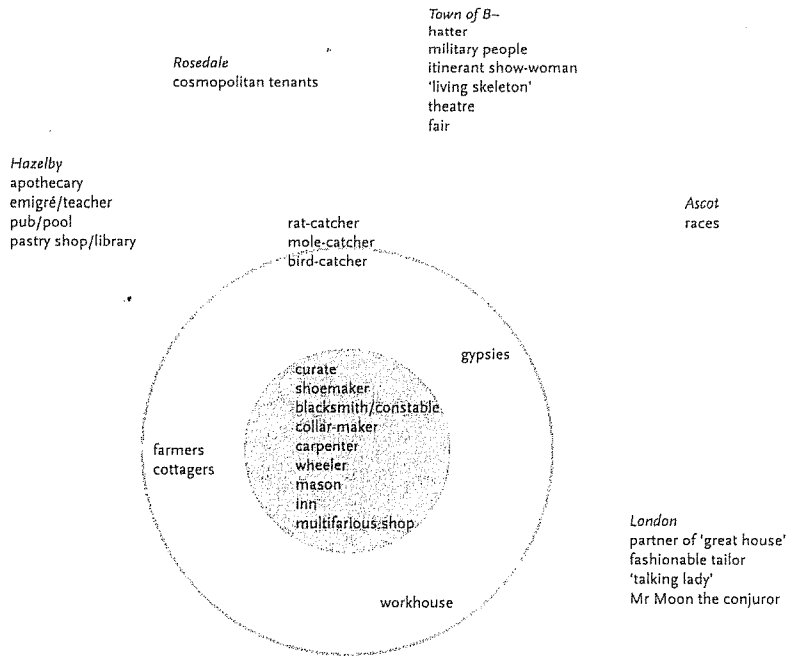
In the village: shoemaker, blacksmith, carpenter, mason; in London and the other towns: French teachers, hatters, fashionable tailors, horse races. Serious daily needs versus frivolous superfluities: this is Mitford's social geography. Its roots are in one of the most ancient, and most widespread, of narrative forms: the idyll. 'Birth, labour, love, marriage, death', wrote Bakhtin of this *longue durée* chronotope: 'only a few of life's basic realities . . . a little world . . . sufficient unto itself, not linked in any intrinsic way with other places.'[5] Sufficient unto itself: this is why village stories organize themselves in circular patterns: a circle is a simple, 'natural' form, which maximizes the proximity of each point to the centre of the 'little world', while simultaneously sealing it off from the vast universe that lies outside its perimeter. 'Sugar and coffee and salt: we wanted nothing else from the outside world', declares proudly the protagonist of a German village story of the same period, Auerbach's *Brigitta*. But the past tense of that 'wanted' is a sign that the days of the idyll are numbered.

V

The changing geography of village narratives is particularly clear in another book of the 1820s, John Galt's *Annals of the Parish* (1821). The parish is Dalmailing, near the west coast of Scotland, and the

[5] Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', 1937–38, in *The Dialogic Imagination*, Austin 1981, p. 225.

FIGURE 18: *Mary Mitford,* Our Village*: spatial division of labour*



There are two main methods by which one can distribute goods to the consumer: one can offer them at the central place to which the consumer must come, or one can travel with the goods and offer them to the consumer at his residence. The former method leads necessarily to the formation of central places or market places; the latter method, however, does not require central places. In earlier times, the travelling salesman was far more prevalent than he is today. The pedlar, the knife-sharpener, the wandering minstrel of the Middle Ages, and the travelling priest all brought goods to the consumer.
Walter Christaller, *Central Places in Southern Germany*

In *Our Village*, the curate, shoemaker, or inn are centripetal services, whereas rat-, mole- and bird-catcher—who are encountered outside of the village, and whose occupation lies, practically and symbolically, on the border between the human and the natural world—are instances of the older type, like the memorable 'reddleman' of *The Return of the Native*. The village's weak division of labour produces also many all-purpose entities like the 'multifarious bazaar' of the village shop, the blacksmith who doubles as a constable, or characters such as John Wilson, 'a handy fellow, who could do any sort of work—thatcher, carpenter, bricklayer, painter, gardener, gamekeeper . . .'

reflections, set down without regard for the limitations of the narrator's understanding'[1]—though you never quite know with ministers. David Craig, on the other hand, objects that Galt shows 'no particular attitude to the way of life he imitates, no effort of art [in] the selection of events'; 'because everything is felt through [the minister's] mentality, all other possible life is diminished to his kind of understanding'.[2] Galt would have regarded this as the more serious criticism. He was born into what Hume had called 'the historical age and . . . the historical nation'; and he was attempting a new kind of history on the ancient complementary principles of instruction and delight.[3] My wish, he said, 'is to be estimated by the truth of whatever I try to represent'; 'if there is any merit in any of my sketches it is in the truth of the metaphysical anatomy of the characters'.[4] The minister himself acknowledges, with gratitude, the limitations of parish life. If it is true, he says—addressing the third Mrs Balwhidder in the tones of Sir Thomas Browne—that 'we live, as it were, within the narrow circle of ignorance, we are spared from the pain of knowing many an evil; and, surely, in much knowledge, there is sadness of heart'. But knowledge of the great world is not a condition of wisdom; and 'I have, in the afternoon of life, been enabled to foresee what kings and nations would do, by the symptoms manifested within the bounds of the society around me', 'for what happened in my parish was but a type and index to the rest of the world'. The human drama of Dalmailing had been an index not only—by a familiar and complacent assumption—to political and social change: '. . . we had intromitted so much with concerns of trade, that

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we were become a part of the great web of commercial reciprocities, and felt in our corner and extremity, every touch or stir that was made on any part of the texture'.[1]

It is true that social alterations and national events make strong, simple, irregular impressions on the minister's mind, and on that of his parish. The effect may seem superficial to readers who are accustomed to the much more complex social novels of the Victorians. But this is just how the recent past looks to unsophisticated minds in remote places; and events 'are described, alluded to, or ignored, with a near-sighted lack of perspective that is curiously realistic'.[2] Galt's first readers were quite persuaded by his minister's account of the half-century they had lived through. Blackwood's 'worthy old mother' was angry to discover that the *Annals* was only a novel, for 'thus it lost all its charms'. A reviewer in 1821 wanted 'the faithful Annals of this homely and veracious Chronicler' added as an appendix to *The Statistical Account of Scotland*. Many 'thought the old gentleman very silly to publish'. Galt carried this public reaction into fiction in *The Last of the Lairds*: 'That silly auld havering creature, Balwhidder o' Dalmailing, got a thousand pounds sterling, doun on Blackwood's counter, in red gold, for his clishmaclavers; and Provost Pawkie's widow has had twice the dooble o't, they say, for the Provost's life.'[3]

Mr Balwhidder gets a deal of national history as well as parish events into the *Annals*: agricultural improvement, industrialization, domestic economy and rural education, kirk affairs, theological fashions, the Gordon riots, the Irish rebellion, the American and French wars, 'democracy', and utilitarianism. But a good deal is left out. In the world of letters, for instance, the work of the Edinburgh 'literati' may

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Forms such as the fabliau, Mennipean satire, and autobiography provide evidence of cultural migrations dating as far back as the medieval period; literature was global, then, before it was ever national.[3] And as Stephen Greenblatt points out, "English literature was always an unsteady amalgam of Scottish, Irish, Welsh, Cornish, and other voices of the vanquished, along with the voices of the dominant English regions, and the English language itself, so securely and apparently imperturbably at the center of the field, is revealed, under the pressure of examination, to be a mixed, impure, and constantly shifting medium."[4] It seems reasonable to suggest, then, that literature in general, and Anglophone literature in particular, is—and perhaps always has been—globalized.

It should be clear immediately, however, that this response does not take up the real demand posed by our student's question, which seeks to understand a more fundamental entanglement between literature and the phenomena most commonly associated with globalization—transculturation, the various forms (from cultural to economic) and periods (from the time of Columbus to the present) of imperialism and colonialism, the violent and uneven impact of socio-cultural and economic systems on one another as they come into contact, the eclipse of traditional ways of life, the temporal (modernization) and spatial (nationalism-internationalism-transnationalism) demands of European modernity, the global spread of capitalism and Western liberalism, and so on. How are these processes expressed through, facilitated, and/or inhibited by literature? To ask this question is to think not just about how globalization is reflected thematically in fiction, for example, but also about literature's role in the narrative construction of the numerous discourses or "fictions" of globalization. One of the first things to realize about globalization is that its significance can only be grasped through its realization in a variety of narrative forms, spanning the range from accounts of the triumphant coming-into-being of global democracy to laments about the end of nature; literature no doubt has a role to play in how we produce these often contradictory narratives about globalization.[5] Whether one sees globalization as a contemporary phenomenon that defines the character of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, or merely as an extension of a process initiated millennia ago, there can be no doubt that the generation of narratives about globalization has assumed particular urgency over the last few decades.[6] While the historical purview of our student's question is open to debate, it is clear that the

THE WORLD'S CLASSICS

JOHN GALT

Annals of the Parish

OR THE

Chronicle of Dalmailing

DURING THE MINISTRY OF

THE REV. MICAH BALWHIDDER

Written by himself.

Edited with an Introduction by

JAMES KINSLEY

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1986

JAMES KINSLEY

INTRODUCTION

FABLES, says Galt, 'are often a better way of illustrating philosophical truths than abstract reasoning; and in this class of compositions I would place the *Annals of the Parish*.'[1] The minister of Dalmailing writes as a 'witness to the work of a beneficent Providence, even in the narrow sphere of my parish, and the concerns of [my] flock'. This book and its companion, *The Provost* (1822), were not designed as novels; and in their reception as such,[2] to Galt's regret,

> they have both suffered, for neither of them have, unquestionably, a plot. My own notion was to exhibit a kind of local theoretical history, by examples, the truth of which would at once be acknowledged. . . . As stories they are greatly deficient. In the composition of [both] I followed the same rule of art . . . namely, to bring impressions on the memory harmoniously together. . . .[3]

—an application of Aristotle's dictum that literary art is 'something more scientific and serious than history, because [it] tends to give general truths while history gives particular facts'.[4]

Recent critics have given only qualified approval to Galt's attempts at 'local theoretical history'.[5] Ian Jack complains that the *Annals* run on into 'Galt's own observations and

[1] *Literary Life* (1834), i. 155–6.

[2] About 1,000 copies of the *Annals* were sold in Edinburgh and London in the first week; of *The Provost*, 2,000 in a fortnight. For comparative sales figures see David Craig, *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People 1680–1830* (1961), pp. 297–8.

[3] *Literary Life*, i. 226, 228.

[4] *Poetics*, ix.

[5] Dugald Stewart had applied the term to a 'species of philosophical investigations . . . *Theoretical* or *Conjectural History*; an expression which coincides pretty nearly . . . with that of *Natural History*, as employed by Mr Hume, and with what some French writers have called Histoire Raisonnée' (*Works*, 1854–60, x. 32–34).

reflections, set down without regard for the limitations of the narrator's understanding'[1]—though you never quite know with ministers. David Craig, on the other hand, objects that Galt shows 'no particular attitude to the way of life he imitates, no effort of art [in] the selection of events'; 'because everything is felt through [the minister's] mentality, all other possible life is diminished to his kind of understanding'.[2] Galt would have regarded this as the more serious criticism. He was born into what Hume had called 'the historical age and . . . the historical nation'; and he was attempting a new kind of history on the ancient complementary principles of instruction and delight.[3] My wish, he said, 'is to be estimated by the truth of whatever I try to represent'; 'if there is any merit in any of my sketches it is in the truth of the metaphysical anatomy of the characters'.[4] The minister himself acknowledges, with gratitude, the limitations of parish life. If it is true, he says—addressing the third Mrs Balwhidder in the tones of Sir Thomas Browne—that 'we live, as it were, within the narrow circle of ignorance, we are spared from the pain of knowing many an evil; and, surely, in much knowledge, there is sadness of heart'. But knowledge of the great world is not a condition of wisdom; and 'I have, in the afternoon of life, been enabled to foresee what kings and nations would do, by the symptoms manifested within the bounds of the society around me', 'for what happened in my parish was but a type and index to the rest of the world'. The human drama of Dalmailing had been an index not only—by a familiar and complacent assumption—to political and social change: '. . . we had intromitted so much with concerns of trade, that

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It is true that social alterations and national events make strong, simple, irregular impressions on the minister's mind, and on that of his parish. The effect may seem superficial to readers who are accustomed to the much more complex social novels of the Victorians. But this is just how the recent past looks to unsophisticated minds in remote places; and events 'are described, alluded to, or ignored, with a near-sighted lack of perspective that is curiously realistic'.[2] Galt's first readers were quite persuaded by his minister's account of the half-century they had lived through. Blackwood's 'worthy old mother' was angry to discover that the *Annals* was only a novel, for 'thus it lost all its charms'. A reviewer in 1821 wanted 'the faithful Annals of this homely and veracious Chronicler' added as an appendix to *The Statistical Account of Scotland*. Many 'thought the old gentleman very silly to publish'. Galt carried this public reaction into fiction in *The Last of the Lairds*: 'That silly auld havering creature, Balwhidder o' Dalmailing, got a thousand pounds sterling, doun on Blackwood's counter, in red gold, for his clishmaclavers; and Provost Pawkie's widow has had twice the dooble o't, they say, for the Provost's life.'[3]

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have been beyond the minister's ken; but he ignores the stir made by Burns's *Poems* in the west country in the 1780s;[1] he cannot have been deaf to the theological scandal of McGill's Christology (1786) or to some other local kirk bruilzies;[2] and surely he should have been a contributor to the *Statistical Account* (1791–9). But although the historical content of the book is so much determined by prescription and caprice, Galt exaggerated its formlessness. Its centre is marked at chapter xxvi:

> . . . here was an example plain to be seen of the truth of the old proverb, that as one door shuts another opens; for scarcely were we in quietness by the decease of that old light-headed woman, the Lady Macadam, till a full equivalent for her was given in this hot and fiery Mr Cayenne.

The parallel, real enough to the long-suffering pastor, disguises an essential contrast. The first half of the book is a picture of the old, settled world of the landed gentry (Lord Eglesham, Lady Macadam) and tenantry: an idyll marred only by common personal or parochial troubles, or by the familiar incursions of war. The second half introduces new themes (some typified by Mr Cayenne) of industry and urban settlement, religious anarchy, schism and decline, and the 'decay in the wonted simplicity of our country ways'. The minister who had been long accustomed to preach on the smuggling of tea, fornication, the horror of war, 'the helplessness of them that have no help of man', or Antichrist and 'orthodoxy', now finds his arguments—'which were the old and orthodox proven opinions of the Divinity Hall'—confounded; his new themes are 'the evil and vanity of riches', bloody revolution, and the fashionable secular philosophies.[3] It is only in 1807 that he begins to feel a settling of attitudes

[1] 'Old and young, high and low, grave and gay, learned or ignorant, all were alike delighted, agitated, transported' (R. Heron, *Memoir of Burns*, 1797, p. 17).

[2] For McGill, see Burns, *The Kirk's Alarm* (1789).

[3] pp. 128; 44, 98, 129, 137, 143, 147 ff.

and ways, 'really a birth of grace', and that is partly a mark of oncoming age in himself.

The story is told from the vantage-point of 1810. This enables Galt to write with an economy and concentration that would not have been so credible in a fictitious journal; but it sets him a difficult artistic problem. By 1809 Mr Balwhidder is, in Galt's words, 'garrulous and doited'. He has so little self-criticism left that he feels 'better' at preaching now, able 'to hold forth, in an easy manner, often a whole half hour longer than I could do a dozen years before'. Can Galt maintain the impression of garrulous age; write for the early years a narrative and dialogue which are vivid without becoming incredible; and get his minister to show evidence of interior change? If not, the autobiographical device becomes a burden; the illusion will not work.

The fiction of Mr Balwhidder—old in years, attitudes, and style—is established in the Introduction, his first account of the events of 1810. Narrative and sermon here set a standard style for the book; persuasively, for Balwhidder is a conservative member of a conservative profession, early confirmed in his ways, resistant to change even in his own calling.[1] He justifies the clarity of his early annals for Galt, by remarking that the memory is hazier about the recent past than about the long ago; and for the later chapters, 'being apt to confound the things of one occasion with those of another' nowadays, he has the help of the third Mrs Balwhidder, a woman of 'very clear understanding' and a 'most judicious judgment'.[2] These devices, sustained by a wonderfully even style, take Galt a long way towards credible fiction. But he goes further, and shows his ageing minister, in the annals from 1800 on, casually aware of his maturity. Mr Balwhidder's first school apophthegm had been, prophetically, 'Experience teaches

[1] He is only half-way through his ministry when he is disconcerted by Willie Malcolm's new-style preaching (p. 132).

[2] pp. 201, 188.

fools'; he has lately (1802) found his 'experience mellowing and . . . discernment improving'. (This is psychologically true; a sense of maturity comes slowly to such a man.) He begins humbly to recognize 'the finger of Wisdom'—his usual term is 'Providence'—in events. Religious schism, which so much distressed him, was better than political revolution; his elders had been right to avoid a head-on collision with Popery—against which he had preached at the Assembly—'and to this opinion, now that I have had years to sift its wisdom, I own myself a convert and proselyte'. Seeing his elders 'set on an alteration' in kirk discipline, he distrusted his own judgement; 'for they were true men, and of a godly honesty'—a lesson, this, for what Balwhidder would have called 'prelatic' clergy, though he is human enough to be a bit prelatic himself towards those who abandon traditional kirk allegiance. As in discipline, so now in divinity; he listens respectfully to his 'theological' elder Mr Siftwell, 'as I have not, at my advanced age, such a mind for the kittle crudities of polemical investigation that I had in my younger years, especially when I was a student in the Divinity-Hall of Glasgow'[1]—the tone and reference, however, preserving his self-respect!

'It is not . . . my design', says the minister, 'to speak much anent my own affairs'; this would be 'a very improper and uncomely thing' in a book intended 'for a witness and testimony of my ministry'.[2] But the tension between social annals and autobiography was recognized from the first in Galt's draft title, 'The Pastor of his Parish or The Chronicles of Dunmailing', and indeed the reader is fascinated far less by events than by Mr Balwhidder's blend of eloquence and garrulity, pathos and humour, simplicity and sense. The main merit of the *Annals* lies, as Galt hoped, in the 'metaphysical anatomy' of the minister.

He displays the necessary virtues of his calling 'to eschew

[1] pp. 175, 204, 185, 184, 193, 186.
[2] p. 46.

evil myself, and to teach others to do the same', walking 'in the paths of simplicity within my own parish'. But blameless lives are, in themselves, not often interesting. We are drawn to the minister as to some of the saints, less by his homespun virtue than by the individual and at times eccentric way he exercises it. The enchantment begins in the first chapter, with his induction. He endures the scorn of his people in dignified resignation, 'compassionating their wilfulness and blindness' (and casually noting the 'clash of glar' in Mr Kilfuddy's eye); but prudence also, at the level of property and politics, 'obligates' him to the indignity of going in and out by the kirk window. Balwhidder has a disarming honesty of mind. He admits that he gave up preaching against tea, not only because it turned out harmless enough but also because Mrs Malcolm took to selling it. Writing the first Mrs Balwhidder's epitaph —in English, for the 'worthy woman . . . did not understand the Latin tongue'—was a solemn duty, but designing her monument became 'a blessed entertainment' in the dreary winter nights. He does not suffer much from self-esteem: though he might fairly, on his own account, have resented Lady Macadam's insult, it was 'surely . . . not a polite thing to say to Mrs Balwhidder, my second wife'. He knows that, to the Searcher of Hearts, he is no saint; but he is modest and open enough to record, without giving offence, that Mr Auld defended him as 'a man of a guileless heart, and a spiritual simplicity, that would be ornamental in a child'. He can, however, be as wise as the serpent. Though he admires the business acumen of Mr Kibbock, and is able to give sound tactical advice to the experienced Mr Cayenne, he knows when not to assert his own rights; he gets the real point of a letter into 'a bit nota bene'; he practises the 'quiet canny way' of reform in his parish. He does not know that his Assembly sermon is in an outmoded style; but intuition, rather than humility and insecurity, tells him that it has been a failure.[1]

[1] pp. 95, 5, 20, 26–27; 62, 42, 29; 120, 177, 47, 189, 100.

There are flaws in Mr Balwhidder. His morality is narrow, conventional (even cards are 'thriftless and sinful'); and he is resistant to change. (This is not always, however, an uncritical conservatism. His pastoral experience enables him to see the darker side of Glasgow's new prosperity, and to 'discern something like a shadow' in the 'spirit of improvement'.) The impulse of courage is, in him as in most of us, spasmodic. He is ready enough to sound the trumpet for the Napoleonic war, and he can tell Lord Eglesham with some tact to give up his whore; but he is terrified by the infamous Mr Heckletext, and finds it difficult to face the tantrums of Lady Macadam or rebuke Mr Cayenne's blasphemies.[1] He is, too, casually and engagingly malicious. He passes on the local joke about Lady Macadam and the Douglas cause; vanquished in an unguarded moment by the Enemy, he laughs at the discomfiture of Betty Wudrife 'loud out among the graves'; provoked, he calls Mr Cayenne a 'dying uncircumcised Philistine'; he parodies the schoolmistress. The brazen fornicator Nichol Snipe is humiliated by a bawdy jest *ex pulpito*, which for once does justice to the realism of the Kirk.[2] Yet, despite these capitulations to the Enemy, the minister is patient and charitable towards Mr Cayenne and Lady Macadam, and above all to that 'engine of industry', the second Mrs Balwhidder. Here affectionate tolerance is enriched by pathos and wit:

> Often could I have found it in my heart to have banned that never-ceasing industry, and to tell Mrs Balwhidder, that the married state was made for something else than to make napery, and bittle blankets; but it was her happiness to keep all at work, and she had no pleasure in any other way of life, so I sat many a night by the fireside with resignation . . . really a most solitary married man.[3]

The minister's sense of Providence is fundamental to his character; it gives his history a design. Providence brings

[1] pp. 58, 137, 179, 105, 64, 78, 118, 144.
[2] pp. 58 and note, 77, 191, 128; 30. [3] p. 138.

good out of evil, working out the 'destined end' of all things with 'accustomed sobriety' (surely a Presbyterian gloss) and sowing seeds which ultimately yield universal increase. To see in the minister's toothache a divine instrument for the exposure of hypocritical lechery is, perhaps, just within the propriety of this view; but there is improbable and sarcastic parody in 'it pleased . . . Him, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, to send at this time among us a Miss Sabrina Hookie'—a woman of 'harmless vanity', 'made up of odds and ends'.[1]

The professional gravity of the clergy has been, at least from the Middle Ages, permissible matter for comedy. Preaching perfection, humanity exposes its imperfections; a religious world-view, interpreted by unsophisticated clerical minds, encourages what the world sees as a lack of proportion; and clerical facility in the language of liturgy and Scripture is easily made into an instrument of satire. This kind of comedy runs harmlessly and delightfully through the *Annals*, and sometimes at least—as in the opening parallel drawn between the minister and the king—seems to be within Mr Balwhidder's own perception. But occasionally Galt exaggerates it mock-heroically and, I think, improperly: in, for instance, the minister's notion that 'all things in this world were loosened from their hold, and that the sure and steadfast earth itself was grown coggly beneath my feet, as I mounted the pulpit' for the Assembly sermon; or when he reduces the idea of parish events as a universal 'type and index' to absurdity, seeing parochial harmony as an omen of national preservation but keeping this to himself 'lest it might . . . relax the vigilance of the kingdom'. Mr Balwhidder's literary dream-vision reads like a parody of the *Spectator*, and is out of character.[2] His romantic posturing in chapter v is not incredible in itself ('I was . . . looking at the industrious bee . . .

[1] pp. 37, 75, 101; 64, 48, 49.
[2] pp. 97, 182, 142.

and the idle butterfly, that layeth up no store, but perisheth ere it is winter'); it is comic enough, especially in the minister's fancy that 'a connect treatise on the efficacy of Free Grace would be more taking' than a poem on original sin 'like Paradise Lost'; but it is wantonly reduced to farce by his throbs, thrills, and transports.

Like Galt's first readers, we easily accept the *Annals* as a brief memoir, and do not ask for the elaborate statement through character, setting, and event, of the sociological novel. We are content, as in reading a journal, to build on hints and fill out characters who are sketched in outline—especially those close to the minister, resolved not to speak much anent his own affairs. People like Lady Macadam, Sabrina, Mr Cayenne, and the Gaffaws are delineated with remarkable economy and force. But the realization of the three Mrs Balwhidders, almost without description or dialogue, is quite as impressive. Of the first we are told only that she was active in good works, settled the minister in his people's affections, and dwined away after the loss of twelve stone of lint. The second is more dramatically portrayed as a resolute woman and an 'engine of industry', but she appears chiefly at 'the down-lying' or 'the wearyful booming wheel'. The third is the well-bred 'relic' of a Glasgow professor, and a woman of judgement and tact.[1] In fact, our sense of the reality of the three wives grows out of Mr Balwhidder's responses and attitudes; they are almost parts of his character. He married the first 'more out of a compassionate habitual affection, than the passion of love', and in this she quietly died. Then he 'placed [his] affections, with due consideration, upon Miss Lizy Kibbock', and reaped the whirlwind. But if the first Mrs Balwhidder set him in the affections of the parish, the second set him up in the world. He was as dangerously deliberate over the third, bending his brows and looking towards Irville, 'an abundant trone for widows and other

[1] pp. 14, 24; 53, 140; 154, 205.

single women', and carrying out a cautious reconnaissance. A new, unexpected note comes in here, merry if not quite romantic. An understanding is achieved by an indelicate game with chicken legs and 'a kindly nip on her sonsy arm', and a happy old age is assured for Mr Balwhidder. The Glasgow 'relic' is, indeed, the almost silent familiar spirit of the *Annals*; it is unthinkable that the book could have got written during the dominion of the second Mrs Balwhidder. Yet it is one of Galt's subtleties that the woman who most fully engages the minister's feelings is not a wife but the Christian paragon, Mrs Malcolm: she evokes pathetic and even poetical description as none of the three wives does, and remains a romantic, unattainable ideal kept beyond his reach by 'saintly steadiness'.[1]

There is a different kind of romantic feeling in Mr Balwhidder's account of the 'two born idiots' Jenny and Meg Gaffaw. Galt, like Scott, expresses the amusement, affection, fear, and wonder with which his countrymen viewed mental disorder. In what Meg Gaffaw says and does at her mother's death there is pathos, dignity—and a rebuke, unintended but poignant, for the minister who has come out of curiosity and too late: 'What a pity it is, mother, that you 're now dead, for here 's the minister come to see you. O, sir, but she would have had a proud heart to see you in her dwelling, for she had a genteel turn. . . .' Mr Balwhidder hears this, perhaps defensively, as 'curious maunnering'. But he does see her, Scottishly, as 'a sort of household familiar' with 'much like the inner side of wisdom in the pattern of her sayings', and he takes her admonition over the tythe-boll as prophetic. Meg comes to full stature after her rejection by Mr Melcomb, her last tragic words a kind of ballad poetry:

> The worm—the worm is my bonny bridegroom, / and Jenny with the many feet my bridal maid. / The mill-dam water 's the wine o' the wedding, / and the clay and the clod shall be my bedding. / A lang night is meet for a bridal, / but none shall be langer than mine.

[1] pp. 9, 31, 154, 156; 46, 154.

'When [Galt] chooses to be pathetic,' said Byron, 'he fools one to his bent.'[1]

Meg is not the only poet in Dalmailing. The minister has his own 'nerve', and an artist's eye for the calm, black-clad figure of Mrs Malcolm 'spinning the finest lint, which suited well with her pale hands'. A preacher of 'moving discourse', he has worked the Bible and the Covenanting tradition into his style: 'we were pre-ordained to fade and flourish in fellowship'; 'where the banner of the oppressor was planted of old, and the war-horse trampled in the blood of martyrs'; 'spinning . . . as if she was in verity drawing the thread of life'; '[this] I made manifest to the hearts and understandings of the congregation, in such a manner that many shed tears, and went away sorrowful'; and (straining our gravity a bit) 'she was removed from mine to Abraham's bosom on Christmas day'.[2] He is addicted to artificial nature-pictures and decorative fancies, in the style of Augustan prose 'meditations'; a poetic simile can bring him to the verge of absurdity. But he has also a natural poetry: 'I saw, as it were, the children unborn, walking in the bright green'; 'it was between the day and dark, when the shuttle stands still till the lamp is lighted'. Sometimes the pattern is complex—made up from peasant speech, Scots poetic tradition, and the language of the preacher—as in the incantations of Meg Gaffaw, or the minister's farewell:

> Our work is done . . . and, in the sleep that all must sleep, beneath the cold blanket of the kirk-yard grass, and on that clay pillow where we must shortly lay our heads, may we have pleasant dreams, till we are awakened to partake of the everlasting banquet of the saints in glory.[3]

[1] pp. 111–12, 160, 125, 160; Byron to the Countess of Blessington, quoted in Aberdein, op. cit., p. 122. Cf. p. 70, note.

[2] pp. 7; 1, 3, 8, 44, 24.

[3] pp. 28, 46, 56, cf. James Hervey's *Meditations and Contemplations* (1746); 148, 22; 4.

The Scottishness of Galt's style is not fully realized in silent reading. When he is read aloud by a Scot, a distinctive pattern and tone come through—even when, as in the first chapter, the dialect element is slight. This is emphasized by Galt himself. Reviewers had objected that the style of *The Provost* was 'not Scotch, because the words are English,—and not English, because the forms of speech are Scottish'. But, says Galt, 'independently of phraseology, there is such an idiomatic difference in the structure of the national dialects of England and Scotland'—as neat a 'retour' as the phrase 'South Britain'—'that very good Scotch might be couched in the purest English terms, and without the employment of a single Scottish word'.[1] Provost Pawkie records his dialect conversations, but tells his tale in the mannered Anglo-Scots which Galt, in his early essay on John Wilson, calls 'a species of translation'. This is also the minister's basic style, and it makes vernacular phrases and passages in the *Annals* look a bit contrived.[2] Galt was, of course, anxious to sell his work in England, where Burns's 'uncouth dialect' often 'spoiled all',[3] and his Scots is unnaturally light. He uses the vernacular for special effects, and indeed risks weighting it a little in the 1822 edition.[4]

It is 'the common language of the country', says Galt, 'in which [a Scotsman] expresses himself with most ease and vivacity, and, clothed in which, his earliest and most distinctive impressions always arise to his own mind': a vehicle of realism, wit, and feeling. Mr Balwhidder's Scots is marked in his reports of peasant speech and, by a natural extension of the principle, in bits of genre-painting—the portrait of Nanse

[1] Postscript to *Ringan Gilhaize* (1823); *Works* (1936), viii. 325.

[2] Cf. Craig (op. cit., p. 261) on Lady Grippy in *The Entail*, 'often no more than a vehicle for displays of language'.

[3] Cowper to Samuel Rose, 27 August 1787: 'Poor Burns loses much of his deserved praise in this country, through our ignorance of his language. . . . His candle is bright, but shut up in a dark lantern' (*Works*, 1836, vi. 56–57).

[4] See Textual Notes.

Banks, the village's farewell to Charlie Malcolm, and the descriptions of the carlins' secret tea-drinking and the 'pay-wedding'.[1] Dashes of dialect, for Galt and still for Scotsmen with a traditional turn of wit, add comic spice to an 'English' narrative: in, for instance, 'the very parrot . . . was a participator, for the beast gied a skraik that made my whole head dirl'; or in the portrait of the dancing-master, which deserves comparison with the Edinburgh etchings of John Kay. Scots is—and remains today—a ready tool for sarcasm: the 'inditer' of Breadland's Latin epitaph, says Mr Balwhidder, 'could no have been the young laird himself, although he got the credit o't on the stone, for he was nae daub in my aught at the Latin or any other language'.[2] Most important of all, Galt uses the vernacular to evoke strong feeling:[3] in the minister's 'touching discourse' of 1776, the plaint of Nanse Banks, the contrived and unconvincing monologue of the widow Mirkland, and the much truer pictures of the sorrows of Mrs Malcolm and Meg Gaffaw.[4]

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[1] Essay on John Wilson (1803); *Annals*, pp. 13, 18, 12–13, 196.

[2] pp. 22, 15, 25.

[3] 'This is perfectly true to the broad Scots for professional pathos which we know to have been used by . . . advocates in court at that time' (Craig, op. cit., pp. 157–8; cf. p. 290).

[4] pp. 81–82, 43, 86–87, 109, 111–12.

NOTE ON THE TEXT

THE text is printed from the British Museum copy of the first edition (12°; 1821), collated with that of 1822. Both editions were published at Edinburgh by Blackwood—and for him, at London, by Cadell. Both were printed in Edinburgh; *21* by James Ballantyne, and *22* by Neill. The title-pages are almost identical. The texts have the same make-up ($A1^r$–$S2^v$; pp. 1–400). In *22*, however, the title-leaf is followed by two new preliminary leaves. The first carries a dedication 'To John Wilson, Esquire, Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh; as a small expression of the Author's regard for his worth and talents'; the second, an advertisement for two other novels by Galt—*The Ayrshire Legatees* ('lately published') and *The Provost* ('in the Press'). An additional leaf at the end of *22* advertises new books from Blackwood.

A number of substantive alterations were made in *22*. Since the printer was following the paging and lineation of *21*, and had to accommodate these changes, they may be safely ascribed to Galt himself. Some of them eliminate cacophonous repetition or improve the rhythm of the prose; a few show Galt, like Burns in revision, weighting the Scottishness of his language. A larger group of variants corrects obvious errors in printing, and what were apparently misreadings of a difficult manuscript. But although Galt revised his work for *22*, he probably did not read the new edition in proof:[1] it introduces as many new errors (both substantive and accidental) as it corrects, and a number of variant spellings unlikely to be Galt's. I have therefore followed the text of *21*, incorporating changes in *22* which have apparent authority. All departures from *21* are recorded on pp. 211–13.

[1] Cf. Galt's second letter to Blackwood, *infra*, p. 207.

Halldór Laxness, *Independent People* (1934-5, trans. 1945)

'Summerhouses is the world.' (393)

Questions/Tasks
(Page Numbers are from my edition, Vintage, 1997)

1. Read the opening of 'The Holding' (second part of Book I, Ch. I, 'Icelandic Pioneer') from 'On a knoll in the marshes stands the ruins...in the sunshine of spring.' (9-11)

Take 5 mins yourself then 5 with a partner. Think how this locates and establishes the 'world' of the novel. Find and connect elements from this short passage to the novel in general: look for key themes, issues, similarity with other episodes, etc.

Connect the opening pages to a section from 'Evening', from 'Free of Debt', beginning 'The little world of humans....*Lonely now I go*' pp. 169-71. Does this depict a particular attitude that exists throughout the novel? How does it accord with its material themes (i.e. history/politics/culture, etc.) and formal/stylistic approach?

2. Is this a realist novel? (It's often mentioned as a classic of Icelandic social realism.)

3. Is Bjartur a 'heroic' character? (Are we to see in him some 'everyman' characteristics? Is he particularly 'Icelandic' or ultimately an 'independent' man?)

- His introduction: 'The Holding', 11-13
- His 'aesthetic' side: 'Dreams, 36-37 (He claims later: 'I don't believe in dreams.' 82)
- He kills the calf: 'Great Events', in 'Free of Debt': 225-6
- The reindeer struggle episode: 'Search' & 'Ballad Poetry', in 'Icelandic Pioneer': 88-99
- His defiance after the sheep slaughter: 'Conversations With Higher Powers'; 'Of the Soul', in 'Hard Times: 278-9; 290-1
- His reaction to Asta's pregnancy: 'Made of Myri...', in 'Hard Times': 363, 'It is I': ('He struck her across the face...' 366)

4. How are we to interpret the role and function of the supernatural in the text? Particularly that of Kolumkilli?

- Opening two pages.
- In Rosa and the sheep killing: 'September Night', in 'Icelandic Pioneeer' 67-75
- In the brothers' conversation: 'On the Paving', in 'Hard Times': ('Have you noticed that when anything happens....a new moon behind the clouds.' 267-8
- The sheep slaughter: 'Conversations With Higher Powers' in 'Hard Times 275-9
- The ghost in the ewe-house: ('After a while, however.... they were cold.') from: 'To Walk, in 'Hard Times': 283-4
- The corpse of the small boy: 'Spring Days', in 'Hard Times': 348
- 'It is the power that rules the world' ('Re The Land of Dreams', in 'Years of Prosperity'): 400

5. What is signified by the novel's title? 'Shepherds' Meet, 64-5; 'The Poetess', 78; 'Errands', 121; End of 'Conversations With Higher Powers', 279.

6. Is this a 'Global'/'World'/'Internationalist' Novel? ('Of the World, in 'Free of Debt', 195-6; Asta Sollilja goes to the town with her father – to 'the edge of the world'); ('Death in the Spring', 252 - a 'sudden expansion of mind' – visit by Bailiff's daughter); (The 'failure' of the croft 'When One Has a Flower', 341-3); ('When Ferdinand was Shot': The 'blessed' war, 373-80); ('Admission Tickets' - the 'dissolution' -the vagaries of the banking system, 387-88, also in 'Interest', 446-47).

What other 'global' themes and issues can you think of to add to trade/economy?

Wool Prices/International economy – 165; ('The vagaries of the sky were incalculable. It was their world war, and in this world war of theirs Bjartur issues commands like a generalissimo...)(45)

Internationalism/Socialist Politics: 'Day'164-5; 'Gentry' 182-3; 'Of the Soul' 286; 'Ideals Fulfilled' 456-57.

7. The End – is it unremittingly bleak? How do we reconcile it to the novel as a whole?

Miscellaneous Questions/Issues (and create your own)....
Is it fundamentally about 'sheep', as Brad Leithauser claims?

How is landscape/nature represented and presented throughout the novel? See 'Winter Morning' 139-140

The role of Asta Sollilja? She gazes at the clouds 240-41; her eventual fate?

Why is the old woman the conscience of the text? 217-8

Modernity/Modernisation is a key theme: 333 – read hand-outs on Iceland's rapid modernisation.

In the process, he transformed his country's cultural conception of itself. If his effect on modern Iceland is something only his countrymen can adequately assess, the critic Kristjan Karlsson sounds convincing when he writes: "It would be difficult to guess what our literary situation now would be like without Laxness but there is much indication that we would be facing an irreparable disruption between the old and the new." And: "He has created a new novelistic literature with deep roots in the Icelandic tradition at a time when there was great danger that our literature might become dissociated from the past." And: "He has deprived us, a small nation much sinned against by God and men, of the vice of self-pity."

But Laxness's influence extends beyond his country's borders-and beyond the expansive terrain he created in his own books. Those who spend time with his novels henceforth will read his forebears differently. To see Laxness making fresh and resourceful use of the old Saga themes and conventions (the titanic feuds and brooding grudges; the offhand credulity toward the supernatural; the abrupt narrative veerings and dismissals; the terseness and understatement; the occasional bloodthirstiness and grotesquerie) is to see new nuances in the great classics-Njal's Saga, Hrafnkel's Saga, Egil's Saga-of Icelandic literature.

Brad Leithauser (from LION material, see module website)

servant and professor in Copenhagen. Together with another Icelander he made an exhaustive analysis of the situation in Iceland, compiled a highly detailed rent roll of the Icelandic farms, listing their resources and profits, and examined the work of the courts, etc. But Árni Magnússon was above all a learned collector of manuscripts who has done more than anyone else to trace and gather into safekeeping the ancient Icelandic vellums which are the visible result of his forefathers' literary efforts. He left his treasure hoard of books and manuscripts to the University of Copenhagen, where they have been kept under the name of the Árnamagnæan Collection. By a decree, however, of the Danish Parliament, which was confirmed by the Danish Supreme Court in 1966, these unique manuscripts are now to be restored to their land of origin; and thus has been settled, once and for all, a matter of long and heated dispute between Danes and Icelanders.

In one of his works of fiction, the trilogy of novels which began with *Íslandsklukkan* (Iceland's Bell, 1943), Laxness has made use of many features drawn from Árni Magnússon's life as a patriot and collector of manuscripts, and has brought to life, with great artistry, the Icelandic world of the times in which he lived.

In the early nineteenth century liberal movements began to assert themselves in different parts of Europe; various oppressed nations and minority groups raised the demand for freedom. These ideas gave new life and energy to the Icelandic struggle for national independence. A few young Icelanders in Copenhagen, among them Jónas Hallgrímsson (1807–45), one of Iceland's finest lyrical poets, became energetic propagandists for the reestablishment of the *alþingi*. A forceful spokesman was found in Jón Sigurðsson (1811–79), who for forty years was Iceland's leading politician—"Iceland's shield and sword," as he has been called. Thus between 1843 and 1845 the *alþingi* was reestablished, but at first only as an advisory body. In 1854 the last vestiges of the earlier trade monopoly were finally removed, and the Icelanders were able to establish trade relations where it best suited them to do so. Thus the ice was broken, both on the political and the economic level. The hundred years which followed tell the story of how Iceland gradually advanced towards its long-sought goal of full national autonomy.

At the thousand-year anniversary of the settlement, which was celebrated in 1874, King Christian IX visited Iceland—the first official royal visit to Iceland in the history of the country—and introduced then a new constitution, which among other things gave the *alþingi* joint legislative power with the crown and control of the country's finances. Just over twenty-five years later, in 1903, the special office of Minister for Icelandic Affairs was established in Reykjavík; and by the Union Act of 1918, finally, the independence of Iceland was fully recognized. Only the king of the two countries and the Danish administration of foreign affairs still remained as reminders of Iceland's earlier state of dependence. In 1944 the final step was taken: on June 17—the anniversary of Jón Sigurðsson's birth and now the country's National Day—Iceland was proclaimed a Republic at Þingvellir, the meeting place for the *alþingi* of the ancient Commonwealth. The country had then had a foreign head of state for well-nigh seven hundred years.

It is clear that in *Íslandsklukkan* Laxness has been inspired by political events in Iceland at the time of writing, by the exultation accompanying the birth of the new Republic—the completely independent state so eagerly desired for so long, and now a reality. In his description of a past age, with its sufferings, its spirit of resistance and the people's yearning for an indigenous culture, the novel is sustained by a profound national fervor with direct appeal to the author's Icelandic contemporaries. The work may be seen as a kind of inventory of the native Icelandic heritage, a magnificent synthesis of what is essential in the Icelandic character, as the author himself has experienced it.

III *The Modern Writer's Background*

The political liberation of Iceland has run parallel with a corresponding development in economic and social spheres. The past fifty years or so have probably meant speedier and more drastic material changes for Iceland than for most other European countries. At the turn of the century the built-up areas or "towns" contained 13 per cent of the island's total population, which was then 78,500; and in 1945 the population of the towns had risen to 55 per cent of a total population of 130,500. In 1900 the capital city of Reykjavík had only 6,500 inhabitants; in 1965 the figure had risen to 78,000, that is, to

about 40 per cent of a population of almost 194,000 people. In Iceland the essential precondition for these changes, which are so typical of the times, has been the development of the fisheries to a level of large-scale production, and the vigorous industry and trade which have grown up around them. Iceland has emerged today as a modern welfare state which is not strikingly different from the other Scandinavian countries.

Laxness himself, being more or less a contemporary in age with the present century, has lived through this revolutionary development which is also reflected, in many different ways, in his work. The novel *Brekkukotsannáll* (The Fish can Sing, 1957), gives a pleasantly humorous description of the idyllic environment of Reykjavík at the time of his childhood. In direct contrast to this stands *Atómstöðin* (The Atom Station, 1948), which is set in the same Reykjavík at the end of the Second World War: a hectic metropolis in a newly created Republic, placed only a few years earlier in the midst of international communications and drawn into events of great political importance.

In an autobiographical fragment dating from 1924, called *Heiman ek fór* (From Home I Went) and not published until much later (1952), Laxness has described his grandmother as he remembers her from the days of his childhood. He emphasizes strongly the archaic qualities of this old Icelandic woman, her links with the past and with all that is most profoundly native to Iceland and its people. It is a document of great cultural-historical interest, and merits lengthy quotation in that it throws light on how the writer has experienced the situation in which he finds himself as an Icelander and modern man of the twentieth century:

> At every opportunity I point out—and always with noble pride—that I knelt at the feet of the eighteenth century to receive my upbringing. My maternal grandmother was born during that half of the nineteenth century which carries all the distinctive features of the previous century, and grew up among those members of the population who might be described as fragments broken from the rock of distant ages. My grandmother's foster-mother lived through the fires of Skaftá [the volcanic eruption of Laki in 1783, Iceland's most severe eruption in historical times], and had to lay shoe leather on the table for her family to eat. A woman who has dealt out shoe leather at meals must surely inculcate in her children rules of life quite different from those encouraged nowadays. My grandmother brought me up and taught me many rules of life which she had gleaned from her foster-mother.
>
> My grandmother was an eighteenth-century person and did not know a thing about what went on in the nineteenth century, either in politics or science. . . . No wonder, then, that the news of twentieth-century events seemed as vague, passing fancies in her eyes, and moved her little. . . . Our telephone was now installed and was placed in a room next door to hers. But even though this strange contraption rang noisily and continually in her ear throughout the remaining years of her life, she died heartily convinced that the telephone was nothing but humbug. No notice should ever be taken of news which came from the telephone. If anyone tried to explain the telephone to her, she simply laughed at his attempts; she just could not be bothered to waste words on these fantasies, she said, and began to talk about something else.

It was from this unusual woman that the boy Halldór received his first impression of Icelandic saga and song:

> But it was my grandmother who brought me up as a child, and I am proud of my good fortune in having been brought up by a woman who, of all the women I have known, was the least dependent on the fashions and spirit of the times. She sang me ancient songs before I could talk, told me stories from heathen times and sang me cradle songs from the Catholic era . . .
>
> Her speech was pure and strong and never a note false as far as language was concerned. I have never known anything more authentically Icelandic than the language of this old woman. It was neither generally Nordic in quality like the folk tales, nor tinged with Latin influence like the writings of the Middle Ages, nor blended with Danish like the Icelandic in vogue at the time of the Reformation. It was the language of the culture, eight hundred years old, of the inland farms of Iceland, unspoilt and wonderful, imbued with the indefinable flavor of its origin, like a wild fruit.[4]

We may suspect that in the interests of gaining his artistic effect the writer has given this portrait a rather stronger element of archaism than his childhood really had. But even if this is so, the description undoubtedly tells us something of fundamental importance, not only about Laxness himself but about all Icelanders of his generation. It is sometimes said that in the

twentieth century Iceland has made a direct leap from the Middle Ages into modern times. This, of course, is an immense exaggeration. Implicit in the statement, however, is the undeniable truth that the rapid development into a modern society must have seemed especially dramatic in a small, homogeneous nation with a cultural tradition as strong and ancient as that of Iceland. To the Icelander conscious of his culture and its implications the meeting of the old and the new, of the native and the foreign, was full of problems, and will have acted as an incitement to self-examination, to a stock taking of his own national values. This situation is to a large extent reflected in Laxness' years of travel and inquiry as a young man, the period of orientation in postwar Europe, which found powerful literary expression in the novel *Vefarinn mikli frá Kasmír* (The Great Weaver from Kashmir, 1927).

CHAPTER 2

Life in Europe. The Great Weaver from Kashmir

I *From Hearth to Cloister*

HALLDÓR Guðjónsson was born in Reykjavík on April 23, 1902, the son of foreman Guðjón Helgi Helgason and his wife, Sigríður Halldórsdóttir. He was evidently christened Halldór after his maternal grandfather; and in accordance with the ancient Scandinavian system of name giving, which still exists in Iceland, he was known as Guðjónsson (Son of Guðjón) after his father. Only as a grown man did he change this patronymic for the new family name of Laxness, by which he has become known.

When Halldór was three years old, his parents moved into the country to the farm of Laxnes in the district of Mosfellssveit, just northeast of Reykjavík, and became farming people. His father died in 1919 but his mother remained on the farm until the spring of 1928, when she returned to the capital. The writer-to-be thus spent a great part of his childhood in the country. Much later, in letters and elsewhere, he has himself described the environment of his youth; the portrait of his grandmother, drawn from his childhood memories, has already been quoted. He showed rather less enthusiasm for his duties on the farm, if we may believe his own description:

> I was really rather a "nice boy" at home on the farm. I was a dual character—an ordinary errand boy and milk collector in the eyes of human beings, but a far from ordinary philosopher before God. I was what people call "lazy." From my earliest childhood I have loathed physical work, and I wormed my way out of all jobs that could possibly be avoided. I was just as skillful, too, at getting others to do the jobs I was supposed to do myself. I was ill-liked by the

from PETER HALLBERG, TWAYNE: NYC, 1971

character and been fitted into a new total view of the subject. On the first pages of both these novels the settler appears as a wanderer coming to survey his land. Hamsun's Isak ends up in secure possession of his world, a well-to-do man; he could without irony be called the king of his little realm. Bjartur, on the other hand, finally has to leave everything which, through thirty years of slavery, first as a farm boy and then as an "independent" man, he has worked to acquire; he has to move off in order to begin anew. Isak's story develops into an idyll, while Bjartur's departure from Sumarhús is veiled in tragedy. There is above all in Laxness' work a social slant which is not to be found in *Markens Gröde*. It is true that Hamsun bitterly criticizes industrial capitalism, which he contrasts with the life of the farmer—the life lived according to nature's laws. But otherwise, Isak and his little world are described as being virtually independent of society. The mining of copper on his land results in much commotion and an influx of money. But it is an episode which passes, and afterwards people manage just as well as before. In *Sjálfstætt fólk* economic policy and trade conditions are made to shape the course of the farmer's life both perceptibly and irrevocably. The fixing of prices on agricultural products, the trade boom during the First World War, the liberally granted or actually forced bank loans, the fall in prices and the bankruptcies—all these things are realities which make their presence thoroughly felt, even in the remote moorland farm of Sumarhús. Near the end of the book, when Bjartur happens to fall in with a group of strikers down in the coastal village, he hears tell of the poor farmers of Russia who had tired of their masters and plunderers and joined forces with their comrades, the workers in the towns, in order to create "a new society in which no one can profit from other people's work" (II, 333).

The reference to the Russian Revolution is no accident. During his time in America Laxness had already talked of visiting the Soviet Union—"the only one of the great civilized countries which I have yet to spend some time in," as he wrote in a letter from San Francisco in March, 1928.[3] He went to Russia in the autumn of 1932 and stayed there in October and the greater part of November. He recorded

his impressions of the visit in the short work *I Austurvegi* (Going East, 1933), an eyewitness account which deals essentially with agriculture in the Soviet Union. As a farmer's son Laxness has always been greatly interested in the work and living conditions of the Icelandic farmers, and has made frequent critical contributions to the subject. At this particular time the subject must have engaged his interests more than usual—partly because a severe agricultural crisis, following in the wake of the great world depression, was prevailing in Iceland; and partly because he was then fully occupied in writing his novel about farmers. It is significant that the very word "crisis" occurs in the projected title of a handwritten manuscript dating from 1933: *Bók kreppunnar, sagan um frelsi Þorleifs Jónatanssonar og heimsstyrjöld hans* (The Book of Crisis, the Story of Þorleifur Jónatansson's Freedom and his World War). On the same title page we also find a highly illuminating note, written as a memorandum for the continued work: "Sharpen the contrasts between the small and large-scale farmer. Show how the large-scale farmer exploits the small farmer in his service both politically and economically, and dubs himself a knight at his expense with promises and flattering gifts—such as roads, a telephone, and building loans—until the large-scale farmer has become a bank manager in Reykjavík and a Cabinet Minister, while the small farmer has become completely impoverished, has to leave his farm and joins up with the crowd of unemployed in the towns."[4]

This declaration should be placed side by side with the author's impressions of his visit to the Soviet Union in the autumn of 1932. The postscript to the second edition of *Sjálfstætt fólk* in 1952 provides, inter alia, a few glimpses of this decisive phase in the story of the work's origin. It says that the draft written in Los Angeles in the summer of 1929 was very incomplete. The writer had early become aware of his inadequate knowledge of the subject, and it was not until three years later that he considered he had laid the proper basis for a continued work. The journey to Russia, where collective farming was just then making its name, seems to have provided him with a new grasp of the task before him: "In the Soviet people's realistic view of the matter, where no lyrical faddists got an opportunity to

confuse the onlooker's view, I soon noticed a few dominant features, and among them was the simple but clarifying method of grouping farmers according to class: large-scale farmers, middle-type farmers, and small farmers. This classification, which is afterwards found to be the most obvious one of all, actually opened the whole problem to me, and enabled me to handle it, fully and clearly, on a social basis." [5]

With the guidance of this comment we may easily notice that in *Sjálfstætt fólk* Laxness has attempted a social differentiation of his farmer types, in accordance with the knowledge he had acquired on his visit to the Soviet Union. Certain of Lenin's ideas, which are reproduced in *I Austurvegi*, are clearly discernible in *Sjálfstætt fólk*. Thus Jón á Útirauðsmýri, the Bailiff, obviously represents the Icelandic version of the Kulak or "rural capitalist" (Icel. *landburgeis, sveitaburgeis*). Much as we should expect, his son Ingólfur rises within the farmers' party to the status of member of Parliament, bank manager in the capital, and Cabinet Minister, just as the author had indicated in the memorandum, quoted above, for his work on the novel. Between this country-dwelling upper class and the out-and-out poor farmers, the proletarians of the soil, like Bjartur, Laxness places a man like the "mountain king," the typical "middle-type farmer" (Icel. *miðlungsbóndi*). In the travel book we find a quotation from Stalin: "The middle-type farmer, that is, the man who waits and sees. He waits to see who will triumph; he waits and waits, and only when we have gained the upper hand and freed ourselves from the bourgeoisie and the landowners, will he begin to incline in our direction. He is, after all, a middle-type farmer" (57-58). This reminds us strongly of Laxness' characterization of the "mountain king," who is always cautious and vacillating: "the mountain king who had not, it is true, become a large-scale farmer yet, although he had wormed his way onto the parish council, but was a middle-type farmer, who for more than a year had been in agony of mind because of the merchant and the cooperative society, for when two strong parties are disputing, it is important to have the patience to wait and see" (II, 45).

The task of taking up the challenge offered by Hamsun's famous novel about farmers, and of doing so on the basis of his new points of departure, must surely have seemed tempting and

pressing to Laxness. By virtue of his experiences and radical views he had found that the social outlook in *Markens Gröde* —or rather, perhaps, its lack of any real view of society—showed an escapist and perhaps dangerously reactionary tendency. In the years when *Sjálfstætt fólk* was written the Blut-und-Boden ideology of National Socialism had already had time to place in an ambiguous light even the essentially harmless concept of Rousseauism, and the romantic tendency to idealize the farmer's life. In July, 1934—before Laxness had seriously set to work on the second volume of his novel—he published a short article about farmers, in which he described himself as an "Icelandic farmer's son and a member of the Icelandic Agricultural Society"; it is an ironic "Þakkarávarp" (Speech of Thanks) addressed to a German Commissioner for Agriculture who on leaving Iceland after an official visit had had published a turgidly phrased message of greeting to the Icelandic farmers.[6] The idea of romanticizing the Icelandic farmer's life must surely have appealed to Laxness less than ever once he had encountered its German equivalent as expressed by an envoy of the Third Reich.

III *"The Cosmopolitan of the Whole Earth"*

Sjálfstætt fólk confronts the reader with the question of how it can happen that a man like Bjartur, with his cunning, his strength of will, his physical endurance and toughness and the endless anxiety he suffers on behalf of man and beast, must nonetheless see himself defeated in the struggle for his own and his family's livelihood. The author gives a kind of answer to the question when he comments on Bjartur's departure from Sumarhús; the passage is a beautiful expression of his humane passion for social justice:

> Once again they had broken down a poor farmer's farm; they are the same from century to century, and that is because the poor farmer always remains the same, from century to century. A war abroad may strengthen his backbone for a few years, but the help it brings is merely illusory; a delusion; through all centuries the poor farmer never escapes from his state of crisis; he continues to exist in misery as long as man is not man's safeguard, but man's worst enemy. The life of the poor farmer, the life of the independent man, is of its very nature a flight from other men who seek to kill him. From one

night lodging to another one still worse. A poor farmer's family moves to a new home, four generations out of those thirty which have kept up the continuance of life and death in this country for a thousand years—but for whom? Not, at least, for themselves and their children. They resembled nothing so much as fugitives in a ravaged land, where long-lasting wars have raged, or outlaws without sanctuary—but in whose country? Not, at least, in their own country. In foreign books there is a legend about a man who became perfect through sowing in his enemy's field for one night. The story of Bjartur í Sumarhúsum is the story of the man who sowed in his enemy's field all his life, day and night. Such is the story of the most independent man in this country (II, 345-46).

In the eyes of their describer, the activities of Bjartur and his like are hopeless as a solution to the practical problems of life. Their independence, which they uphold with tooth and claw, is an illusion and a deception, both a self-deception and a deception on the part of the landowners; we ought, indeed, to imagine ironic quotation marks on either side of the book's title—*Sjálfstætt fólk* (Independent People). For his own part Bjartur cannot, or will not, revise his opinions. But he leaves his son behind among the strikers in the coastal village, where the exploited workers who have begun to grow aware of the mechanism of society glimpse a solution to the problem in the idea of joining forces and working together in the struggle for a better existence.

But once it has been pointed out and established that this social attitude is adopted in the book, we see at once how inadequate it is as an expression of the work's individual character. Considering the great extent to which socially critical viewpoints contributed towards the origin of *Sjálfstætt fólk*, it is surprising indeed that this social slant does not thrust itself more directly forward in the finished work. The chief reason for this is probably that the social motif has expanded to mythical proportions of universal applicability. The first chapter of *Sjálfstætt fólk* relates the ancient legend of Kólumkilli, a powerful raiser of spirits and sorcerer of Irish origin, and his woman worshiper, the housewife Gunnvör, who murdered people in order to drink their blood and suck their marrow. After being exposed and broken to death this woman walked again on her farm and haunted the place as a ghost to such a degree that it lay

deserted for many a long year. It is, however, the very place which under the name of Sumarhús becomes Guðbjartur Jónsson's property. Thus his life on the moor is laid from the beginning beneath the spell of supernatural and terrifying powers—even though he refuses to acknowledge them to the very last. Kólumkilli becomes a symbol of what has been inimical to man from time immemorial. His shadowy figure melts imperceptibly together with the invisible enemies in society who are constantly depriving Bjartur of the fruit of his work—these "they," who "are the same, from century to century," according to the passage quoted above. These latter seem in their way as irrational, and as unapproachable for the purposes of honest combat, as Kólumkilli himself, for it is impossible to wrestle with a bank.

Thus the present is linked together with the distant past in such a way as to provide a powerful perspective through the centuries. Despite the fact that we have the First World War as a landmark in the chronology of the narrative, the story of Bjartur leaves an impression of bewildering timelessness. According to the Marxist pattern, and perhaps in accordance with the writer's earlier intentions, the poor farmer, who is forced to leave his farm, ought surely to have been made to join up with "the crowd of unemployed in the towns." But the final scene in *Sjálfstætt fólk* shows the aging Bjartur, still unbroken, leaving Sumarhús to start life all over again in a new dwelling place. As a character in the book he has grown away from the pattern and acts according to his own inherent logic.

There is, however, no reason for trying to challenge the author's view that his radical and politically social outlook has helped him, in a decisive way, to give artistic form to his material. A political conviction or belief does not, of course, constitute any guarantee of esthetic qualities in an imaginative work. But it looks as if Laxness' own view of society has contributed towards giving steadiness and dramatic stature to *Sjálfstætt fólk*—qualities which are noticeably lacking in the draft of the novel dating from 1929. But as we have hinted, this theoretical basis never reveals itself in a crude or obtrusive form. It lies embedded in the narrative's mass of teeming life and individual human destinies, and plays the part of an invisibly supporting structure. This is one of the reasons why Laxness' social outlook—to say nothing of his Marxist or socialist view of society—here seems

so universally applicable, so little bound to a definite political situation, such as the agricultural crisis at the beginning of the thirties. Commenting later on his work, Laxness has emphasized very strongly that "the small farmer is a classic, international type, except in the Soviet Union and in those countries which have advanced far in socialism":

> . . . Bjartur í Sumarhúsum is understood in all countries of the world: he is the cosmopolitan of Iceland, because he is the cosmopolitan of the whole earth. And it is not only in the sparsely populated areas of the countryside that this type of man belongs; he has his parallel and surprisingly exact equivalent in every man who, with a similar financial position and a corresponding way of thinking, fights for his own and his family's life in the cities of the world. I recall that shortly after *Sjálfstætt fólk* came out in the United States, [in New York, 1946] I was visited by a gifted American who, to judge from his manner, was a city dweller. He said that he had interrupted his journey at the airport here, in order to talk to me about Bjartur í Sumarhúsum; he told me, among other things, something which might seem strange to many, although nothing could seem less surprising to me: that in the very city of New York there were millions of people who in all essential respects lived more or less exactly as Bjartur í Sumarhúsum and his family did—not only under the same economic conditions, but with the same moral principles and way of thinking.[7]

IV *"Father" and "Daughter"*

In *Sjálfstætt fólk* there are many individualized characters who deserve closer study as fictional creations. Here, however, we must concentrate on three characters who, to a higher degree than others, have been made to crystallize the narrative's deepest meaning and pathos: Bjartur, Ásta Sóllilja, and Bjartur's youngest son, Nonni.

Bjartur himself has been given some measure of the Icelandic sagas' dimensions, of their heroes' superhuman toughness and strength of will. It is not just for amusement's sake that he takes comfort from the story of Grettir Ásmundarson—Grettir the Strong—who lived as an outlaw among the Icelandic mountains for nineteen years; his own situation is basically not very different from Grettir's.[8] In his characterization of the book's leading figure Laxness for the first time makes use, in a truly masterly way, of his country's ancient poetic tradition. Loudly singing *rímur* (rhymed ballads) about the exploits of ancient warriors, Bjartur forces himself onward, dead tired, against the snowstorm on the highland moor.[9] In his own old-fashioned Icelandic poetry, with its intricate rules, he binds his own thoughts and experiences in rigorous bonds. It is one of his ways of molding and mastering his existence, of raising himself above it; it is the triumph of his spirit over matter.

This adventure on the heath shows the writer's art from yet another angle. We are given here an excellent example of his capacity for allowing the landscape itself to play a living part in the description. Bjartur's fantastic ride on a wild bull reindeer over the ice-cold and rapidly flowing glacier river has, for all its palpability, an element of saga and myth about it. "There came moments, both then and later, when it seemed to Bjartur as if it were the fiend Kólumkilli himself, and no other, who had shown himself here" (I, 149). In the storm on the highland moor the man fights for his life in single combat with the monsters of the land, the enemies of man. The severity of the landscape is in harmony with the *rímur* which he sings about the legendary warriors of ancient times, and with his own indomitable will.

Bjartur dominates the narrative and gives it its fundamental tone. But here as elsewhere Laxness works with strong contrasts and tensions. In Ásta Sóllilja he has created a contrast and complement to her hard-hearted father. If a snowstorm on the heath seems the natural setting for Bjartur's struggle for existence, the author surrounds Ásta Sóllilja with the most ethereal shades of feeling, with the most spiritual kind of lyricism, which the Icelandic countryside can inspire. The young girl is to be allowed, for the first time, to accompany Bjartur to the market town and "get to know the world from her own experience" (I, 310). The night before the journey is midsummer night, when those who bathe in the dew may have a wish, and Ásta Sóllilja steals out alone:

> A dell by the river. Two inexperienced feet. Hither leads her curving track in the dewy grass. For a while the birds are silent. She sits on the bank and listens. Then she takes off her worn-out, everyday rags beneath this sky which actually manages to veil in oblivion

Halldór Laxness and his second wife, Audur Sveinsdóttir, Florence, Italy, 1948 (Collection of the family of Halldór Laxness; from Ólafur Ragnarsson and Valgerður Benediktsdóttir, eds., Lífsmyndir skálds: æviferill Halldórs Laxness í myndum og máli, 1992; Suzzallo Library, University of Washington)

life). Ásta Sóllilja collapses on the way, and when Bjartur picks her up and carries her dying in his arms, she whispers, "Nú er ég aftur hjá þér" (Now I am with you again).

Sjálfstætt fólk was highly controversial at first because of its caustic portrayal of Icelandic farmers. Halldór commented that this reaction took him aback as much as that of the Icelandic Canadians who had objected to the way they were portrayed in his story "Nýja Ísland." But the novel became the most popular of his works, both at home and abroad. When the English translation appeared in the United States in 1946, it was chosen as the July Book-of-the-Month Club selection. Today *Sjálfstætt fólk* has attained the stature of a national epic: in an opinion poll in 2000 Icelanders named it the best Icelandic book of the twentieth century.

In an afterword to the second edition of *Sjálfstætt fólk,* Halldór attributes the enduring appeal of the work—manifested by its best-seller rank in countries as different as Czechoslovakia and the United States—to the small farmer's being a classic, universal type recognized the world over. He observes that this type of man is found not only in rural areas but also in big cities, where Bjartur's counterpart is any man who is fighting for survival—his own and his family's—with similar means, principles, and outlook. He goes on to say that, after beginning the novel in Los Angeles in 1929 and putting it aside for lack of knowledge about the subject, he was able to begin the novel once again after he witnessed the plight of Russian farmers in the fall of 1932. He had notebooks full of material that he had collected on trips to the most remote farms of Iceland, so there was nothing left to do but to find peace and quiet and sit at a desk ten or fifteen hours a day for several years. He says that when he completed the novel in the summer of 1935 and let go of Bjartur in the final chapter, "fanst mér um stund einsog ég ætti ekki haldreipi leingur í veröldinni" (I felt for a while as if I no longer had a lifeline to the world).

The spring following the publication of *Sjálfstætt fólk,* Halldór took a monthlong trip around the isolated settlements of the West Fjords to collect material for his next novel. In *Skáldatími* he explains what led to this work: "Mér fanst að úr því ég hefði skrifað hetjuljóð bæði soðningarinnar og sauðskepnunnar þá yrði ég líka að skrifa hetjuljóð skáldsins, ekki einhvers sérstaks stórskálds með heimilisfang og síma í bókmentasögunni, . . . heldur þess skálds sem var og er og verður á Íslandi og í öllum heiminum" (I thought that since I had written the epos of both the fish and the sheep, then I likewise had to write the epos of the poet, not some special great poet with an address and a telephone in literary history, . . . but rather the poet who was and is and will be in Iceland and in all the world).

The "epos of the poet" appeared in four volumes: *Ljós heimsins* (The Light of the World, 1937), *Höll sumarlandsins* (The Palace of the Summerland, 1938), *Hús skáldsins* (The House of the Poet, 1938), and *Fegurð himinsins* (The Beauty of the Skies, 1940). In 1955, with the second edition, *Heimsljós* became the title of the whole tetralogy (translated as *World Light,* 1969), and the first volume was renamed *Kraftbirtingarhljómur guðdómsins* (The Revelation of the Deity).

The novel describes the miserable life of the folk poet Ólafur Kárason from his early childhood until his death in his early thirties. Ólafur Kárason was inspired by Magnús Hjaltason, an obscure folk poet from the West Fjords who lived between 1873 and 1916 and whose unpublished autobiography and diaries are preserved in the National Library of Iceland. In depicting this "world poet" from the West Fjords, Halldór adhered closely to these sources and even incorporated into the novel many passages verbatim. But he also transformed these materials and created in Ólafur Kárason an antihero who has been variously compared to Jesus, Charlie Chaplin, and Fyodor Dostoevsky's idiot.

Ólafur, a parish pauper in the custody of strangers on an isolated farm, is a lonely, introspective child who feels that he does not belong—that his life has no connection to the lives of others. He seeks consolation in the beauty of nature and in poetry, which comes to him as a strong sound and visions of the deity. This sound, as a manifestation of divine beauty, becomes a recurring motif. The entire story is filtered through his consciousness and narrated in a lyrical style. Thus, to a certain extent Ólafur is the author of his own story.

After years of cruel and unjust treatment, Ólafur is transferred to a nearby coastal village where he is allowed to live in an abandoned warehouse, his "summerland palace." The village is controlled by a caricature of a manager, Pétur Pálsson, nicknamed "Þríhross" (Threehorses). For a time Ólafur enjoys the manager's patronage but then is dismissed because his poetry lacks the right ideology. Ólafur's love affair with an equally poor young woman ends when she becomes pregnant and leaves him for a fisherman who can offer her security. He then renews a relationship with the epileptic woman Jarþrúður, who is many years his senior, and they begin living together in a shack beyond the village outskirts. In this "house of the poet," Ólafur has long discussions with a friend and fellow poet about the connection between justice and poetry. On these occasions the little house "bæði víkkaði út og hækkaði uns það var eins stórt og allur heimurinn" (became both wider and higher until it was as large as the whole world). In her own misery, Jarþrúður turns into a jealous, domineering woman, and Ólafur falls in love with a young woman who is a labor agitator in the village. She urges him to leave Jarþrúður and to come down off this "andstyggilegur kross" (disgusting cross). But he does not have the heart to abandon Jarþrúður and takes her with him when he moves on, leaving everything behind: "Alt. Alla sína drauma. Allan sinn skáldskap. Alla sína von. Alt sitt líf. Alt" (Everything. All his dreams. All his poetry. All his hopes. All his life. Everything).

Halldór Kiljan Laxness

Sjálfstætt fólk

II

Cover for the second volume of Halldór Laxness's most important work, about a sheep farmer whose fanatical devotion to his flock costs him his family (from Árni Árni Sigurjónsson, Laxness og þjóðlífið, *volume 2, 1987; Widener Library, Harvard University)*

In the last part of the novel he has become a schoolteacher and is living with Jarþrúður in a remote village at the foot of a glacier. Accused of sexual misconduct with one of his pupils, a fourteen-year-old girl, he is sentenced to a one-year jail term. Upon his release from prison, he meets a young woman who strikes him as the incarnation of the beauty he has yearned for all his life. After an enchanted midsummer night of lovemaking, they go their separate ways, and she returns to her own village on the other side of the glacier. But they correspond with each other, and he writes love poems to her and then later an elegy when he learns of her death. These are among Halldór's most beautiful poems and were included in the second edition of *Kvæðakver.* Finally, in the deep, new-fallen snow of Easter morning, Ólafur walks off toward the glacier, and the novel concludes with the famous line "Og fegurðin mun ríkja ein" (And beauty alone shall reign).

Halldór's three novels of social realism from the Depression years stemmed from the contemporary realities of poverty and class division. In the next decade, Icelandic society was transformed by sweeping change, and his work took a new turn. With the occupation of Iceland by first British and then United States forces beginning in May 1940 and the establishment of a foreign military base, employment surged and economic conditions improved. In 1944 Iceland ended its union with Denmark and reestablished itself as a republic after almost seven centuries of foreign rule. These events generated intense debates among Icelanders about their national identity and their autonomy as a nation among other nations. In his renowned 1942 essay "Höfundurinn og verk hans" (The Writer and His Works), published in *Veltvángur dagsins,* Halldór says that the value of Iceland's literary heritage lies in its expression of the Zeitgeist of each era, with both national and universal significance. Citing examples from Iceland's literary canon, he argues that all good literature is both national and international–for the simple reason that people, especially nowadays, are no longer national but rather as international as the birds. A good book written in China is written for Iceland.

The essay shows Halldór's growing interest in an Icelandic literary heritage that he wants to bring closer to his own time in a kind of synthesis of the old and the new. With perhaps this aim, in the early 1940s he published his own editions of several Icelandic sagas with modern orthography, replacing the normalized (but archaic) spelling system. As he explains in the preface to his edition of *Laxdæla saga,* which appeared in 1941, his intention is to show readers that the language of the Icelandic sagas is essentially the same as the language the readers use themselves. This edition was censored by the authorities, and the Icelandic Parliament immediately passed a law that banned publication of the Old Icelandic texts with anything other than the normalized spelling. When Halldór forged ahead with an edition of *Hrafnkatla* in 1942, also with modern spelling, the Ministry of Justice brought charges against him. After protracted legal proceedings, Halldór was acquitted, and the orthography law was ruled a violation of a constitutional provision guaranteeing freedom of the press.

Although Halldór advocated standard modern spelling for the sagas, the spelling that he used in his fiction was far from standard. In the late 1930s he invented his own idiosyncratic spelling, which adhered more closely to pronunciation than the mandated system, and he used it in all his work thereafter, including republished versions of earlier works. This arcane orthography, which gives his works a distinctive and even strange look on the printed page, is a characteristic of his style that is lost in translation.

While he was publishing his editions of the sagas, Halldór was also at work on a lengthy article titled "Minnisgreinar um fornsögur" (Notes on the Sagas), published in *Sjálfsagðir hlutir* (Things Taken for Granted, 1946). In it he rejects the accepted view of the Icelandic sagas as historical accounts and argues that they are fictionalized accounts that succeed in bending history to the narrative truth of the works. He praises their objective, concise style, in which not a single word is superfluous, and concludes, directly contradicting his statements from the 1920s, that an Icelandic author cannot get along without the old books. Halldór's interest in Old Icelandic literature thus grew not merely from patriotic feeling but also out of his search for new narrative techniques.

In 1942 Halldór published *Sjö töframenn: þættir* (Seven Magicians), a collection of short stories written mainly in the 1930s except for "Temúdsjín snýr heim" (Temúdsjín Returns Home), which dates from 1941 and was Halldór's last short story for more than twenty years. Set in the Far East, the story is about Genghis Khan discovering Taoism and shows the first emergence of the mysticism of Lao-tzu and the *Tao Te Ching* (circa 206 B.C.–A.D. 220) that was to characterize all of Halldór's later works. In a 1942 essay, "Bókin um veginn" (The Book about the Way), published in *Sjálfsagðir hlutir,* Halldór discusses the abiding influence of the *Tao Te Ching* in his life and work. He also remarks on the stillness of Taoism that is exemplified in the simplicity of the sentences in the book, which he deems, in their musicality and directness, the most perfect in all of world literature. Halldór's deep interest in such diverse works as the *Tao Te Ching* and the Icelandic sagas is significant, for both are marked by detachment and objectivity in style, with the laconic speech of the sagas corresponding to the subtle aphorisms of Tao. From these complementary sources Halldór synthesized a highly creative style that typifies his subsequent fiction.

His next major work was the trilogy consisting of *Íslandsklukkan* (Iceland's Bell, 1943), *Hið ljósa man* (1944; The Fair Maiden, 1944), and *Eldur í Kaupinhafn* (Fire in Copenhagen, 1946), republished in one volume as *Íslandsklukkan* in 1952 (translated as *Iceland's Bell,* 2003). *Íslandsklukkan* is an historical novel, set in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, based on historical and legal records and written in the antiquated language of the period. It focuses upon three main characters: the poor farmer Jón Hreggviðsson, who is sentenced to death for killing the king's henchman; Arnas Arnæus, a figure modeled on the Icelandic scholar and manuscript collector Árni Magnússon; and Snæfríður Eydalín, daughter of the local magistrate and the sister-in-law of the bishop of Skálholt. Þingvellir, where the story begins and ends, is the focal point of events, and other important settings include the bishopric at Skálholt and Copenhagen, places that are also important in Icelandic history.

Íslandsklukkan provides an accurate picture of the political and social conditions in Iceland during one of the most degrading periods in the history of the nation. It opens with a scene at Þingvellir, where the king's henchman has arrived to oversee the destruction of an ancient bell that has hung from the gable of the old courthouse as long as anyone can remember. Over the protests of an old man whose family has lived in the vicinity for generations, Jón Hreggviðsson is commanded to smash the venerable bell, which is then shipped to Denmark in pieces. Þingvellir is also the setting in which the henchman flogs Jón Hreggviðsson as punishment for composing sly verses that lampooned His Majesty while destroying the bell. Jón accompanies him home, and the following morning the henchman is found dead in the bogs.

To some extent Jón Hreggviðsson resembles Bjartur of *Sjálfstætt fólk: hetjusaga*–crusty, intrepid, clever at versifying, and enthralled by the saga heroes. The paths of Jón and Arnas cross when Arnas comes to Jón's poor cottage and discovers, in Jón's mother's bedstead, some sheets from a precious vellum manuscript of ancient poetry that he has been seeking for many years. Arnas realizes that his calling lies in sacrificing himself to rescue the old books from oblivion, which in his view embody the soul of Iceland, so he forsakes Snæfríður, the woman he loves, and marries a rich, elderly, crippled Danish widow. After Jón has been sentenced to death and is awaiting execution at Þingvellir, his mother walks to Skálholt and appeals to Snæfríður for help. Snæfríður manages to free Jón and sends him to Arnas in Copenhagen for protection, along with both a message telling Arnas that she understands his sacrifice and a ring as a token of her affection. Through Arnas's assistance, Jón is acquitted, and the corruption of Snæfríður's father, the magistrate, is exposed. For a time, Snæfríður and Arnas foresee a common future in their vision of the Promised Land, a motif that appears frequently in Halldór's works, but nothing comes of their dreams, and the novel ends apocalyptically with the great Copenhagen fire, which consumes Arnas's manuscripts. The only manuscript that escapes destruction is the one that once belonged to the poor old woman, Jón Hreggviðsson's mother.

In accord with Halldór's principle of artistic representation, formulated in an interview about the first two volumes of the trilogy in the newpaper *Þjóðviljinn* on 23 December 1944, the characters' thoughts and feelings are reflected in their speech and physical reactions, and the action does not take place "í sálarfylgsnum" (in the soul's hideaways). Although the narration itself is objective, Halldór makes use of literary allusions, parables, and aphorisms. The language is often highly lyrical, with descriptions of nature reflecting characters' mental and emotional states, especially those kindled by Snæfríður, whose beauty and worthiness have earned her the epithet Íslandssól (Iceland's Sun). Of the three protagonists, Snæfríður is the only one whose name bears no relation to that of the historical counterpart, in this case, Þórdís Jónsdóttir. Rather, she is named for the Snæfríður of Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla* who so bewitched Harald Fairhair that he neglected his kingdom. The novel also alludes to her as "hið ljósa man" (the fair maiden) of the Eddic poem "Hávamál" and describes her as a "huldukona" (hidden woman) out of folktales or a Valkyrie from heroic poetry. Like many other women in Halldór's works, Snæfríður has a remoteness that suggests she does not quite belong to society. In the end Snæfríður Íslandssól, dressed in black and riding a black horse, disappears into the landscape as a sublime symbol of Iceland.

Halldór Laxness receiving the Nobel Prize in literature, 10 December 1955 (from Peter Hallberg, Skaldens hus: Laxness' diktning från Salka Valka till Gerpla, *1956; Doe & Moffitt Libraries, University of California at Berkeley)*

Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967, trans 1970)

*Page Numbers are from my 1978 Picador edition (the sections are unnumbered – I have given them numbers and call them "chapters" for expediency)

The first page / opening section:

a) Is everything you need to know about the novel embedded in the first sentence? How? Why?

   Compare it to the passage in Chapter 17 (280), beginning "That was how everything went after the deluge.... lunchtime meatballs in the unbearable heat of siesta time."

b) Read the rest of the opening section (from "At that time...containing a woman's hair around its neck.") What aspects of theme, tone, perspective can you pick out that might give us a way into discussing the novel in general (or any thread in the novel)? Take a partner and take 10 mins to do this.
   You might want to think about what the section suggests about:

- the role of the gypsies?
- the theme of invention? (the magnets, the telescope, the magnifying glass)
- the setting – in space and time?
- Jose Arcadio Buendia?

(See Moretti on 'non-contemporaneity', from 'Modern Epic' excerpt)

Read the opening two pages of Ch3 (38-9): Is this episode comparable to *Annals*?

Melquíades

What is the role of Melquíades in the novel?
See Ch1, opening page; 12-14: "the whole village was convinced that José had lost his reason.... under Melquíades' influence." (His rapid ageing, his diseases, storytelling, laboratory, his reversion to 'youthfulness'); Ch. 3, 46-47 ("At the beginning of the road into the swamp...": His resurrection/reappearance, with a 'cure' for the memory plague and a camera); Ch4, 65-67 (The new found harmony was interrupted by the death of Melquíades.... who was not worth taking seriously.": his aged behavior, his writing, his death, burial and wake); Ch10: What does his room signify? (153): "The decisive difference was revealed in the midst of the war....'Nobody,' Aureliano Segundo said."; Beginning, Ch. 18, 288-89, Aureliano and Sanskrit.

"The Magical Real"

- the flying carpet: Ch2 (32-3: "Úrsula was barely over her forty days' rest when the gypsies returned....into a snake for having disobeyed her parents.")
- Opening. Ch. 3: "José Arcadio Buendía did not have a moment's rest. Fascinated by an immediate reality that came to be more fantastic than

the vast universe of his imagination, he lost all interest in the alchemist's laboratory."

- Levitation: The children, Ch. 18 (300); Father Nicanor Ch5 (74, 89); Aureliano Ch4 (62); Remedios the Beauty Ch12 (195).
- Ghosts throughout the narrative (e.g. "dead people who wandered through the house after sundown" Ch18, 298)
- The insomnia/memory plague – Ch3.
  (See Critical Excerpts from King, Swanson, Moretti)

The Family

Moretti, in his essay in *Modern Epic* claims that *One Hundred Years* is a "a family saga." What function does the family have as both theme and aesthetic device in the novel?

Ch. 7, 113-15. The story of Rebeca's 'shooting' of José Arcadio, the trail of blood to Ursula and the smell of his corpse.

Ch11: 177, the discovery of Don Fernando's coffin/corpse box ("At first Fernanda did not talk about her family....like live pearls."

Ch. 16: 266: Úrsula's decrepitude and ancestral / temporal confusion. ("Amaranta Úrsula and little Aureliano would remember the rains as a happy time....sown with subtle traps." Ch. 17: 277: her death ("She had confused him with her son again...to die in the bedrooms."

Ch. 19: 311: (The last) Aureliano returns to Macondo and wanders through the streets..."Although she had not noticed it..."Aureliano could not find anyone who remembered his family..."

End Ch19, Ch20: What are we to gather from the story of Aureliano and Amaranta Úrsula's incestuous affair? 320-321 ("It's alright child....already tearing at her insides." 326 ("Gaston has returned to Brussels...they were awakened by a torrent of carnivorous ants who were ready to eat them alive."); 329, 331 ("many times they were awakened by the traffic of the dead.")

Aureliano

What is the role and persona of Colonel Aureliano Buendía? See Opening, Ch. 6; Ch7: 112 ("That was how the legend of the ubiquitous Aureliano Buendía began."); His "pride" 116; Ch8: 123 ("Ten days after a joint communiqué..."); His extraordinary paternity: Ch. 8: 128-9; Ch. 8: 133: ("He was preserved against imminent old age by a vitality that had something to do with the coldness of his insides.") Ch. 9 140 ("Lost in the solitude of his immense power.") 143 ("fighting for his own liberation") 149-50 ("The failure of his own death.")Ch. 10: 165: His retreat and decline; Ch13 215 ("the family finally thought of him as if her were dead."); Ch. 13 – What are we to make of the manner of his death? 218-9: ("'It's the circus...")

Why is Transport a central "globalizing" theme?

1. The Galleon: Why is the discovery of the Galleon an interesting symbolic feature of the novel? Ch. 1: 17-18
2. Compare and Contrast to the relation of José Arcadio Segundo's Boatline Ch10: 161)"Things like that, which gave Úrsula such consternation....Fernanda del Carpio.")
3. The Railway: Ch11: 182-84 ("On the second visit by the sons....to Macondo") (See critical excerpt from Conliff)

Ch12 – Read the first four pages and compare to other novels we have/will read. Is this Macondo's real "global" moment? Why so? Write down some examples.

The 'banana plague': the arrival and impact of the 'Gringos'
Ch10. 185-90: ("On the other hand, when someone from the town had the opportunity to test the crude reality of the telephone installed in the railroad station.... 'just because we invited a gringo to eat some bananas.'") How is Mr. Herbert characterized? Why is this, in many ways the centre of the novel? (you might want to disagree with this reading). (See Moretti on 'incorporation', from 'Modern Epic', p. 244)

The Strike is central to the narrative, part of "the events that would deal Macondo its fatal blow."(Opening, Ch15). Read the story of the strike from Ch15, and the beginning of Ch. 16. With a couple of partners, pick out a paragraph or sentence describing an important moment/element, to bring to class discussion of the events. (See also the subsequent recalls of the "massacre" in Ch17 (282-83): "convinced as most people were by the official version that nothing had happened"); The end of Ch17; Ch19 315 (It turns into myth); and by Aureliano in the final chapter.
(See excerpt from Gene H. Bell-Villada; Denning)

Is the story of Aureliano Segundo's gluttony allegorically related to the banana story? See Ch13: 208-10 ("He never looked better, nor had he been loved more...death was awaiting him.")

Travel/Exploration: the world out there.
"'Science has eliminated distance,' Melquíades proclaimed. 'In a short time,, man will be able to see what is happening in any place in the world without leaving his own house.'" Ch1.
The trope of the voyage/exploration: José Arcadio Buendía, 16; Úrsula, 36-7; José Arcadio's travels Ch. 5 80-1;

Why the title?
"solitude" 138, 140, 153, 166, 174, 181-2, 236, 302.

Storytelling
Why is storytelling a formal and thematic feature pervading the novel?
Ch3, 44-45 (during the memory plague: 'They would gather together to converse endlessly...in a vicious circle that would last entire nights."); José Arcadio's seafarer's tales (Ch5, 81: "He had been around the world sixty-five times...")

(See Carlos Fuentes, excerpt: 'García Márquez: On Second Reading'; Michael Bell critical excerpt)

Metafiction plays a central role: See Ch10, 154 (Aureliano Segundo in Melquíades's room: "Although it had no cover and the title did not appear anywhere..."); Ch18, 302 (his wrestling and deciphering of the parchments: "He remained shut up...") Ch19, 316 (the parchments and their relation to the "facts" of the worker's fate); **The End**: how do you interpret it? (334-6)

Miscellaneous:

What to make of....

The story of the Pianola? (Ch4, 56-8)
The Gold Fish?
The role of the Magistrate?
The 'Ice'?

His world was always that of the "realist" novel, the modern novel out of Flaubert and Faulkner. In this he shared the critical realist interests revealed in the early novels of Gabriel García Márquez, though he would remark in his studies of that writer, that from the publication of the novel *La mala hora* (*In Evil* Hour) and the stories of *Los funerales de la Mamá Grande* (*Big Mama's Funeral*), both of 1962, García Márquez's fictions began to be centered around a space, Macondo, and would use narrative voices that showed no surprise at the introduction of "magic" or the extraordinary. These are the seeds of *Cien años de soledad* (1967), the novel that many critics see as the central moment of the Boom. In his recent autobiography, García Márquez constantly refers to the world of his childhood, in Aracataca, a remote northern Caribbean coastal town of Colombia, and his life with his grandparents: his grandmother, whose storytelling introduced him to the narratives of rural popular culture, and his grandfather, a former Liberal soldier, whose stories were full of recent history, civil wars, and the stifling power of North American capital in the region. These memories and modes of narration would become part of the texture of *Cien años*, helping in particular the discovery of a storytelling voice that could weave the natural and the supernatural, the mundane and the marvelous, into a seamless whole.

Cien años is analyzed in detail elsewhere in this volume, so here we need briefly to summarize its historical moment. The novel has been labeled as "magical realist" and it became so popular wordwide that the term almost became synonymous with Latin American narrative. A useful definition of magical realism is offered in William Rowe and Vivian Schelling's work on Latin American popular culture, which points out that from the 1950s, certain writers like Rulfo, Asturias, and García Márquez wrote about native and popular cultures as valid forms of knowledge rather than as folklore, contrasting Western forms of rationalism and progress with other, "premodern," "magical" ways of seeing and thinking.[24] Magical realism, in these terms, is the creative tension caused by the juxtaposition of the avant-garde and the non-modern, Western thought and popular beliefs, Borges and García Márquez's grandmother. *Cien años* finds a voice to express these concerns shared by other writers of the sixties, to narrate afresh the experience of modernity, the problems of underdevelopment, the nature of heterogeneous cultures, the tension between the written word – the novel as a "European" form – and orality. It also expresses the hope that the new generation both inside the novel and outside it – the character who finally deciphers the enigmatic parchments, the "real" history of Macondo, Aureliano Babilonia, has a close friend called Gabriel – can do away with the solitude and inhumanity of one hundred years, or more, of Latin American history.

of Henri Christophe . . .' And during his stay in Haiti, Carpentier reflects critically upon the experience of the European avant garde:

> [The] exhausting attempt to invoke the marvellous which has characterized certain European literatures of the last thirty years. The marvellous pursued in old prints [. . .] The marvellous, pathetically evoked in the skills and deformities of fairground characters [. . .] The marvellous, produced by means of conjuring tricks, bringing together objects which would never normally meet . . .

In the long run, Carpentier concludes, this wish achieves the opposite effect: 'the miracle workers turn into bureaucrats'. Whereas, in Haiti:

> I found myself in daily contact with something which might be called *marvellous reality*. I was treading on land where thousands of men anxious for freedom had believed in the lycanthropic powers of Macandal, to the point where this collective faith produced a miracle on the day of his execution [. . .] I had breathed the atmosphere created by Henri Christophe, a monarch of incredible exploits, far more astonishing than all the cruel kings invented by the surrealists [. . .] At every step I encountered this *marvellous reality* . . .
>
> *The Kingdom of This World*, 'Prologue'

Lo real maravilloso. Not magical *realism*, as it has unfortunately been translated (and as it will inevitably continue to be called), but marvellous *reality*. Not a poetics – a state of affairs. In Haiti, Carpentier writes, surrealism is in the things themselves. It is an everyday, collective fact, which restores reality to modernist techniques: which takes the avant garde, and sets its feet back on the ground. Does *Ulysses* separate polyphony from any concretely recognizable 'voice' whatsoever? Well, in *Midnight's Children* the opposite happens, and polyphony is re-motivated: there are many languages in the novel, because India is divided into many cultures, and Saleem, with his extraordinary hearing, manages to hear them all. The technical complexity remains, but it is *naturalized* (and also, if the truth be told, somewhat attenuated). In *The Death of Artemio Cruz*, to take another example, the stream of consciousness is motivated: its confusion is attributed to Cruz's dying (and is clarified, moreover, by copious narrative accounts). In *Three Trapped Tigers*, it is the turn of puns, and intertextuality: presented as the nocturnal pastime – halfway between Hollywood and *Finnegans Wake* – of three young Cuban intellectuals. Cortázar's

Hopscotch naturalizes the category of possibility, presenting it as the sign of a bohemian lifestyle; *Conversation in the Cathedral* naturalizes montage, motivating it with a long, disjointed chat in a bar.

Other examples could be added. But the tendency is clear. Magical realism restores the link that Joyce's generation had severed: technique – and anthropocentrism. I am thinking of Artemio Cruz, or Saleem Sinai, whose life gradually replicates the modernization of an entire country. And I am thinking, of course, of Aureliano Buendia:

> Colonel Aureliano Buendia organized thirty-two armed uprisings and he lost them all. He had seventeen male children by seventeen different women and they were exterminated one after the other on a single night before the oldest one had reached the age of thirty-five. He survived fourteen attempts on his life, seventy-three ambushes, and a firing squad. He lived through a dose of strychnine in his coffee . . .[1]

Nothing abstract here. No 'objective' reason for wars. Everything springs from a concrete, flesh-and-blood, subject, unalterably repeated at the beginning of nine consecutive long sentences. Is it a mythical way of explaining events, as Karl Popper so often said of Homer's gods? Yes, certainly. But it is an explanation. And after half a century of enigmas, there is always a great need for explanations.

Set modernism's feet back on the ground. And then, heal 'the great divide' (Adorno) between modernism and mass culture. It is the 'return of narrative', as people would say in the sixties of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*: an avant-garde work, but with a gripping story. It is the product of a literary evolution different from that of Europe. For many reasons, of course, but perhaps above all because, more than three centuries ago, the Inquisition decided to forbid the sale of European novels in Latin America. An act of censorship with very clear intentions – and very strange consequences. Because, once the novel was eliminated, the result (other things being equal) was a literary system that, far from being poorer, was *much richer than its European counterpart*. An absurd result, at first sight: a subtraction producing an increase. But a bit less absurd if you

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[1] G. García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, translated by Gregory Rabassa, Avon, New York 1970, p. 104.

character in Melquíades's narrative who will disappear with the final words of the novel.

This foregrounding of the fictional obviously accounts, at one level, for what is often referred to as the 'magical realist' style of the novel, for, if this is not reality, then the introduction of fantasy is perfectly acceptable. Yet magical realism is also about rethinking rather than negating reality. The Cuban Alejo Carpentier's original notion of *lo real maravilloso* (the 'marvellous real') was based on the idea of rediscovering Latin American reality, and, in an echo of Carpentier, García Márquez has commented that his encounter with the larger-than-life world of Colombia's Caribbean region taught him to perceive reality in a new way, in which the fantastic was part of everyday life.[4] A standard line on Garciamarquian magical realism became that its perspective (in which ice, films, false teeth and phonographs are presented as bizarre, while levitating priests, rains of butterflies and girls ascending into heaven are presented as normal) is striking a blow for authenticity and Latin Americanness by inscribing events from the perspective of a remote rural community. This would allow for a political reading in which a 'developing world' perspective is privileged from within the implicitly 'First World' form of the novel and in which the reader is being invited to exercise his or her imagination in order to invent an alternative and more just reality for the continent.

So far, so good. However, the founding father also introduces his children to the most dazzling and beautiful diamond on earth – actually, it turns out, the previously unknown substance ice. Magical realism in action perhaps – but the reader knows that the beautiful diamond is only ice and must inevitably be engaged in a relationship of ironic complicity with the implied narrator. Thus implied reader and narrator are, if anything, posited as First World. The exoticness of Latin America is assumed as much as it is problematised. Just as the character Gabriel (surname Márquez) leaves Macondo to go to Europe, so too does the magical-realist experiment seem to be departing Latin America at the very moment of projecting its own Latin Americanness. Indeed, the young Gabriel leaves for Paris (like his real-life namesake), on the advice of a 'wise' ('sabio') European bookseller, who has lost his 'marvellous sense of unreality' ('su maravilloso sentido de irrealidad') and who encourages his literary protegés to abandon the fantastic world of Macondo.[5]

The argument can be twisted in another direction, though. Myth and magic are associated with the falsification of reality by an establishment culture that leads ordinary Latin Americans to internalise an essentially unreal version of their own history and identity as dictated by, say, Europe and North America and its clients in Latin America. Critics have often linked the

apparent pattern of repetition and the supposedly circular structure of the novel with myth, magic and timelessness. However, while the novel's characters constantly talk about the confusing and circular nature of history and reality, and while the account of Melquíades's manuscripts is willfully complex and obfuscatory, the (complicit?) narrator and reader actually enjoy what is really an essentially clear and largely linear narrative. If anything, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* breaks with the structural impenetrability typical of the New Novel and marks a turn to accessible and, if suggestive, relatively clearly readable narrative. In other words, Latin Americans – like the character Gabriel who is advised by the 'wise' man to leave the marvellously unreal world of Macondo – are being encouraged to see through the myth-making and to take a grip of reality on their own terms. Hence – in two very different but complementary readings of the ending – Edwin Williamson interprets the destruction of Macondo as a punishment for the final Buendía's immersion into the mythical reality of the manuscripts, while Gerald Martin interprets it as a moment of revolutionary change in that the final Buendía not only has proletarian roots but is also the only one to believe in the historical reality of the massacre of striking banana workers, a truth which has been turned into a fanciful myth by official documents that suppress the facts of this massive scandal and replace them with a false history.[6] Fictitious or unreliable 'official' versions of social reality must be questioned, then, and, despite all the talk of 'the marvellous' or 'lo maravilloso', it is vital that truth will out. Even so, a positive political reading of the ending is difficult to reconcile with the last survivor's withdrawal from society, his incestuous romping, which leads to the fulfillment of the long-predicted curse of the birth of a child with a pig's tail, the generally apocalyptic tone of destruction and the final implication of the fundamental fictionality of a text which cannot be taken as a reflection of reality.

Nonetheless, no amount of scepticism can undermine the impression that this novel is very much about Colombian and Latin American history, and the 100-year span of the action effectively corresponds to the story of 'Latin' America from 'discovery' to the modern day. In a sense, what the novel does is to offer an account of Latin American history from the perspective of the privileged and popular classes, so that history becomes a process of facts replaced by myths and myths turned into facts.[7] The founding of Macondo echoes the chronicles of the 'discovery' and colonisation of the 'New World', and the plague of forgetfulness the loss of historical memory regarding the indigenous inheritance, while the rise of the Buendías parallels the emergence of a powerful landowning oligarchy (alluding to the twin myths of the European heritage and of Independence [the latter often seen as merely cementing the interests of a small white creole elite]). The myths

of 'civilisation' à la Sarmiento and democracy are explored after the arrival of the corrupting influence of central government, while the myth of progress is played out by the foreign banana company's transformation of the town into a locus of modern economic colonialism.[8] The banana company is modelled on the notorious North American United Fruit Company, an unverified number of whose workers were shot by Colombian troops during a strike in Ciénaga, Magdalena, in 1928 (another true event shrouded in the mists of mystery and disinformation). The key moment in the novel's political narrative is this massacre of striking banana workers by client government troops and the official repression of the facts as truth is turned into a wacky conspiracy theory. This emblematic portrait of suppressed memory and historical truth took on an even greater significance, of course, for readers of the novel in the decades immediately after its publication in the light of the officially denied plight of the disappeared in Latin America's Southern Cone.

Yet, in a notorious passage, this key episode also becomes the fulcrum of the debate concerning tensions between politics, metaphysics, literature and ambiguity. When, years later, the last of the clan, Aureliano Babilonia, the only believer in the truth of the massacre and the possible embodiment of proletarian revolution, asks the town's main source of knowledge and authority, the parish priest, if he believes in the veracity of the massacre, he receives the world-weary reply: 'Oh dear, my son, ... it would be enough for me to be able to believe that you and I exist at this moment.'[9] This is a remarkable introduction of radical doubt at a key moment, and it casts the entire narrative in a state of existential uncertainty. Unsurprisingly, many critics have noticed a pervasive undercurrent of death and hopelessness in the novel, reinforced by a biblical framework that inverts conventional positive belief systems and brackets human experience within the parameters of negative myths such as the Fall, the Great Flood, Plagues and the Apocalypse.[10] The political hero of the novel, for instance, the civil-war legend Colonel Aureliano Buendía, ends up cruel and alienated, spending the rest of his life in the futile circular process of endlessly making little fish from gold, only to melt them down and make the fish again and again.[11] He dies a sad and forlorn figure, pissing against the tree that the mad and disillusioned town founder was once bound to. As he expires, a colourful circus draws into town, but then leaves him behind, the memory gone, an empty and desolate landscape all that remains. No brave new world is imagined here – this is simply the grim reality of emptiness and death or the failure of knowledge and understanding.

One final motif which brings out *One Hundred Years of Solitude*'s seesawing pull between reality and fantasy or optimism and despair is the

much-commented-on theme of incest. The Buendía dynasty in Macondo is founded on an Original Sin (echoing another biblical myth) – that of incest. The married couple, José Arcadio and Ursula, are cousins, and their families are terrified that they will engender a cursed child with a pig's tail. Ursula's fear of such a less-than-immaculate conception leads her to deny herself to her husband, and this in turn provokes rumours about his alleged impotence. His public ridicule leads to the violation of Ursula and his murder of his main taunter. However, the subsequent haunting by the victim's ghost compels them to flee their village, and they set off for a new world where they build a town on the spot revealed to José Arcadio in a premonitory dream. Of course, the trek through 'that paradise ... prior to original sin' leads to the inevitable Fall.[12] Not only does José Arcadio's obsession with learning and science lead to madness (he is eventually bound, raving, to a tree, a sort of inverse Tree of Knowledge), but progress, of course, ultimately brings chaos and destruction to Macondo, and the curse of the birth of the child with a pig's tail is fulfilled just as the shattered town is about to be wiped off the face of the earth by a biblical hurricane.

This all sounds rather grim, but the meaning of incest in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is really very unclear. It has obvious (but contradictory) social and political connotations. The curse of the original sin is repeated from generation to generation in a series of incestuous or pseudo-incestuous relationships, while some family members' deformities of physique or character are said to echo the monstrosity of the pig's tail. The inward-looking nature of incest relates to the notion of a dynastic oligarchy. The much-mentioned 'sino solitario' or 'solitary fate' of the Buendías, then, is the cause and consequence of the selfishness of an entire class or caste: it represents the opposite of social solidarity. Hence, the dynastic reign of 100 years of 'solitude' is wiped out by a revolutionary wind that may usher in a new regime (possibly even a reference to the hope for a new socialist era inspired by the Cuban Revolution).

Incest can also be associated with repression, of course. Martin connects Ursula's paralysing fear of the curse with a mixture of religion and biological determinism reflecting both the inheritance of Catholic Spanish colonialism, on the one hand, and, on the other, European Positivism and the cult of progress after Independence; Williamson meantime links it to the torpor of introspection, dream, myth and subservience to non-historical time.[13] At the same time, though, incest is therefore a form of rebellion (a rejection of the anxiously conservative values embodied in Ursula or the sleepy tie to unquestioned traditional beliefs). The fact is that many of the incestuous relationships in the novel are profoundly healthy ones and often described with an engagingly ribald sense of fun. Moreover, the last-born child, though with a pig's tail, has the appearance of one 'predisposed to begin the race

the revolution might instead have taken very different paths. 'All the doors open', reflects Santiago Zavala in *Conversation in the Cathedral*, '– at what moment did they begin to close, and why?'

Non-contemporaneity. II

In his fine analysis of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Vargas Llosa describes the basic narrative cell of the novel as follows:

> 1. At the start of an episode, the main fact in the narrative unit is mentioned: it is usually the last, in chronological terms. In other words, the episode begins with a leap towards the future [. . .] 'Many years later, as he faced the firing squad . . .' [. . .]
> 2. The narrative then jumps to the remotest past of the fact mentioned, whence it follows a linear chronological account of events, until it reaches the future fact that has been displaced and reported at the start of the episode: in this way the circle is closed, and *the episode ends where it began, just as it had begun where it would end.*[7]

Future, past, future. It is an interplay of prolepsis and flashback that endows the novel with its peculiarly unforgettable quality: announcing a fact long before it takes place, and then recalling it long afterwards – like the *Leitmotiv* in the *Ring*, or in *Ulysses* – endows it with a truly epic grandeur. But there is more. Cesare Segre:

> These wide or narrow turns of the wheel of time have the primary function of pointing, at the start of a cycle of life, to its conclusion, so that the present is also already perceived in the past perspective that will give it its future.[8]

A present pursued by the future, which drives it towards the past . . . A 'strange' present: unstable, overdetermined. It is yet another version of non-contemporaneity – with a tremendous novelty, as compared with *Faust* and *Ulysses*. For, in magical realism, the heterogeneity of historical

[7] M. Vargas Llosa, *García Márquez: historia de un deicidio*, Barral Editores, Barcelona 1971, p. 549.

[8] C. Segre, *I segni e la critica*, Einaudi, Turin 1969, p. 253.

time is also, for the first time, *narratively interesting*: it produces plot, suspense. It is not just the sign of a complex, stratified history: it is also the symptom of *a history in progress*. At the precise moment when Nehru proclaims the independence of India, and solemnly announces an irreversible break with the past – 'A moment comes [. . .] when we step out from the old to the new; when an age ends . . .' (*Midnight's Children*, 'Tick, tock') – at that precise moment the demon of non-contemporaneity, to complicate an excessively linear path, gives birth to a thousand and one babies endowed with magical powers. And who will eventually prevail: the modern state, or the children of magic? And the same in Macondo. A small, peaceful town: but the gypsies arrive, with inventions that seem to drop from the future, and history begins to run.

But the gypsies arrive . . . As always, the interweaving of different times is actually an interweaving of different *spaces*: Dutch telescopes, Asian parchments, British sextants, ice from somewhere or other . . . Read in this light, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* – like *Faust* – tells the story of an 'incorporation': of an isolated community that is caught up in the modern world-system, which subjects it to an unexpected, extremely violent acceleration. It is the novel of uneven and combined development: the *marvellous reality*, indeed, in which a prophecy in Sanskrit coexists with photography, and South American phantasms with Italian mechanical pianolas.

A circle that goes from the future to the past to the future, Vargas Llosa wrote of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. True: and a circle, we can now add, often triggered *by an external geographical reality*. The twofold prolepsis that opens the novel is due to the gypsies' trading, and to the army of a distant capital. And so on: the history of Macondo is continually intersected and deflected by other histories: by processes that begin in Europe and in Asia, in 'Colombia', Latin America, the United States. A far cry from Mann's Lübeck, or De Roberto's Catania. This, again, is the geography of the world text: broad, heterogeneous, complex. With respect to *Faust*, however, *the perspective has been reversed*. We no longer see things from the core of the world-system – but from the periphery. And from this new viewpoint, epic digressions become something else. *Interferences*: weighty events, with long-lasting consequences. In *The Forty-Second Parallel*, the story of United Fruit is a brief parenthesis abroad; in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, it is the turning-point

from which Macondo will never manage to recover. A single fact, and two different outcomes. A single world-system – and two different histories.

One Hundred Years of Solitude as the story of an incorporation, then. And in this overall process, three phases, and three quite distinct geographies. The first half of the novel is the moment of simple trading relations: in an irregular, creative medley, objects and people flow into Macondo from every part of the world. It is the moment of combined development, in the most striking sense of the term: the telescope, and Melquiades' dead language; Father Nicanor's levitations, and the ebullient French whores. Great confusion, of course – the semi-madness of the first of the Buendias, in which the old and the new clash most dramatically – but nothing worse. The encounter with the world-system produces freaks, but no irreversible consequence. In this first phase, indeed, interference enriches the life of Macondo: it makes it more varied, more open. It is the moment in which the key word of modernism – *possibility* – pervades every page of the story. It is the hour, as it were, of *white magic*.

This first section also encloses the second: the phase (to simplify somewhat) of Aureliano's wars. Here, the space of the story changes completely. Aureliano leaves Macondo; the network of international exchanges unravels. The very small and the very large recede into the background, while the foreground is occupied by a third geographical entity, of intermediate dimensions, which has wedged itself between the small isolated town and the world-system: the nation state. A centralized reality, and one that demands the monopoly of violence.

The state wins, the war ends, and Macondo comes back into contact with the outside world. With the *world*? Not any more. With only part of it: the United States. And, at this point, what was at stake in the civil war suddenly becomes clear: Macondo's role in the international division of labour. A relatively independent development – or a banana republic. On the one hand, the productive imbalance of the semi-periphery: the sense of possibility, and sometimes of real prosperity, that accompanies the early stages of development. On the other (just as in *Men of Maize*, by Miguel Angel Asturias), enslavement to monoculture: a peripheral, other-directed role. Not even Aureliano had understood it. And by the time the reader does so, it is too late.

All the doors open, said the character in Vargas Llosa: at what moment did they begin to close, and why? When the pressure of the world-system, answers *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, forces your country into a more complete – and hence more rigid – integration. A thousand and one possibilities then really do become a thousand and one dead ends: the multiplicity of possible developments, a set route. It is the hour of black magic: an 'incredible' that is no longer bound to a whirlpool of bizarre combinations, but to the enormity of the crimes committed. It is the train loaded with corpses, which vanishes from the collective memory as though it had never been. And in *Midnight's Children*:

> Shaheed and I saw many things which were not true, which were not possible, because our boys would not could not have behaved so badly; we saw men in spectacles with heads like eggs being shot in side-streets, we saw the intelligentsia of the city being massacred by the hundred, but it was not true because it could not have been true . . .
>
> *Midnight's Children*, 'Sam and the Tiger'

Rhetoric of innocence. II

'Colonel Aureliano Buendia organized thirty-two armed uprisings and he lost them all.' Subject, verb, predicate, conjunction, subject, verb, predicate . . . It is a sentence that would be impossible in the twenties, when the plane of enunciation is a terrain of radical experiments. But *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is not bothered about that: it is to the story, and its internal ramifications, that it seeks to bind us. 'When' must be by far the most common word in the novel – which begins, indeed, with the phrase: 'Many years later . . .'. And then, in a real bombardment of time markers: At that time, As soon as, Even then, But one day, Shortly before, The next night, During the time, Until the day, From that moment, Years later, There was at that time, While waiting, This time, Later, As long as . . .

A really strange place, Macondo. A city of madmen, where nobody has anything in common with anybody else. But where *language is the same for everybody*. While you are reading, you pay no attention to it – it is all so lovely. But if you reopen the novel with a little detachment, you find that the narrator's impersonal voice covers more or less *ninety-five per cent* of

García Márquez did read Asturias in the 1950s and early 1960s, quite possibly in order to learn from the elder writer's mistakes. It's well worth noting that, in all the Banana Company–related episodes in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, there is but a single occasion in which an American character is directly quoted, and that rare utterance is relayed to us secondhand, via an unreliable source. I am referring to the government's proclamation that, following assurances that the strike had been peacefully settled, cites Mr. Brown as affirming that labor negotiations will resume "When the rain stops. As long as the rain lasts we're suspending all activities" (287).[11] The truth is that the rain will fall for almost a half decade and heap ruin on Macondo.

In his numerous interviews and journalistic writings, García Márquez always demonstrates an excellent knowledge of United States history and culture. Moreover, he lived in New York in 1960 and 1961, and then, en route to Mexico, he traveled through the southern states (where, owing to Jim Crow laws, he and his family experienced some difficulty in finding hotel rooms). And yet he has never presumed to know the more intimately psychological, existential aspect of American life. Nevertheless, the Colombian novelist was to make the most out of his small-town Caribbean point of view, transforming this perspective into a narrative strength and casting the mold for the satirical vision he at last articulates toward that most classic of U.S. agribusiness firms.

The Banana episodes themselves benefit from the author's formal and narrative genius—for example, the humor in the reference to Virginia hams and in the useless copper-colored pills that the children rip off for use as bingo markers. Moreover, in contrast to Asturias's amorphous and rambling prolixity, García Márquez's myriad symmetries and repetitions keep any loose ends carefully under control. The sudden arrival of Americans in Macondo is the second such intrusion by outsiders, the first having been that of the Conservatives; in the wake of the gringos we find once again the sextet of opportunistic lawyers dressed in black; and, in the same way that José Arcadio Buendía and Colonel Aureliano Buendía had been prime leaders in the anti-Conservative resistance, José Arcadio Segundo now becomes a prominent agitator in the struggle against the Banana Company. And, finally, instead of allowing himself to be carried away by the sensationalism of the massacre, García Márquez goes well beyond it, steers our attention away from it with his wild fantasies of Orwellian oblivion and five-year rains, the work, respectively, of the Government and the Company. In all, it is a panoramic sociopolitical subplot constructed with utmost craftsmanship and imagination.

THE BANANA COMPANY CHAPTERS in García Márquez's book adhere quite closely to the actual facts of the great strike of 1928 (the year also of the novelist's birth in Aracataca).[12] The historical record of the United Fruit Company's operation in Colombia furnishes a textbook case of overseas imperialism and colonialism, a story vividly suggestive of a novel by Conrad, Foster, Graham Greene—or García Márquez. From what were comparatively modest holdings around 1900. United's dominions in the northern, coastal portions of Colombia expanded rapidly to become a state-within-a-state and the de facto power in that region. In addition to the best lands, United had its own railroads, general stores, and telegraph system; with its network of canals it monopolized irrigation; and its water practices violated Colombia's Civil Code.[13] Its labor policies left much to be desired, and already in 1918 United Fruit had responded to protests over low wages with a promise to consult with Company headquarters in Boston. The promise came to nothing.[14]

By 1925 a number of anarchist and communist labor unions were formulating strike plans and preparing organizers.[15] On 6 October 1928, the strike leadership confronted management with its list of demands. The first and most basic of these was that the Company acknowledge the fact that it had employees, inasmuch as its labor recruitment method had been one of relying solely on subcontractors who rounded up workers for United, a tactic whereby the firm had successfully evaded national laws regarding employee safety and security.[16] The strike organizers also demanded "hygienic dwelling places," "social hygiene," "a day of rest in seven," and "the establishment of hospitals in sufficient numbers."[17] Last but not least, they wanted an end to the system of paying the worker in credit slips, with which he had been obligated to purchase his provisions, at high prices, in Company comissaries. With this practice the firm had further reduced its labor costs and also steered clientele away from local merchants, who, not surprisingly, felt no love for United Fruit.[18]

Meanwhile, tensions had been mounting, and the Company manager Thomas Bradshaw feigned absence from Santa Marta. But, according to congressional testimony by the union leader Alberto Castrillón, "the simple truth is that he was merely trying to evade any negotiations whatsoever with the workers and their demands. After several days' search . . . he was casually found . . . while arranging the purchase of an automobile, and he absolutely refused to deal with the workers, and in a rather surly voice he declared them legally incompetent for negotiations of any kind, *given that the Company had no workers.*"[19]

With the talks at an impasse, the thirty-two thousand workers went

Segundo has already organized the workers in a strike against the Banana Company, and he has already been "pointed out as the agent of an international conspiracy against public order" (276). Fernanda's two rides on the train are opposite in direction, but tell of a single effect: "civilization," modernization, and progress are finally assured, even in Macondo—if not with "proper" manners and gold chamberpots, then with guns.

The train is, if anything, even more symbolic of this "progress" in Colombia than it is in Macondo. Under the dictatorship of General Rafael Reyes (1904–1909), "British capital was, for the first time, invested in Colombian railways in substantial amounts" (Safford 232). Not surprisingly, this period saw the completion of the railway between Bogota and the Magdalena River; "Macondo" was irreversibly linked to the "outside world." But, of course, that was only the start: "As the transportation improvements of 1904 to 1940 began to knit together a national market, significant innovations occurred in other economic sectors," and it was the nationalization of Colombia's railways that made many such "innovations" possible (Safford 232–234). In the period of the strikes against the United Fruit Company, in particular, reorganization of the railroads was a central issue of American diplomacy in Colombia. The National City Bank and the First National Bank of Boston refused to extend short-term credits until a railroad bill was passed. By 1931, they demanded, in their negotiations with the Colombian government, an even greater control: "that the railroad system be taken out of the hands of the government and placed under the direction of professional management" (Randall 64). In his description of the banana strike, García Márquez makes the implications obvious: the same trains that send bananas and profits to the north transport the murdered bodies to the sea. There—both the government and the "professional management" hope—they will disappear, even from history.

The repeated follies of José Arcadio—like the name and hereditary stubbornness of his great-grandson, like Úrsula's pronouncements, like the end of the novel—are attempts on the part of García Márquez to assert that history is, in some sense, circular. The "primitive" past of Latin America, like that of Macondo, might have provided countless omens of Colombia's future, if anyone had paid attention—that is, if anyone had avoided the delirium of progress. From the first half of the nineteenth century, the combination of foreigners and trains was devastating, in Argentina, in Chile, in Guatemala, in Mexico, and in Uruguay. With their public services, especially the railroads, controlled by foreigners, or by governments serving foreigners—first from Paraguay, then principally from Britain, then principally from the United States—these countries faced extraordinary military expenditures, "a frenzied increase in imports," and growing debts, subject to inflationary manipulation. In Galeano's words, they mortgaged their futures in advance, moving away from economic freedom and political sovereignty" (216–219). Later, in Colombia, the tendency to see railroads as "forerunners of progress" would be just one more failure to remember. For García Márquez, such an assertion of history's circularity is not merely a matter of philosophical speculation; it is a calculated attempt to make the outrages of oppression, ancient and recent, visible again; it is an attempt to make Colombian history credible.

After the massacre, when the train from which he has escaped slips off into the night, "with its nocturnal and stealthy velocity," on its way to dump more than three thousand murdered bodies into the ocean, José Arcadio Segundo cannot see it in the darkness; the last things he sees are "the dark shapes of the soldiers with their emplaced machine guns" (285).[7] Perhaps José Arcadio Segundo came to understand such progress as his great-grandfather could not, and perhaps that is why the government's search squad could not see *him*. For men indoctrinated by such a government, opposition must not exist.

For such men, the past must disappear. That is why they seem so improbable, and so real. That is why a "resource" like "magical realism" is needed to depict them. And that is why the novel's famous "apocalyptic closure" is not only credible but also anticlimactic. Apocalypse is merely the darkest side of "magical realism," in which the "magic" and the "realism" are most completely fused, in which the most unimaginable event is the most inevitable. The "biblical hurricane" that "exiles" Macondo "from the memory of men" is "full of voices from the past, the murmurs of ancient geraniums, sighs of disenchantment that preceded the most tenacious nostalgia" (383). The ceaseless repetitions of the novel lead to this final conviction that apocalypse is only one more "scientific possibility," which the "primitive world" understands only after it is too late. Apocalypse is only the logical consequence of imperialist oppression, supported by science. The "events" that bring about the end of Macondo were actually determined much earlier, even before the trains came. The end began the first time the gypsies appeared with their foreign discoveries.

Notes

1. Gabriel García Márquez, in "The Solitude of Latin America: Nobel Address, 1982," describes Latin American history as such a fount (208). Gerald Martin provides a detailed and critical summary of this criticism in his essay.

ture, mediated, which man can influence. Hence those numerous myths about coupling between man and animal, about marriages between woman and beast, double metaphors for the natural sphere and the incest prohibition, for violation and sin. Such metaphors are nonetheless the condition for a synonymy expressed by the Yoruba word for *marriage*, which just as readily denotes *food, possession, merit, gain,* or *acquisition.* I believe that via this route we can approach the profound significance of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*: this novel is a long metaphor—extended over a long century of occurrences—that only designates the instantaneous act of carnal love between the first man and the first woman, José Arcadio and Ursula, who fornicate in fear that the fruit of their incest might be a child with the tail of a pig but who also fornicate so that the world will sustain itself, will eat, possess, and acquire, will merit, dream, and be.

Does myth—as Philip Rahv insisted—deny history? Yes, a deadening, oppressive, factitious history, which García Márquez leaves behind in order to situate, within a novel, the triple encounter of Latin American time. The encounter with the living, original, creative past, which is the tradition of risk and rupture: each generation of the Buendías will experience a son dead in a revolution—an epic—that never ends. The encounter with the longed-for future: ice arrives for the first time in the torrid jungle of Macondo amid wonder at the supernatural—magic and usefulness will remain inseparable. The encounter with the absolute present in which we remember and desire: a novel lived as the lengthy chronicle of a century of solitude in Colombia but read as the fable precariously registered within the peripatetic papers of Melquíades. Macondo's secular document consists of the instant pages of a mythomaniacal sorcerer who mixes indelibly the relations of life as it is lived with the relations of life as it is written.

Through this doubling process, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* becomes the *Quixote* of Latin American literature. As happens with the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance, the men and women of Macondo can turn only to a novel—this novel—in order to prove that they exist. The creation of a novelistic language, then, as proof of being. The novel as certificate of birth, as negation of the false documents of civil status that, until recently, had concealed our reality. Language-fiction-truth versus lexicon-oratory-falsehood: *One Hundred Years of Solitude* against the conquistadors' arrogant letters to the crown, against the monarchs' unfulfilled Laws of the Indies, against the nineteenth-century liberators' violated Constitutions, against the oppressors' humiliating letters of an alliance for progress. Against all the texts that disguise us there stands a novelistic sign that indelibly identifies us, like those Ash Wednesday crosses that are never to be erased from

the foreheads of the seventeen natural sons of Aureliano Buendía: the cross of a scorched earth, the black sign of baptism and also the target of death for the guns of dictatorships and oligarchies that—thanks to a fleshly cross—will always succeed in recognizing, and assassinating, the rebel, bastard sons of the patriarch.

Against invisible crimes, against anonymous criminals, García Márquez erects, in our name, a word and a place. He baptizes—as does the first Buendía, as did Carpentier—all the nameless things of a continent. And he fashions a place. The site of the myth is Macondo. García Márquez, fabulist, knows that presence dissolves in a site (a locus of resistances) that will be all sites: a place that contains them all, that contains us all: the seat of time, the consecration of all times, the appointed place of memory and desire, a common present where everything may start again: a temple, a book. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* re-initiates, re-updates, re-orders—makes contemporary—all present times of a part of the Spanish American imagination that for too long seemed lost to letters and subject to the tyrannical weight of folklore, naturalistic testimony, and naive denunciation. Not among the least of García Márquez's virtues is that in his book he transforms evil into beauty and humor. The darker side of Latin American history had previously emerged—in the old novels of Rómulo Gallegos, José Eustasio Rivera, and Jorge Icaza—as the embodiment of an evil that was isolated, impenetrable, crudely realistic, and so alien and defined as to be ultimately ridiculous. García Márquez realizes that our history is not merely inevitable; in some obscure way, we have also desired it. Moreover, he makes evil into humor because evil desired is not an abstraction that is alien to our lives; it is the other, that which we can see outside ourselves but also as part of ourselves, reduced to its ironic, proportional, chance encounter with our everyday weaknesses and our imaginary representations.

Freshly dissolving those false polemics and dilemmas concerning realism versus fantasy, art *engagé* versus art for art's sake, national literature versus cosmopolitan literature, García Márquez's book destroys those idiotic a prioris in order to proclaim and conquer the right to an imagination that nonetheless can distinguish between *mystifications*—in which a dead past wishes to pass as living present—and *mythifications*—in which a living present recaptures, also, the life of the past.

Note

This essay was translated by Gene H. Bell-Villada.

To be sure, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* draws more evidently on the folk imagination for its mediation of biblical motifs, but that mediation too is through explicitly literary means: Cervantes's signature device of the foreign historian. The final discovery that the chronicle has already been written by Melquíades gives the whole narrative a Proustian doubleness requiring us to reread its story of lost time in the light of this knowledge. But the significance of the doubled text is already cunningly implanted within it, for another Proustian dimension of the narration is its local distraction of the reader when major links are being forged so that what seems on first reading to be a randomly associative process proves on the second to have a tautly constructed logic. A major episode in the story of Macondo is the memory sickness which may be thought of as the moment in which the communal memory becomes dependent on writing. The townsfolk initially seek to stay the loss of memory by the mechanical means of putting name labels and instructions on everyday items, and then they start to produce an 'imaginary reality, one invented by themselves, which was less practical for them, but more comforting'.[18] After these rather desperate veerings between mechanical records and flights of imagination, José Arcadio starts to construct a memory machine: a wheel turning thousands of cards reminiscent of a 1960s computer. But just as José Arcadio has written some 14,000 cards it is rendered redundant by the arrival of a mysterious, decrepit old man who eventually proves to be Melquíades. The focus veers in mid-sentence, and the memory machine itself quickly fades from the memory of most readers as the narrative goes on to tell how Melquíades cures the memory sickness with his magic potion.

Only at the end of the novel does the conjunction of Melquíades and the memory machine become significant. For Melquíades's true remedy for the memory sickness is the written narrative he produces in the timeless zone of the chamber to which he retires. The timeless room figures both a Nietzschean superhistoricism, the capacity to escape 'presentist' illusions and the traditional 'Once upon a time' of fiction.[19] So too, within the world of the novel, Melquíades's manuscript may be seen as a chronicle, the simplest and most factual form of history, yet within the novel which we read *as* a novel, it is the purest fiction. As an internal image of the novel itself, therefore, it preserves all the ambiguities signalled at the moment of its birth. If the novel itself is a memory machine, how should this be understood? Is it a reductive image of the genre, exposing its limitations, or is it a contrastive image suggesting how it transcends the mechanical dimension of its medium? The chronicle within the novel is an image of the novel's ambiguous status as history and fiction in which its considerable power as each is inseparable from the other. Most notably, the memory of the massacre,

echoing the memory sickness, disappears from the official history, and even from collective memory, but is revived, in a more mythic than historically accurate form, by virtue of García Márquez's fiction. Fiction need not be a deviation from history but a concentration of it as meaning. As such, it may not be transparent, and interpretation, or a lived experience of history, may be necessary before its meaning can be appreciated. In that respect, the final deciphering only when the experience has been lived is a resonant symbol, in Michael Wood's words, of what literature knows.[20] It knows in a mode of the open secret, both transparent and opaque. In this respect, the populist literary charm of the book is itself part of the seductive illusion from which the Buendías need to awake in their sleepwalking through history. Literary formal self-consciousness is the figure, and the means, of historical awareness.

At this point, we may recollect, too, that the memory sickness, in its conjunction of insomnia and amnesia, is effectively a reworking of Borges's philosophical fable 'Funes, the Memorious' ('Funes el memorioso'), which also exalts the oneiric transformations of literature over any merely literal or mechanical recall, however stupendous that may be.[21] Thomas Mann once saw the twentieth century under the gaze of a Don Quixote with Nietzsche's features.[22] Unlike Mann, García Márquez does not think creatively through discursive or philosophical reflection: his imagination expresses itself through the elusive concreteness of characterisation, action, iconic images and genealogical connections. But Borges had provided for García Márquez's generation a highly suggestive assimilation of a Nietzschean outlook into literary images that were formally teasing, imaginatively compelling and regionally specific. Borges, for example, speaks of the Cervantean vertigo created by the play within the play in *Hamlet*. In truth, *The Murder of Gonzago*, unlike comparable moments in *The Tempest*, is a fully embedded and motivated plot device that hardly arouses the metafictional and metaphysical response Borges rather forces upon it unless one puts it beside Nietzsche's remarks in *The Birth of Tragedy* on Hamlet as the Dionysian hero who feels, with superhistorical insight, the nausea of existence behind the phenomenal world of appearances in which the action of the play takes place.[23] Such a Nietzschean/Borgesian implication is enacted in the metafictional exposure of Melquíades's manuscript at the end of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The personal illusions of the characters, and of the Buendías collectively, may be understood within a more encompassing sense of the presentist illusions that make up history at any time. For all three, the difficult art is to live not without illusion but within it, while in García Márquez's case the fictional enclosure also suggests the national and regional condition from which the characters must escape.

CULTURE IN THE AGE OF THREE WORLDS

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the three deals that they challenged. The rhetoric of a new politics of networks, links, a virtual commune, challenges not only the orthodoxies of social democracy and Leninism, but also the orthodoxies of 1968. "We do not," a young German wrote in the new times of the first world revolution of 1848, "tell the world: 'Cease your struggles, they are stupid.' . . . We merely show the world why it actually struggles."[26] That remains the task of a critical and emancipatory cultural studies, facing what may yet be a global left.

4

THE NOVELISTS' INTERNATIONAL

In the midst of the age of three worlds (1945–1989), the novel looked dead, exhausted. In the capitalist First World, it was reduced to increasingly arid formalisms alongside an industry of formulaic genre fictions. In the Communist Second World, the official conventions of socialist realism were ritualized into a form of didactic popular literature. Into the freeze of this literary cold war erupted Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* [*One Hundred Years of Solitude*] (1967), the first international bestseller from Latin America and perhaps the most influential novel of the last third of the twentieth century. In its wake, a new sense of a world novel emerged, with *Cien años de soledad* as its avatar, the Third World as its home, and a vaguely defined magical realism as its aesthetic rubric.[1]

Like world music, the world novel is a category to be distrusted; if it genuinely points to the transformed geography of the novel, it is also a marketing device that flattens distinct regional and linguistic traditions into a single cosmopolitan world beat, with magical realism serving as the aesthetic of globalization, often as empty and contrived a signifier as the modernism and socialist realism it supplanted. There is, however, a historical truth to the sense that there are links between writers who now constitute the emerging canon of the world novel – writers as unalike as García Márquez, Naguib Mahfouz, Nadime Gordimer, José Saramago, Paule Marshall, and Pramoedya Ananta Toer – for the work of each has

roots in the remarkable international literary movement that emerged in the middle decades of the twentieth century under the slogans of "proletarian literature," "neorealism," and "progressive," "engaged," or "committed" writing. The African-American novelist Richard Wright captured the sense of political and literary enfranchisement that marked this "novelists' international" in his autobiography:

> It was not the economics of Communism, nor the great power of trade unions, nor the excitement of underground politics that claimed me; my attention was caught by the similarity of the experiences of workers in other lands, by the possibility of uniting scattered but kindred peoples into a whole. [. . .] Out of the magazines I read came a passionate call for the experiences of the disinherited, and there were none of the lame lispings of the missionary in it. It did not say: "Be like us and we will like you, maybe." It said: "If you possess enough courage to speak out what you are, you will find that you are not alone." [. . .] Out of step with our times, it was but natural for us [writers] to respond to the Communist party, which said: "Your rebellion is right. Come with us and we will support your vision with militant action."
>
> Indeed, we felt that we were lucky. Why cower in towers of ivory and squeeze out private words when we had only to speak and millions listened? Our writing was translated into French, German, Russian, Chinese, Spanish, Japanese. . . . Who had ever, in all human history, offered to young writers an audience so vast? True, our royalties were small or less than small, but that did not matter.[2]

This international of writers was allied to, and often organized by, the international Communist movement, and its failures and successes – "the horror and the glory" in Wright's phrase – echoed the checkered history of that movement in both the local Communist parties, legal and underground, and the revolutionary regimes ruled by Communist parties in the wake of 1917. Nevertheless, its history is by no means congruent with that of the official "socialist realisms" of the Communist regimes. And though the novelists of this movement were deeply influenced by the experimental modernisms of the early decades of the century, they rarely fit into the canonical genealogies of Western modernism and postmodernism. Though

the royalties were small, the writers not all proletarians, and the audience often more a promise than a reality, the movement transformed the history of the novel. By imagining an international of novelists, it reshaped the geography of the novel. It enfranchised a generation of writers, often of plebeian backgrounds, and it was the first self-conscious attempt to create a world literature. From Maxim Gorky to Gabriel García Márquez, from Lu Xun to Pramoedya Ananta Toer, from Richard Wright to Ngugi wa Thiong'o, from Patrícia Galvão to Isabel Allende: the novelists' international spans the globe and the century.

To sketch the history of this novelists' international is a daunting task. First, literary histories usually focus on its dramatic and still controversial literary politics: the formation and splitting of writer's organizations and unions; the brief ascendency of the idea of a "proletarian literature" and the shift to "socialist realism" at the 1934 Soviet Writers' Congress; the famous writers' congresses in Kharkov (1930), Moscow (1934), Paris (1935), New York (1936), Lucknow (1936), Madrid (1937), Tashkent (1958), Cairo (1962), and Havana (1967); the struggles over the writers' place in revolutionary regimes from Stalin's Soviet Union to Mao's China and Castro's Cuba. One can easily collect the manifestos in which writers, critics, militants and bureaucrats tried to define the proletarian novel and the forms of a radical or revolutionary realism – critical, social, socialist – and announced their intention to produce a committed, engaged, and partisan writing. But the novels actually written under these literary charters rarely matched the manifestos and often provoked further controversy.

Second, though the aesthetic ideologies of proletarian literature, socialist realism, or engaged writing are found around the globe in the twentieth century, most literary histories focus on a single national tradition, and there is little comparative work that would indicate whether the novels share common modes, forms, and styles. Mainstream literary criticism has generally taken one of two stances: either arguing that proletarian or social realist novels share a transnational formula that marks them as less-than-literary outsiders to the national literature, or claiming that the finest left-wing writers transcend the generic formula and are thus best understood within the particular linguistic and cultural tradition that makes up the national literature. Moreover, the two leading transnational aesthetic terms,

only a central formal, and political, challenge, but it offered a microcosm, a knowable community that might found a new realism. "There are no heroes in this work – no leading characters or persons such as you would find in works dealing with the lives of individuals," Kobayashi Takiji wrote about his *Kani kosen*, a landmark of Japanese proletarian literature that was banned in Japan and translated around the world. "The collective hero is a group of laborers. . . . I have rejected all attempts at depicting character or delving into psychology."[23] The narrative is a sequence of incidents in the daily life of the factory ship, culminating in a strike.

The strike narrative becomes, not surprisingly, a core element in these works, representing the interruption in daily life – a festival of the oppressed – that creates a story. Certain actual historical strikes – the 1927 Shanghai strikes and the 1929 Gastonia (US) textile strike, for example – became the subject of a cluster of novels. If the strike is often defeated, it is because it stands as a figure for a promised revolution. In the early, simpler novels, the strike serves as the climax, often meriting only a few pages; by Sembene Ousmane's *Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu* (*God's Bits of Wood*, 1960), the strike (a fictional account of the 1947–48 railway strike in French West Africa) becomes the subject of the entire novel, its own form of daily life and struggle, a totality that encompasses not a single workplace but an entire land connected by the railway.

The other formal option was to represent the tenement, the crowded and chaotic collective households of urban workers which spilled out into the streets of the proletarian quarter. "When I think," Michael Gold wrote, "it is the tenement thinking."[24] A few of the radical writers – following the celebrated examples of Dos Passos and Döblin – attempted to write what might be called the novel of the metropolis by juxtaposing the workers' districts to the city of the bourgeoisie. In Mao Dun's sprawling portrait of Shanghai, *Midnight*, an omniscient narrator tries to weave together the family sagas of silk factory owners and workers; in Patrícia Galvão's brief and staccato montage of São Paulo street life, an omniscient editor splices together maps, statistics, conversations, and speeches under chapter headings like "In a Sector of the Class Struggle," "Where Surplus Value is Spent," and "Where They Talk About Rosa Luxemburg."

But the novel of the metropolis was far outnumbered by the novel of

the ghetto, the tale of working-class districts isolated from the city, that is to say, the commercial districts whose department stores, skyscrapers, and theaters served as emblems of modernity. Early twentieth-century socialist and Communist subcultures were usually found in class-isolated mining and textile towns, and the class-segregated urban waterfronts and metal-working districts, and this became the characteristic landscape of the proletarian novel: Johannesburg's Malay Camp in Peter Abrahams' narrative of a South African miner, *Mine Boy*; the immigrant patchwork of New York's Lower East Side in the novels of Michael Gold and Henry Roth; or a single street like Florence's Via del Corno ("fifty yards long and five wide") in Vasco Pratolini's *A Tale of Poor Lovers*. Often, the protagonist of these novels was not an adult worker, but a child growing up in the streets and tenements. Equally common were accounts of the intellectual outsider watching and learning from the life of the "barrack-yards," as in C.L.R. James's *Minty Alley*.

Both of these modes were forms of subaltern modernism, as writers abandoned established family plots and the individual *Bildungsroman* to create an experimental collective novel based on documentary and report-age (terms both coined in this period). This impulse continued throughout the age of three worlds, manifesting itself in the aesthetic of neorealism, in fiction and film, at mid-century, and then in the testimonial literature of the 1960s and 1970s.[25] However, these often powerful documentary portraits of factories and tenements were, like many modernist fictions, curiously ahistorical, and rarely produced the temporal and spatial sweep of grand historical fiction or generational epics. A larger historical sensibility first emerged among the proletarian writers with the resistance narratives of antifascist and anticolonial wars, but it fully developed in the novels that grew out of the recognition that the new proletarians of the century were not simply factory workers and tenement dwellers, but were migrants from the countryside.

The worldwide migration from country to city was one of the central historical events of the age of three worlds: as Eric Hobsbawm writes, "the most dramatic and far-reaching social change of the second half of this century . . . is the death of the peasantry. . . . With the exception of Britain, peasants and farmers remained a massive part of the occupied population

even in industrialized countries until well into the twentieth century." In 1940, Hobsbawm notes, there were only two countries – England and Belgium – where farmers were less than twenty percent of the population; in Latin America, peasants were a majority at the end of World War II. But by the 1980s, farmers were less than ten percent in almost all the countries of western Europe, and peasants were a minority throughout most of Latin America. "In Japan . . ., farmers were reduced from 52.4 percent of the people in 1947 to 9 percent in 1985."[26] Like the Leninist Communisms of the twentieth century which inspired them, the proletarian literary movements were hybrid concoctions, at once peasant and proletarian, completely entangled in this worldwide migration. Many of the novelists were themselves products of the migration, peasant children who moved to cities for work or education, or the city-bred children of peasant migrants.

Thus, in the decades after the initial factory novels of the proletarian avant-garde, the social and cultural uprooting that accompanied the migration from rural villages to the vast proletarian metropoles became the key historical experience behind the works of the novelists' international. At times, it took the form of a quasi-autobiographical tale of a young man, as in the trans-Pacific migration of the Filipino proletarian novelist Carlos Bulosan, recounted in his *America is in the Heart* (1944), or the migration of the student nationalist Minke from a Javanese village to the port city of Surabaya and the capital city of Batavia that structures Toer's Buru Quartet. At other times, it becomes the quasi-epic saga of a migrant family: John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) narrates the exodus of a southwestern Dust Bowl family to California's "factories in the fields," and Harriette Arnow's *The Dollmaker* (1954) follows an Appalachian hill family to the war plants of Detroit. The migration was present even if it was not directly represented: it was the subtext to the contemporary murder mysteries that structure Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood*.

The contemporary experience of migration is one reason why many of the earliest proletarian novels were actually novels of the peasantry, like Jacques Roumain's *Gouverneurs de la rosée* (*Masters of the Dew*, 1944) or the Brazilian novels of the "Northeast." "The urban masses are, on the whole, only rarely the central focus of Latin American narrative," one literary historian notes, and even the radical self-consciously proletarian writers often represented those who, metaphorically, stood between the peasantry and the urban working classes: rural proletarians like miners, plantation workers, sharecroppers, and tenant farmers. Mining novels, sugar novels, banana novels (including Asturias's classic banana trilogy) became entire genres in the middle decades of the twentieth century.[27]

When the radical writers turned to historical fiction, they also returned to the countryside, writing narratives of the epoch Marx had called "primitive accumulation." In his classic *Terras do sem fim* (*The Violent Land*, 1942), Jorge Amado turned away from the proletarian naturalism of his early novels to fashion a historical romance of the founding of the cacao plantations, a "land fertilized with human blood":

> It was the last great struggle in connection with conquest of the land, and the most ferocious of them all. For this reason it has remained a living reality down the years, the stories concerning it passing from mouth to mouth . . . at the fairs in the towns and the cities blind musicians sing of these gun-frays which once upon a time drenched with blood the black land of cacao.[28]

Out of the clash of peasant and proletarian worlds came the most powerful new form to emerge from the proletarian literary movements: magical or marvelous realism. Though magical realism is often considered as a successor and antagonist to social realism, its roots lay in the left-wing writers' movements. The idea and practice of magical realism was developed by two left-wing novelists from the Caribbean and Central America, the Cuban Alejo Carpentier and the Guatemalan Miguel Angel Asturias, both of whom had been briefly imprisoned as young radicals in their native countries and both of whom were influenced by the Communist surrealists during periods of exile in Paris. Carpentier's notion of "*lo real maravilloso*" was an explicit attempt to capture the temporal dislocations, the juxtaposition of different modes of life – the mythic and the modern – that had resulted from a history of conquest, enslavement, and colonization. "What is the entire history of America if not a chronicle of the marvelous real?", he asked in the 1949 preface to *El Reino de Este Mundo* where he coined

the phrase. The novel that followed was a tale of the Haitian revolution, a central turning point in that history, and a narrative that the proletarian writers often retold.[29]

The magical realism of Carpentier and Asturias is perhaps best seen as a second stage of the proletarian avant-garde. If the first moment in the wake of the upheavals of 1917–1919 was dominated by a paradoxically ahistorical modernism that tried to document the lived experience of the radically new factory and tenement, the magical realism of 1949 is the return of the repressed history, lived and witnessed by the exiles and migrants, and the consequent insistence on the specific reality of the colonized world at the moment of liberation in India, Indonesia, and China, a moment that finds its historical precursor not in the French Revolution (as the Bolsheviks did) but in the Haitian Revolution.

If this is true, then one can see why the notion of magical realism resonates far beyond the Caribbean islands and coasts where it began. The term comes to represent a larger shift in the aesthetic of the novelists' international, from the powerful censoring of desire in the early novels (the works of the epoch of worldwide depression are novels of lack and hunger, and the utopian novel is rare) to an unleashing of desire and utopia, foreshadowing the liberation ideologies of the New Left. This is why it is common to see magical realism as the antithesis of an earlier social realism. One can see the shift in individual writers: in Brazil, Amado remains loyal to the Communist left while creating a fictional equivalent of carnival, beginning with *Gabriela, carvo e canela* (*Gabriela, Clove, and Cinnamon*, 1958); in Egypt, Naguib Mahfouz turned from the urban realism and generational saga of his Cairo trilogy to a series of allegorical tales on the betrayal of the revolution of 1952, beginning with *Awlad haratina* (*The Children of our Quarter*, 1959). It is also evident in the work of the left-wing writers of the postfascist Iberian peninsula, Juan Goytisolo and José Saramago, in the turn to surrealism and magical realism in the post-1965 Indonesian novel of figures like Iwan Simatupang, and in the work of the contemporary English-language inheritor of the Marxist traditions of India's Kerala, Arundhati Roy.[30]

Magical realism finds its most celebrated avatar in Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad*. The 1967 novel, part of the celebrated

boom in Latin American fiction, came to stand for the moment of Third World hopefulness in the wake of decolonization, the 1955 Bandung conference, and the 1959 Cuban revolution, peaking at the Havana cultural congress of 1967, a moment that died with the coups in Brazil (1964), Indonesia (1965), and Chile (1973). The literary analogue of the 1960s dependency theory of Latin American Marxists, *Cien años de soledad* is a tale of primitive accumulation and desire, of the origins of the capitalist world system with its wonders and its monsters; the house of the Buendías is neither a factory nor tenement. Nevertheless, it could be said to contain the classic proletarian novel, for at its heart lies a strike story. The climax of the novel – "the events that would deal Macondo its fatal blow" – is directly based on the 1928 strike by Colombian banana workers against United Fruit, and the subsequent massacre of the workers by government troops. The curious nature of García Márquez's strike sequence suggests that *Cien años de soledad* is both the culmination and overturning of the half-century of proletarian literary movements.[31]

In 1928, the strike might have inspired one of the original proletarian novels. For García Márquez, a generation later (he was born the year of the strike), it is a history suppressed by the "official version . . .: there were no dead, the satisfied workers had gone back to their families." The strike stands not as a figure for future revolution, but for social amnesia, as it is swept away in the torrential five-year rains that bring ruin to Macondo: "Nothing has happened in Macondo, nothing had ever happened, and nothing ever will happen." Indeed, the strike has a contradictory place in the novel, at once central and marginal, memorialized in a single brief chapter, a climax which is forgotten by nearly every character. There is no preparation for the strike, and the massacre seems to take its place among the myriad of magical events that constitute Macondo's reality. Unlike Asturias in his banana trilogy, García Márquez makes no effort to represent either United Fruit or the banana workers. The only link between the strike and the novel's larger narrative is that one of the more "colorless" and anonymous Buendías – José Arcadio Segundo – becomes one of the leaders of the strikers and the sole survivor of the massacre, keeping its memory alive.[32]

Thus, *Cien años de soledad* stands as both a sign of the crisis in the literary

desire to represent workers that had animated a generation of plebeian writers and as an attempt to bear witness to that desire. On the one hand, not only does García Márquez not represent the banana workers; he testifies to the "hermeneutical delirium" in which "by a decision of the court it was established and set down in solemn decrees that the workers did not exist." On the other hand, García Márquez, like the child witness to the massacre, continues to recount the tale "to the disbelief of all."[33] Nearly a century after the first calls for an international proletarian literature and socialist realism, that desire seems not only defeated, but nonexistent and unimaginable. Yet like the strike story in *Cien años de soledad*, the aspirations and aesthetics of the novelists' international remain the forgotten, repressed history behind the contemporary globalization of the novel.

PART TWO

WORKING ON CULTURE

Modern Epic

The World-System from Goethe to García Márquez

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EPILOGUE

One Hundred Years of Solitude

CHAPTER

9

Let us move to a new horizon. After so much discussion of Western literature, magical realism transports us to the one continent not mentioned at all in *The Waste Land*: to Cuba and Haiti, Guatemala, Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina . . . For the first time in modern history, the centre of gravity of formal creation leaves Europe, and a truly worldwide literary system – the *Weltliteratur* dreamed of by the aged Goethe – replaces the narrower European circuit.

Away from Europe, then. And yet, no postwar work has been greeted by the Old World with more enthusiasm than *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Does this mean that García Márquez's novel really belongs, like it or not, to the Western tradition? Not exactly. Or rather, it half belongs to it (just like *Midnight's Children*, which I shall often mention too): sufficiently at home there to make itself understood – but also sufficiently alien to say different things. And to succeed, moreover, in solving symbolic problems that European literature was no longer able to work through. But let us begin at the beginning.

Magical realism

The expression 'magical realism' appears for the first time in a book by Alejo Carpentier, *The Kingdom of This World*. 'At the end of 1943,' we read in the prologue to the novel, 'I had the good fortune to visit the kingdom

of Henri Christophe . . .' And during his stay in Haiti, Carpentier reflects critically upon the experience of the European avant garde:

> [The] exhausting attempt to invoke the marvellous which has characterized certain European literatures of the last thirty years. The marvellous pursued in old prints [. . .] The marvellous, pathetically evoked in the skills and deformities of fairground characters [. . .] The marvellous, produced by means of conjuring tricks, bringing together objects which would never normally meet . . .

In the long run, Carpentier concludes, this wish achieves the opposite effect: 'the miracle workers turn into bureaucrats'. Whereas, in Haiti:

> I found myself in daily contact with something which might be called *marvellous reality*. I was treading on land where thousands of men anxious for freedom had believed in the lycanthropic powers of Macandal, to the point where this collective faith produced a miracle on the day of his execution [. . .] I had breathed the atmosphere created by Henri Christophe, a monarch of incredible exploits, far more astonishing than all the cruel kings invented by the surrealists [. . .] At every step I encountered this *marvellous reality* . . .
>
> *The Kingdom of This World*, 'Prologue'

Lo real maravilloso. Not magical *realism*, as it has unfortunately been translated (and as it will inevitably continue to be called), but marvellous *reality*. Not a poetics – a state of affairs. In Haiti, Carpentier writes, surrealism is in the things themselves. It is an everyday, collective fact, which restores reality to modernist techniques: which takes the avant garde, and sets its feet back on the ground. Does *Ulysses* separate polyphony from any concretely recognizable 'voice' whatsoever? Well, in *Midnight's Children* the opposite happens, and polyphony is re-motivated: there are many languages in the novel, because India is divided into many cultures, and Saleem, with his extraordinary hearing, manages to hear them all. The technical complexity remains, but it is *naturalized* (and also, if the truth be told, somewhat attenuated). In *The Death of Artemio Cruz*, to take another example, the stream of consciousness is motivated: its confusion is attributed to Cruz's dying (and is clarified, moreover, by copious narrative accounts). In *Three Trapped Tigers*, it is the turn of puns, and intertextuality: presented as the nocturnal pastime – halfway between Hollywood and *Finnegans Wake* – of three young Cuban intellectuals. Cortázar's

Hopscotch naturalizes the category of possibility, presenting it as the sign of a bohemian lifestyle; *Conversation in the Cathedral* naturalizes montage, motivating it with a long, disjointed chat in a bar.

Other examples could be added. But the tendency is clear. Magical realism restores the link that Joyce's generation had severed: technique – and anthropocentrism. I am thinking of Artemio Cruz, or Saleem Sinai, whose life gradually replicates the modernization of an entire country. And I am thinking, of course, of Aureliano Buendia:

> Colonel Aureliano Buendia organized thirty-two armed uprisings and he lost them all. He had seventeen male children by seventeen different women and they were exterminated one after the other on a single night before the oldest one had reached the age of thirty-five. He survived fourteen attempts on his life, seventy-three ambushes, and a firing squad. He lived through a dose of strychnine in his coffee . . .[1]

Nothing abstract here. No 'objective' reason for wars. Everything springs from a concrete, flesh-and-blood, subject, unalterably repeated at the beginning of nine consecutive long sentences. Is it a mythical way of explaining events, as Karl Popper so often said of Homer's gods? Yes, certainly. But it is an explanation. And after half a century of enigmas, there is always a great need for explanations.

Set modernism's feet back on the ground. And then, heal 'the great divide' (Adorno) between modernism and mass culture. It is the 'return of narrative', as people would say in the sixties of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*: an avant-garde work, but with a gripping story. It is the product of a literary evolution different from that of Europe. For many reasons, of course, but perhaps above all because, more than three centuries ago, the Inquisition decided to forbid the sale of European novels in Latin America. An act of censorship with very clear intentions – and very strange consequences. Because, once the novel was eliminated, the result (other things being equal) was a literary system that, far from being poorer, was *much richer than its European counterpart*. An absurd result, at first sight: a subtraction producing an increase. But a bit less absurd if you

[1] G. García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, translated by Gregory Rabassa, Avon, New York 1970, p. 104.

think of literature as a kind of ecosystem, and of the novel, for its part, as the most fearsome predator of the last half millennium. In such a scenario, a world without novels certainly loses one narrative form: unlike Europe, however, it preserves *all the other forms* that the novel would otherwise have swept away.[2] In particular, pre-realistic narrative forms survive (myths, legends, romances of chivalry); and hybrid forms, such as the *cronica*, where the boundary between invention and historical fact is unclear. Latin America is a world without novels, writes Mario Vargas Llosa:

> A world without novels, yes, but a world into which fiction had spread and contaminated practically everything: history, religion, poetry, science, art, speeches, journalism, and the daily habits of people.[3]

A world, in short, in which the extraordinary, the monstrous, the miracle – in a word: *adventure* – still occupies the centre of the picture. It was not this – not this at all – that those zealous priests intended. But infinite are the ways of the Lord, and those of evolution still more so.

From Lübeck to Macondo

Thinking of the genre to which *One Hundred Years of Solitude* belongs, 'family saga' is perhaps the best choice. The form of *Buddenbrooks*, *The Viceroys*, *The Forsyte Saga*, *The Radetzky March*, the Snopes trilogy. It is a hybrid genre, with strong epic components, whose absence may have already surprised more than one reader. Why *Bouvard and Pécuchet*, but not *Buddenbrooks*?

Retrospectively, I think it can be explained as follows. A study of the

[2] The image of the predator is no exaggeration. When we have historical atlases of literature at our disposal, it will be seen how the spread of the novel erased all sorts of pre-existing forms from the map of Europe. Between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for example, when oral narratives began to be collected, their areas of maximum diffusion (Balkans, Baltic, northern Scandinavia) coincided with those that remained outside the development of the novel. England, the Île de France, or northern Italy, present the opposite correlation: a high incidence of novels, and scant presence of other narrative forms.

[3] M. Vargas Llosa, 'Latin America: Fiction and Reality', in J. King, ed., *Modern Latin American Fiction: a Survey*, Faber and Faber, London and Boston 1987, p. 5.

modern epic has two paths from which to choose: it can focus on either temporal, or spatial, extent. Initially, to be honest, I was thinking mainly of the former. But then, as I was working on *Faust*, it struck me that the historical aspect of Göethe's poem did not make much sense *as such*, and should rather be interpreted as a grand rhetorical figure: as metaphor for a geographical breadth. And from this first hypothesis (though I did not know it at the time, of course), many others have flowed. Polyphony, for instance, became interwoven in turn with the geography of the world-system. The epic dimension became identified with synchronic breadth, rather than with diachrony. Digression became interesting, and the plot secondary. And the category 'modern epic' was gradually filled with texts that were exactly the opposite of *Buddenbrooks*.

Was it right, that initial decision? Let us hope so. Whether it is shared or not, however, there is another point upon which it is perhaps easier to agree: namely, that in *Faust* both space and time have a prominent place. Stress may be laid on the one (and *Faust* becomes a world text), or on the other (and it becomes a kind of national saga). But it is clear that the two aspects both exist, and are woven together. A hundred years later, however, things have changed. *Buddenbrooks* is an entirely temporal construction, and *Ulysses* a spatial one. In the twenty-four hours of the world text, the search for spatial totality has reduced the temporal flow practically to zero. In the hundred years of the family saga, the opposite has happened: history has become longer, and space narrower. Because *Buddenbrooks* is not, as is often said, a novel on 'Germany', but on Lübeck – and perhaps not even that, but on the house of Buddenbrook. It is a spatial contraction that returns in *The Viceroys*, and then in *The Leopard*, where the temporal survival of houses and palaces is one of the main narrative themes. Houses again, and a narrow region, are the sites of the Faulkner cycle. And as for *The Forsyte Saga* (which is similarly a novel about London, rather than about Great Britain, and still less the Empire), my Penguin edition diligently includes the various houses in the genealogical tree – as if they were so many human beings.[4]

[4] In this, *The Radetzky March* – which shifts from one end to the other of a multinational empire – is different from the other family sagas. In Roth too, however, there is an absolutely Austrian nucleus – the March, the language, the portrait of Franz Joseph: the house of Habsburg – which accompanies the Trottas wherever they go.

It is like a zoom shot: from the world to the nation state to the city to the house. Spaces ever more tightly defined, ever smaller and more homogeneous. And in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* too, of course, there is a house: the house of Buendia, which like that of Buddenbrook lasts for an entire century, and never moves from Macondo. And yet Macondo is, as it were, larger than Lübeck: because more open to the world. It is a reality that surfaces from the very first words of the novel, with ice and wars – and it continues with gypsies' inventions and Arab traders, Italian dandies and French whores, the wise Catalonian, the wandering Jew, the Flemish airman . . .

Macondo as a *m[ac]ondo* [world], in short. The story of *Buddenbrooks* – in the context of the world-system. No wonder Europe went crazy over *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.[5]

Towards the middle of the novel, one of Aureliano's seventeen children is looking for a house so that he can send for his mother and sister to join him in Macondo. He stumbles across a 'run-down big house', and with a heave of his shoulder he knocks down the front door:

> Aureliano Triste stood on the threshold waiting for the dust to clear and then he saw in the center of the room the squalid woman, still dressed in clothing of the past century, with a few yellow threads on her bald head, and with two large eyes, still beautiful, in which the last stars of hope had gone out, and the skin of her face was wrinkled by the aridity of solitude. Shaken by that vision from another world,

[5] 'The great transformation that took place between 1945 and 1970 in Latin America can also be defined succinctly as the transition from a situation of equilibrium between city and countryside to another situation characterized not just by urban primacy, but more precisely by hegemony of the great metropolises': so wrote M. Carmagnani and G. Casetta, in *America latina: la grande trasformazione*, Einaudi, Turin 1989, pp. 16–17. The urban setting is perhaps the main difference between *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and the great novels of the preceding generation, such as *Men of Maize*, or *The Lost Steps*. Although Macondo is isolated, and a very long way from any other centre of population, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* makes practically no mention of agricultural activities; and even the banana company, which brings with it a typically urban type of technology, separates Macondo yet more hermetically from its rural hinterland.

> Aureliano Triste barely noticed that the woman was aiming an antiquated pistol at him.
>
> *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, 223–4

It is Rebeca, widow of Josè Arcadio: '"Holy God!", exclaimed Ursula, "She's still alive!"' With her, non-contemporaneity returns – for which the family saga is, in any case, structurally predisposed. But while in Europe the overlap is usually limited to just two generations – Johann and Jean, Jean and Thomas, Thomas and Hanno; the hero of Solferino and the District Commissioner, the District Commissioner and Karl Joseph: fathers and sons – in Macondo, the situation is quite different. The Buddenbrooks live spiritually in the epoch of the reigning paterfamilias: but the Buendias, who are an extended family and absurdly longlived to boot, always inhabit a hybrid, ill-defined epoch:

> Amaranta Ursula [fifth generation] and little Aureliano [sixth] would remember the rains as a happy time. In spite of [fourth-generation] Fernanda's strictness, they would splash in the puddles in the courtyard, catch lizards and dissect them, and pretend that they were poisoning the soup with dust from butterfly wings when Santa Sofia de la Piedad [third] was not looking. Ursula [first] was their most amusing plaything.
>
> *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, 333

Fifty words – and five out of six generations appear in them (the second, which no longer has any survivors, is evoked immediately afterwards, when Ursula thinks little Aureliano 'was her son the colonel during the time he was taken to see ice'). And it is not just a question of biological coexistence: through individuals, whole cultures overlap. When Remedios the Beauty flies up into the sky, there succeed one another within half a page: gossip typical of a patriarchal society, Christian faith in miracles, the government's political calculation, Mr Brown's American technology, and Aureliano's weary opposition. Non-contemporaneity here closely recalls Bloch's original idea: a bundle of thrusts and counter-thrusts, where old and new combine in the strangest ways, always keeping Macondo's fate in suspense. It does not so much bring to mind *Buddenbrooks*, with its declining (*Buddenbrooks. The Decline of a Family*) but still orderly trajectory, as De Roberto's *The Viceroys*: another extended (and somewhat crazy) family from a region only recently annexed to a modern nation state. In short, another story of accelerated

modernization, and of combined development – where the compiler of heraldic manuals sits at the same table as the unscrupulous young politician. But before turning to this, one last look at the structure of the family saga.

The history of every family, inevitably, is a history of shadows. Two or three generations, and the dead outnumber the living. The story unfolds in reverse: towards memory, or nostalgia. 'The past grew daily more vivid', reflects Saleem Sinai, 'while the present seemed colourless, confused, a thing of no consequence' (*Midnight's Children*, 'Abracadabra'). But there is past and past. In *Buddenbrooks* or *The Radetzky March*, for example, the past is lamented because of its order. It is a world to be kept alive for its homogeneity: because it is made up of a single class, and speaks a single language.[6] It is the world of habit:

> These open-air concerts would all take place beneath the Chief District Commissioner's balcony, and they would all begin with the Radetzky March. Although the march was so familiar to the members of the band that any one of them could have played it in his sleep without a conductor, their bandmaster nevertheless considered it essential to follow every note of the score. Each Sunday, with a burst of musical and military zeal, as though he were trying it out for the first time, he would raise his head, his eye, his baton [. . .] The bluff drums would roll, the sweet flutes pipe, and the bright cymbals crash. Pleased and pensive smiles would spread over the faces of his audience, and the blood would tingle in their legs. Though they were standing still, they felt they were marching.
>
> *The Radetzky March*, 2 (translation modified)

[6] The bitterest moment in *The Radetzky March* occurs when the news of Sarajevo reaches the garrison on the Empire's eastern frontier, and there is a sudden eruption of incomprehensible insults in Hungarian. To defend the language of the Habsburgs ('We must ask you gentlemen to continue your conversation in German', *The Radetzky March*, 19), there remains only a Slovene captain, whose own half-grown sons talk of South Slav independence, read pamphlets which 'might have been written in hostile Belgrade', and seem to him as 'incomprehensible as great-grandchildren'.

Roth's civilization is one of repetition: a world that strips events of their irreversibility: that tones down, attenuates, protects. The dominant tense is the imperfect, as befits any self-respecting bureaucratic account – and as turns out to be the case, rather to our surprise, also in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*:

> It seemed as if some penetrating lucidity permitted her to see the reality of things beyond any formalism. That at least was the point of view of Colonel Aureliano Buendia, for whom Remedios the Beauty was in no way mentally retarded, as was generally believed, but quite the opposite. 'It's as if she's come back from twenty years of war', he would say. Ursula, for her part, thanked God for having rewarded the family with a creature of exceptional purity, but at the same time she was disturbed by her beauty, for it seemed a contradictory virtue to her . . .
>
> *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, 202–3

Continuity in Roth, continuity in García Márquez. But the repetition evoked by verbal forms possesses a completely different reality in the two novels. In *The Radetzky March*, it is a sign of modesty: it indicates obedience, meticulousness. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, by contrast, repetition has been transformed into a haunted, hyperbolic obsession: goldfish, reading the cards, inventions, cockfights, invisible doctors, Sanskrit parchments . . . 'A madhouse', in Ursula's words: a world where the imperfect tense signals not order, but confusion. And, indeed, this is exactly the point. Unlike *The Radetzky March*, no regret is expressed in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* for the certitude of unchanging concerts: if there is any nostalgia, it is *nostalgia for disorder*. The world was beautiful when it was full of gypsies and military revolts, foreign traders and midnight's children. When it was formless, composite, unstable:

> A thousand and one children were born; there were a thousand and one possibilities which had never been present in one place at one time before; and there were a thousand and one dead ends.
>
> *Midnight's Children*, 'My tenth birthday'

A thousand and one possibilities – a thousand and one dead ends. 'We would have no meaning' – adds Rushdie in 'Alpha and Omega' – 'until we were destroyed'. They are 'the days of the end of possibility', like the petrified present of *The Death of Artemio Cruz*, which in the chapters on

the revolution might instead have taken very different paths. 'All the doors open', reflects Santiago Zavala in *Conversation in the Cathedral*, '– at what moment did they begin to close, and why?'

Non-contemporaneity. II

In his fine analysis of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Vargas Llosa describes the basic narrative cell of the novel as follows:

> 1. At the start of an episode, the main fact in the narrative unit is mentioned: it is usually the last, in chronological terms. In other words, the episode begins with a leap towards the future [. . .] 'Many years later, as he faced the firing squad . . .' [. . .]
> 2. The narrative then jumps to the remotest past of the fact mentioned, whence it follows a linear chronological account of events, until it reaches the future fact that has been displaced and reported at the start of the episode: in this way the circle is closed, and *the episode ends where it began, just as it had begun where it would end.*[7]

Future, past, future. It is an interplay of prolepsis and flashback that endows the novel with its peculiarly unforgettable quality: announcing a fact long before it takes place, and then recalling it long afterwards – like the *Leitmotiv* in the *Ring*, or in *Ulysses* – endows it with a truly epic grandeur. But there is more. Cesare Segre:

> These wide or narrow turns of the wheel of time have the primary function of pointing, at the start of a cycle of life, to its conclusion, so that the present is also already perceived in the past perspective that will give it its future.[8]

A present pursued by the future, which drives it towards the past . . . A 'strange' present: unstable, overdetermined. It is yet another version of non-contemporaneity – with a tremendous novelty, as compared with *Faust* and *Ulysses*. For, in magical realism, the heterogeneity of historical

[7] M. Vargas Llosa, *García Márquez: historia de un deicidio*, Barral Editores, Barcelona 1971, p. 549.

[8] C. Segre, *I segni e la critica*, Einaudi, Turin 1969, p. 253.

time is also, for the first time, *narratively interesting*: it produces plot, suspense. It is not just the sign of a complex, stratified history: it is also the symptom of *a history in progress*. At the precise moment when Nehru proclaims the independence of India, and solemnly announces an irreversible break with the past – 'A moment comes [. . .] when we step out from the old to the new; when an age ends . . .' (*Midnight's Children*, 'Tick, tock') – at that precise moment the demon of non-contemporaneity, to complicate an excessively linear path, gives birth to a thousand and one babies endowed with magical powers. And who will eventually prevail: the modern state, or the children of magic? And the same in Macondo. A small, peaceful town: but the gypsies arrive, with inventions that seem to drop from the future, and history begins to run.

But the gypsies arrive . . . As always, the interweaving of different times is actually an interweaving of different *spaces*: Dutch telescopes, Asian parchments, British sextants, ice from somewhere or other . . . Read in this light, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* – like *Faust* – tells the story of an 'incorporation': of an isolated community that is caught up in the modern world-system, which subjects it to an unexpected, extremely violent acceleration. It is the novel of uneven and combined development: the *marvellous reality*, indeed, in which a prophecy in Sanskrit coexists with photography, and South American phantasms with Italian mechanical pianolas.

A circle that goes from the future to the past to the future, Vargas Llosa wrote of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. True: and a circle, we can now add, often triggered *by an external geographical reality*. The twofold prolepsis that opens the novel is due to the gypsies' trading, and to the army of a distant capital. And so on: the history of Macondo is continually intersected and deflected by other histories: by processes that begin in Europe and in Asia, in 'Colombia', Latin America, the United States. A far cry from Mann's Lübeck, or De Roberto's Catania. This, again, is the geography of the world text: broad, heterogeneous, complex. With respect to *Faust*, however, *the perspective has been reversed*. We no longer see things from the core of the world-system – but from the periphery. And from this new viewpoint, epic digressions become something else. *Interferences*: weighty events, with long-lasting consequences. In *The Forty-Second Parallel*, the story of United Fruit is a brief parenthesis abroad; in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, it is the turning-point

from which Macondo will never manage to recover. A single fact, and two different outcomes. A single world-system – and two different histories.

One Hundred Years of Solitude as the story of an incorporation, then. And in this overall process, three phases, and three quite distinct geographies. The first half of the novel is the moment of simple trading relations: in an irregular, creative medley, objects and people flow into Macondo from every part of the world. It is the moment of combined development, in the most striking sense of the term: the telescope, and Melquiades' dead language; Father Nicanor's levitations, and the ebullient French whores. Great confusion, of course – the semi-madness of the first of the Buendias, in which the old and the new clash most dramatically – but nothing worse. The encounter with the world-system produces freaks, but no irreversible consequence. In this first phase, indeed, interference enriches the life of Macondo: it makes it more varied, more open. It is the moment in which the key word of modernism – *possibility* – pervades every page of the story. It is the hour, as it were, of *white magic*.

This first section also encloses the second: the phase (to simplify somewhat) of Aureliano's wars. Here, the space of the story changes completely. Aureliano leaves Macondo; the network of international exchanges unravels. The very small and the very large recede into the background, while the foreground is occupied by a third geographical entity, of intermediate dimensions, which has wedged itself between the small isolated town and the world-system: the nation state. A centralized reality, and one that demands the monopoly of violence.

The state wins, the war ends, and Macondo comes back into contact with the outside world. With the *world*? Not any more. With only part of it: the United States. And, at this point, what was at stake in the civil war suddenly becomes clear: Macondo's role in the international division of labour. A relatively independent development – or a banana republic. On the one hand, the productive imbalance of the semi-periphery: the sense of possibility, and sometimes of real prosperity, that accompanies the early stages of development. On the other (just as in *Men of Maize*, by Miguel Angel Asturias), enslavement to monoculture: a peripheral, other-directed role. Not even Aureliano had understood it. And by the time the reader does so, it is too late.

All the doors open, said the character in Vargas Llosa: at what moment did they begin to close, and why? When the pressure of the world-system, answers *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, forces your country into a more complete – and hence more rigid – integration. A thousand and one possibilities then really do become a thousand and one dead ends: the multiplicity of possible developments, a set route. It is the hour of black magic: an 'incredible' that is no longer bound to a whirlpool of bizarre combinations, but to the enormity of the crimes committed. It is the train loaded with corpses, which vanishes from the collective memory as though it had never been. And in *Midnight's Children*:

> Shaheed and I saw many things which were not true, which were not possible, because our boys would not could not have behaved so badly; we saw men in spectacles with heads like eggs being shot in side-streets, we saw the intelligentsia of the city being massacred by the hundred, but it was not true because it could not have been true . . .
>
> *Midnight's Children*, 'Sam and the Tiger'

Rhetoric of innocence. II

'Colonel Aureliano Buendia organized thirty-two armed uprisings and he lost them all.' Subject, verb, predicate, conjunction, subject, verb, predicate . . . It is a sentence that would be impossible in the twenties, when the plane of enunciation is a terrain of radical experiments. But *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is not bothered about that: it is to the story, and its internal ramifications, that it seeks to bind us. 'When' must be by far the most common word in the novel – which begins, indeed, with the phrase: 'Many years later . . .'. And then, in a real bombardment of time markers: At that time, As soon as, Even then, But one day, Shortly before, The next night, During the time, Until the day, From that moment, Years later, There was at that time, While waiting, This time, Later, As long as . . .

A really strange place, Macondo. A city of madmen, where nobody has anything in common with anybody else. But where *language is the same for everybody*. While you are reading, you pay no attention to it – it is all so lovely. But if you reopen the novel with a little detachment, you find that the narrator's impersonal voice covers more or less *ninety-five per cent* of

the textual space. In direct speech, one or two sentences per page: and so short that no voice ever stands out from the rest.[9] And here, we really are at the antipodes to modernism. Think of *Ulysses*: a non-story, told in innumerable styles. With all its problems, a real triumph of polyphony. And now, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*: endless stories, told in a non-style. For all its beauty, a real triumph of monologism.

From polyphony to monologism. It occurred in the nineteenth century, from Goethe to Flaubert; and again in the twentieth, from Joyce to García Márquez. The history of techniques follows its undulating curve, made up of short creative explosions and long countertrends. But there is something more: the fact that the style of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* – this writing without polyphony, and without irony; this writing as *transparent* as a fine summer morning, to which the novel owes so much of its success – had long ago become impossible for European literature, which had discovered the omnipresence of ideologies, hence the impossibility of an 'objective' viewpoint. Well, it is as though a flash of genius had revealed to García Márquez the secret wish of the educated European reader: to have faith once more in the story. To read a strange and complicated story, yes: but 'objective'. In short, to read a novel *without ideology*.

Can this be true? Of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the novel of '68?

[9] Apart from rare exceptions, moreover, direct speech here has just one function: to describe a state of affairs. It is a retrospective and basically superfluous act (hence Aureliano's dumbness), which fixes the event in a few words. As an example, here are the novel's first sentences in direct speech: 'Things have a life of their own; it's simply a matter of waking up their souls'; 'It won't work for that'; 'Very soon we'll have gold enough and more to pave the floors of the house'; 'Science has eliminated distance; in a short time man will be able to see what is happening in any place in the world without leaving his own house'; 'The earth is round like an orange'; 'If you have to go crazy, please go crazy all by yourself; but don't try to put your gypsy ideas into the heads of the children'; 'It's the smell of the devil'; 'Not at all; it has been proven that the devil has sulphuric properties and this is just a little corrosive sublimate'; 'Incredible things are happening in the world; right there across the river there are all kinds of magical instruments while we keep on living like donkeys'; 'It's all right; the main thing is not to lose our bearings'; 'God damn it! Macondo is surrounded by water on all sides'. With the exception of one (half) performative sentence, they are all observations.

Let us start with a preliminary question: the political meaning of magical realism. It is a widening of horizons, Carpentier maintains in *The Kingdom of This World*, that carries with it new possibilities of political emancipation. It is a dangerous trick, retorts Naipaul in *The Bend in the River*, where the Big Man, the dictator, wants to be 'the greatest magician' his country has ever seen. 'Is it important to keep the myths alive?', an interviewer asks Carlos Fuentes, who replies: 'Yes, why should we become impoverished?'[10] Because, Franz Fanon would perhaps have answered, the 'richness' of myth can have a paralysing effect.[11] And so on. It is not surprising that *Midnight's Children*, which is the latest and most self-reflective text of magical realism, should continually oscillate from one position to the other:

> Midnight's children can be made to represent many things, according to your point of view; they can be seen as the last throw of everything antiquated and retrogressive in our myth-ridden nation, whose defeat was entirely desirable in the context of a modernizing, twentieth-century economy; or as the true hope of freedom, which is now forever extinguished.
>
> *Midnight's Children*, 'My tenth birthday'

A backward-looking myth, or the one hope of freedom. For now, let us leave the matter in suspense. What is certain is that myth (understood in its broadest sense) is the sign and instrument of a *symbolic resistance* to

[10] See 'Carlos Fuentes: An Interview with John King', in John King, ed., *Modern Latin American Fiction*, Faber and Faber, London 1987, p. 146.

[11] 'The zombies are more terrifying than the settlers [. . .] We no longer really need to fight against [the settlers] since what counts is the frightening enemy created by myths [. . .] During the struggle for freedom, a marked alienation from these practices is observed [. . .] After centuries of unreality, after having wallowed in the most outlandish phantoms, at long last the native, gun in hand, stands face to face with the only forces which contend for his life – the forces of colonialism. And the youth of a colonized country, growing up in an atmosphere of shot and fire, may well make a mock of, and does not hesitate to pour scorn upon the zombies of his ancestors, the horses with two heads, the dead who rise again, and the djinns who rush into your body while you yawn. The native discovers reality . . .' (F. Fanon, *The Damned*, translated by Constance Farrington, Présence Africaine, Paris 1963, pp. 44–6).

Western penetration. *Men of Maize*, which in so many ways is the prototype of magical realism, tells precisely the story of how mythical thought is reinvigorated by forced modernization, which it seeks to oppose by every means. And to oppose it, of course, not (just) by taking up explicit positions, but by means of its particular narrative technique. By taking the various aspects of social transformation, *and rewriting them as something else*: as so many magical phenomena, or the return of ancient archetypes. The devastation remains, of course, as does occupation: but they become, if nothing else, (mythically) comprehensible, and even familiar. 'All societies are in history and change', writes Claude Lévi-Strauss:

> But societies react to this common condition in very different ways. Some accept it, with good or bad grace, and its consequences [. . .] assume immense proportions through their attention to it. Others (which for this reason we call primitive) want to deny it, and try, with a dexterity that we underestimate, to make the states of their development they consider 'prior' as permanent as possible.[12]

Dexterity: just the right word, for the world of Asturias – and, in general, for the resistance to the 'disenchantment' that modernization tends to carry with it. For rewriting an event in mythical form is tantamount to making it *meaningful*: freeing it from the profane world of causes and effects, and projecting into it the symbolic richness of the archetype. Vargas Llosa:

> In Latin America [. . .] we still have great difficulty in differentiating between fiction and reality. We are traditionally accustomed to mix them in such a way that this is, probably, one of the reasons why we are so impractical and inept in political matters for instance. But some good also came from this novelization of our whole life. Books like *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Cortázar's short stories and Roa Bastos's novels wouldn't have been possible otherwise.[13]

Inept in political matters – but great novelists. We are back to Rushdie's hesitation over the historical meaning of myth. I shall not resolve the uncertainty: I do not know enough about Latin America, or India, to

[12] C. Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, London 1962, pp. 232–4.

[13] M. Vargas Llosa, in King, ed., *Modern Latin American Fiction*, p. 5.

do so in a responsible way. On the role of magical realism *in the West*, however, I do feel able to advance a couple of hypotheses. The first is a development of Gellner's diagnosis: the desire of contemporary societies for 'meaning', imagination, *re-enchantment*. A wish that, in Europe, comes up against centuries of Weberian coldness, and is therefore hard to fulfil; but which can quite well find an outlet in stories belonging *to another culture*. Especially if that culture is a perfect compromise formation: sufficiently European ('Latin') to be comprehensible – and sufficiently exotic ('American') to elude critical control. We are ready to believe almost anything about what is far away from us: it was true for the *cronicas* of the Conquista, and has been true again for magical realism.

A complicity between magic and empire, in short. And it is only logical, after all. Ever since modern science launched its attack on the omnipotence of thought, European culture has kept shifting its location: to art, said Freud; to consumption, added Gellner; finally, to other continents. These are, so to speak, the reserves of magic of the modern world-system: places of prophecies and archetypes; of apparitions, and pacts with the Devil.

And here, one final distinction. In Asturias and Carpentier, in Rushdie and Guimarães Rosa, magic is a thing of the past, and of the periphery. In García Márquez, however, it belongs *to the future*: to the West, to the core of the world-system. Compared with the compass or the mechanical pianola – not to speak of ice – flying carpets and spooks are irrelevancies:

> It was as if God had decided to put to the test every capacity for surprise and was keeping the inhabitants of Macondo in a permanent alternation between excitement and disappointment, doubt and revelation, to such an extreme that no one knew for certain where the limits of reality lay. It was an intricate stew of truths and mirages that convulsed the ghost of Josè Arcadio Buendia under the chestnut tree with impatience, and made him wander all through the house even in broad daylight.
>
> *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, 230–31

A stew of truths and mirages . . . Reading these lines, you would not say: but García Márquez is talking about the cinema and the telephone. Because the true magic of this novel is not magic: it is technology. The

Weberian side of our existence – which the flash of genius of Macondo has succeeded in re-enchanting. And re-enchanting it in a *substantially benign* form. Nothing frightening, in the products of Western technology. They seem a game. A fantastic present sent from Europe to that faraway village: truly, a *marvellous reality*. Afterwards, to be sure, the banana company comes along too. But, adding it all up, the forced modernization of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a story of extraordinary delight. Anybody would have liked to live in Macondo.

A rhetoric of innocence, we said of *Faust*. A rhetoric of dubious efficacy, if absolution is granted by the defendant himself. But if absolution comes from the victim . . .

The sixties. With the withdrawal from Africa, the phase of open colonial conquest comes to an end: the phase of gunboats, and military violence. And a novel reaches Europe which recounts those hundred years of history as an adventure filled with wonder. Is this perhaps the secret of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*?

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