

# Literature After Globalization

Textuality, Technology and  
the Nation-State

Philip Leonard

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## Literature After Globalization

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# Literature after Globalization: Textuality, Technology and the Nation-State

Philip Leonard

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## The ends of man: electronic frontiers in an age of global community

Globalization, as it tends to be understood today, begins with Shakespeare. In terms that are more commonly associated with the eccentric flows and global connections of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Shakespeare describes a world in which populations and trade move easily across the frontiers that have circumscribed localities, regions, or countries and anticipates forms of social governance and cultural production that function beyond the institutions of particular states. *Antony and Cleopatra*, perhaps where he most forcefully invokes a universal sovereignty that connects the people of the world, in this manner envisages an attachment that is not limited to ethnic affiliation or geographical proximity, an economy that does not impose restrictions on the movement of commodities, and a polity that does not root itself in the idea of national self-determination. Embodying this departure from territorial autonomy, from the perceived self-sufficiency of the nation or state, Antony is a ruler whose jurisdiction extends beyond Rome, ‘The triple pillar of the world’<sup>1</sup> whose flawed judgment is seen to compromise the pursuit of empire; for Cleopatra, his ‘legs bestrid the ocean; his reared arm/Crested the world.../But when he meant to quail and shake the orb,/He was as rattling thunder.’<sup>2</sup> Predicting an end to enmity after his victory over Antony at Actium, and foreseeing a world united, Octavius declares that ‘The time of universal peace is near:/Prove this a prosperous day, the three-nooked world/Shall bear the olive freely’.<sup>3</sup>

Such a peace would not, of course, unfold smoothly as the democratic federation of different states, and neither does it promise a globally inclusive or representative cosmopolitanism that would harmoniously unite diverse cultures and regions. Instead, the peace envisaged by Octavius would result from the expansion of empire and the spreading of Rome’s exceptional authority, a beneficent *pax Romana* that would ultimately bring civilization

and order to a violent and unstable world. Such an imperious projection is rejected by Shakespeare, however; refusing to endorse Octavius' vision of an enduring uniformity, and prophetically looking forward to the emergence in Europe of an alternative – Christian – metaphysics and sociality, *Antony and Cleopatra* testifies against the idea that Rome's unification of the earth could successfully effect a functional world polity. Out of empire's systematizing axioms and orthodoxies this text conjures images of fluidity and transition, of space as displacement, of the precarity of nation and state. Antony commands, 'Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch/of empire fall',<sup>4</sup> presaging Cleopatra's exhortation to 'Melt Egypt into Nile';<sup>5</sup> this renouncing of home and nation leads one of Antony's followers sorrowfully to complain that 'We have kissed away/Kingdoms and provinces'.<sup>6</sup> Suggesting impermanence and dislocation as the underlying condition of cultural and territorial attachment, this play thus conceives *imperium* as unsustainable, and disintegration as inexorably following Rome's pursuit of universal peace.

Conceiving the world as either universal polity or interrupted by an immanent flux is not, however, what places Shakespeare at the source of the global. Indeed, although *Antony and Cleopatra* both attaches itself to the idea of global governance and suggests that such a fidelity precludes the formation of a generalized belonging, this attachment to the world – and the crisis in European sovereignty that it inevitably triggers – does not arise *ex nihilo* with Shakespeare.<sup>7</sup> Rather, globalization, as it tends to be understood today, begins with Shakespeare because it is with his vision of authority peripheralized and space standardized that Marshall McLuhan opens *The Gutenberg Galaxy*. Promoting the idea of an electronically connected world and introducing the concept of the global village, McLuhan takes *King Lear* as his point of departure for approaching the reshaping of consciousness and culture by media technologies. Lear's proposal to devolve power to his three daughters inaugurates an era of social modernity by dividing and decentralizing monarchic authority, McLuhan writes, and this act of political redistribution results in part from the perceptual change that accompanied sixteenth-century cartography. Lear's imperative, 'Give me the map there. Know we have divided/In three our kingdom',<sup>8</sup> for McLuhan points to the emergence of a cognitive and representational technology which construes space as 'uniform and continuous' and, as such, triggers 'a major shift in human awareness in the Renaissance'.<sup>9</sup>

One important feature of McLuhan's response to *King Lear* is that the movement away from national or regional cultures is not attributed simply to modernity's informational networks or to post-industrial systems of exchange. But, as much as it denies that the world is suddenly evolving into the global, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* also suggests that (since it has long been formed around a negotiation of the trans-, inter- and supranational), the nation-state has not recently been compromised or entered its terminal moment. *Literature after Globalization* considers texts which reflect and reflect on the forms of displacement and dislocation that are often associated with the emergence of global culture: the porosity of national borders, the decline of the state as a political system, the movement of populations, workers and goods across regions and between markets, the legislation and governance of supranational organizations or transnational criminality, networked communications and digital community. But, echoing McLuhan's reading of *King Lear*, the texts that are central to this book also dispute the idea of a social and cultural moment that is unprecedentedly and irrefutably global, as well as the treatment of information and communications technologies as the environment in which global exchanges function and develop at the expense of territorial or state-based systems of governance. Pointing to a movement away from early narratives of global culture – that is, after the global conceived as the collapse of national cultures in the face of synthetic transborder movements – these fictions explore recent efforts to reinvent and reassert national sovereignty against technology's transnational effects.

What follows in this book is not an attempt to instantiate the particular dimensions of globalization today; rather, it will consider what happens in the gap between the pursuit of the transnational and the commodification of the world – between the universalism that is to be found at the beginning of the European nation-state and the narrow sense of cultural particularity that is precipitated in the shift towards the global. Its concern is not to treat literary representation as the documentary recording of a sociological exchange between the global and the nation-state, but to explore how literary fictions both expose and explore the gap between narratives of the national and the global, and to consider forms of territorial, social and cultural attachment and detachment that cannot be accommodated by agonistic narratives of national belonging or global dispersion. What these fictions share is not the attempt to

preserve or re-invigorate the nation-state's sovereign authority against digital culture's transnational effects, but a more nuanced sense of what might be described as an ambivalent and anxious condition of national globalism.

## I

The idea that the world started to become borderless at some point towards the end of the twentieth century has become the stock-in-trade of recent responses to cultural belonging and, with the flourishing of an apparently new global condition, national cultures and state-based authority seem no longer to have the status they once enjoyed or to function as they once did. Information, populations, capital and commodities often appear to move easily and without restriction across national borders. Borders, according to such a perception, are turning into administrative, cartographic and cognitive conveniences, with the nation-state's rights and responsibilities increasingly abdicated to transnational corporations and institutions or, when it resists the rise of the global, becoming an impediment to the emergence of an open and unrestricted community that would surpass attachment to the physicality of space or geography. Announcing the arrival, or at least the imminent arrival, of an unparalleled and integrative moment in history, narratives of a connected humanity emerged in the closing decades of the twentieth century to become the prevailing *mythos* for understanding socio-cultural belonging; within this *mythos*, power is seen to be distributed across regions of the world, markets are no longer limited to national – or even international – economies, information is disseminated as a force for global democracy, and the social sphere has been refigured as a universal association. Transportation and communications infrastructures are similarly treated as offering the potential for a material and informational interconnectedness that has overcome distance, resulting in the compression of different locations into a global simultaneity that is mediated by the immediacy of the screen; for some, this condition can be described as 'the end of geography',<sup>10</sup> for others it has resulted in 'the death of distance'<sup>11</sup> or a flattening of the world.<sup>12</sup> And, again within this narrative of the world's sudden unification, the consolidation of disparate societies, cultures and ethnicities is resulting in a single community that is conscious

of itself, allowing all groups and regions to participate in the negotiation of organizational rules, structures for social governance, systems of exchange and notions of cultural identity.

If such a conception of globalization is today commonplace then its origins can be traced to efforts in the 1990s to understand precisely what the shift away from the nation-state constitutes. For Malcolm Waters, even if we have not yet attained a syncretic merging and reconciliation of cultures, regions and populations, then we are undeniably accelerating towards the sublimation of national topologies: 'territoriality will disappear as an organizing principle for social and cultural life; it will be a society without borders or spatial boundaries',<sup>13</sup> he writes. Although observing that 'the state remains the preeminent political actor on the global stage', Richard Falk similarly claims that:

the aggregation of states – what has been called 'a states system' – is no longer consistently in control of the global policy process. Territorial sovereignty is being diminished on a spectrum of issues in such a serious manner as to subvert the capacity of states to govern the internal life of society, and non-state actors hold an increasing proportion of power and influence in the shaping of world order.<sup>14</sup>

This idea of the global is no longer striking, since it now figures prominently in political, corporate and media discourses – as well as providing a vocabulary for some environmentalist and protest movements – which seek to capture the specificity of the present and to diagnose both the opportunities and dangers of a world in which territorial limits are no longer determinate. Inevitably, however, beyond the most superficial treatment of the transitions and transformations that have reconfigured national and international structures, the idea that global culture promises a smooth and shared condition is, at the very least, in need of analytical substantiation.

Assessments of globalization often conceive it as the synthetic interplay of socio-political, legal, economic and cultural shifts that occurred in the closing decades of the twentieth century. Perhaps the most immediately visible of these is the rapid and increasingly complex departure from national economies, with world capitalism evolving from its reliance on the international markets of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to a system in which markets

are increasingly detached from particular national or geographical locations. The establishing of transnational corporations, which produce goods and deliver services in ways that are not confined to, or regulated by, particular national markets, has been central to the evolution of this worldwide economy; indeed, as Leslie Sklair observes, 'One powerful school of thought ... is that the transnational corporation is the dominant institutional force in the global economy and a driving force for globalization.'<sup>15</sup> Departing from imperialism's metrocentric economies, these corporations are often understood as neither exporting cultural values by a dominant nation to a colonized or ideologically subjugated periphery, nor producing commodities and profits in one country for the benefit of another. Rather, transnational corporations spread out across the world, reshaping themselves and their brands to fit different regional conditions, often appealing to a sense of global belonging, nomadically moving to where economic conditions are most advantageous, benefiting from the reduced national provision of public services or the state's increased deregulation of corporate activity, and pursuing opportunities in regions that have recently moved towards the market as a model for production and exchange. Promoting these corporate institutions are the multilateral organizations and systems that have been developed specifically to enhance worldwide production, trade and finance – perhaps most recognizably the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund. Providing supranational and transgovernmental regulatory frameworks, these organizations are built around the idea that sustainable development and economic governance can provide balance in a world in which trade and finance have superseded national economies. *Our Global Neighborhood*, the 1995 report of the Commission on Global Governance, in this spirit places particular importance on 'the establishment of a WTO' which acts 'as a forum for equitable dispute settlement, for further liberalization and for curbing the use of protectionist and discriminatory measures. Its establishment will be a crucial building block for global governance.'<sup>16</sup>

The transition to, and governance of, a world market alone does not account for globalization's multiple dimensions, and economic conditions are usually seen to be alloyed with legal, social and political structures. For Anthony McGrew, 'As globalization has intensified, the power of national

governments to tackle it appears to have declined and international bodies lack the authority to enforce agreed policies.<sup>17</sup> In a world where populations find social and cultural identification across national borders, where transfrontier affiliation is enabled by globally distributed networks, where engagement with 'the political' means responding to issues and problems (such as terrorism or climate change) that transcend regionality, and where the idea of participatory inclusion and consensually determined control systems is promoted as a human right, the nation-state is here seen to be attenuated by forms of association that reject the limits of territorial location, elude the regulatory mechanisms of the nation-state, and blunt the political authority that has been associated with bordered sovereignty.

The perception that technology acts as an accelerant that hastens the arrival of global uniformity, as well – perhaps conversely – as the idea that global culture acts as a trigger for the efflorescence of information and communications technology, adds to this analysis of globalization's various dimensions. These technologies are often seen to have contributed to, or perhaps even initiated, global culture by offering forms of contact, interaction and association that pay no regard to the territorial borders and regulatory mechanisms that have historically tied populations to the nation-state. Following in the tracks of McLuhan's claim that 'the world has become a computer, an electronic brain'<sup>18</sup> and that 'the electronic age' will lead to 'the sealing of the entire human family into a single global tribe',<sup>19</sup> social and cultural theory has continued to chart the eclipsing of industrial production by electronic media, and has sought to establish the global contexts of recent information and communications technologies. Anthony Giddens, for example, suggests in *The Consequences of Modernity* that the widespread distribution of technologies reflects the intensification of social relations across national economies: 'One of the main features of the globalizing implications of industrialism is the worldwide diffusion of machine technologies',<sup>20</sup> he writes. In 'Power Shift', Jessica T. Matthews finds in information technologies the capacity to influence the political sphere, since these tools place knowledge and power in the hands of users: 'Widely accessible and affordable technology has broken governments' monopoly on the collection and management of large amounts of information and deprived governments of the deference they enjoyed because of it.'<sup>21</sup> And in *New Rules for a New Economy*, *Wired* magazine's founding



editor Kevin Kelly writes: 'Of all the endeavors we humans are now engaged in, perhaps the grandest of them all is the steady weaving together of our lives, minds and artefacts into a global scale network ... As this grand net spreads, an animated swarm is reticulating the surface of the planet. We are clothing the globe with a network society.'<sup>22</sup>

Such a treatment of globalization, as an emergent (perhaps even attained), diffuse, technologically enabled, universally connected, politically decentralized and inclusive condition is now commonplace, and some notable events – such as the establishing of Global Public Policy Networks in the late 1990s, the founding of the International Criminal Court in 2002, the SARS health alert in 2003, the banking crisis of 2007, or the worldwide disruption of air travel after Iceland's volcanic eruptions in 2010 and 2011 – appear to confirm that such a conception of the global as a uniform and continuous space remains relevant in the twenty-first century. Similarly, technologies of the early twenty-first century continue to be conceived in terms of their global location or globalizing effects. The notion of cloud computing, in a language long-familiar to readers of cyberpunk fiction, metaphorizes data storage and the provision of computing applications as a sublime separation of consciousness from the body and an empyrean detachment from physical space. The distributed, user-generated content that comes from crowdsourcing suggests a participatory model of network community which continues to engineer the information age across territorial locations. Creative Commons licensing is based on the idea of free and universal access to, sharing and reproduction of, intellectual property and creative production. And social media are seen as the lubricant for the global evolution of democracy, not only providing extended networks for neighbourly affiliation, but also, as the events in the Middle East during the 'Arab Spring' of 2011 demonstrate, offering forums for organizing political protest, acts of civil disobedience and armed resistance.

And yet, increasingly clamorous challenges to 'the strong "globalization" thesis [that] is now largely and uncritically accepted as the mainstream'<sup>23</sup> are developing, contesting the idea that information and communications technologies effect a domain that is free from geographical limitations, as well as the claim that a new condition of universal connectedness, distributed power and dispersed socio-cultural belonging is emerging. Michael Hardt and Antonio

Negri warn that, rather than promising freedom, power remains in what they describe as 'Our contemporary interregnum'; this moment is 'populated by an abundance of new structures of power. The only thing that remains constantly present and never leaves the scene is power itself'.<sup>24</sup> Certainly, claims that established inequalities persist in, and new forms of discrimination develop with, globalization can point to the uneven distribution of information and communications technologies as evidence of an order that is plainly not one which enables equitable participation in the public sphere, in emerging systems of exchange, or in new forms of association. Geoffrey Bowker, for example, observes that 'governments in the developing world have indicated real doubts about the usefulness of opening their data resources out onto the Internet. Just as in the nineteenth century, the *laissez-faire* economies of free trade was advocated by countries with the most to gain ... so in our age, the greatest advocates of the free and open exchange of information are developed countries with robust computing infrastructures'.<sup>25</sup>

Also working against the perception that the information age takes the world as its point of reference, governmental, corporate and media narratives, as well as hardware and software of the early twenty-first century (such as geotagging tools or locative devices), have more firmly started to invoke a sense of spatial attachment. Several examples illustrate this shift towards a more explicit attachment to place and a re-affirming of the bordered nation. First, there is Ayn Rand's informational legacy. In 2000, Alan Greenspan, then Chairman of the US Federal Reserve and proponent of a *laissez-faire* individualism that grew out of his association with Rand, embraced the Internet as the engine of a self-organizing and decentralized marketplace.<sup>26</sup> In 2010, a fan of Rand's fiction used a GPS tracker to etch the message 'Read Ayn Rand' across 1200 miles of the US;<sup>27</sup> information technology, hailed by Greenspan at the beginning of the twenty-first century as the facilitator of global finance, had, by the end of this century's first decade, come to provide a digital inscription that is circumscribed by territorial limits. Second is Google's 2009 launch of a Chinese-language self-censoring service which satisfied requirements stipulated by the government in Beijing. These requirements included managing the content of particular sites, blocking the IP addresses of banned organizations (most famously, the Falun Gong and the Tibet Independence Movement), and preventing access to search engines, including Google

and Baidu. One of Google's core principles – to promote the perception of the Internet as a universal nation with a global citizenship ('democracy on the web works'<sup>28</sup>) – was, following this decision, therefore subordinated to protecting national sovereignty. The third can be found in *Wired* magazine's departure from an eschatology in which information and communications technologies are seen to allow humanity finally to consummate itself as a universal, auto-affective and all-embracing totality.<sup>29</sup> In 1995, the UK launch issue harnessed Thomas Paine's call for democracy and 'universal society' to the notion of global citizenship which *Wired* associated with the emerging digital revolution.<sup>30</sup> At the beginning of 2010, however, *Wired* UK enjoined its readers to 'reboot Britain' and offered 'fifteen ideas for a smarter nation'.<sup>31</sup> Finally, there is the UK Government's 2009 'Digital Britain' report which states that 'We are at an inflection point in technology, in capability and in demand. Those countries and governments that strategically push forward their digital communications sector will gain substantial and long-lasting competitive advantage'. Within and against this context, the report proposes, strategies are needed which 'will enable the UK to keep pace with and exceed international developments in this sector'.<sup>32</sup> What these examples suggest is that a false antinomy needs to be identified in the idea that national culture or the nation-state are either in conflict with global culture or wholly assenting to the socio-political structures it brings; here, the nation-state is in both an antagonistic and a co-operative relationship with global culture, both contesting the attenuation of national authority that globalization threatens and participating in the opportunities it offers to national culture.

## II

How, given this ambivalent departure and return of space and place, of sovereignty and nationality, is the global therefore to be conceived? And how is writing to be situated in respect of this ambivalence? Although global culture's dimensions have been variously navigated, charted, projected, remapped and even found to be incompatible with cartographic or topological tropologies, it has nevertheless remained on the margins of literary history and theory. Certainly, technological and global preoccupations figure prominently in

fiction from William Gibson to Margaret Atwood, or from Douglas Coupland to Don DeLillo. Implicitly reversing the connection to the earth that Heidegger associates with Van Gogh's *A Pair of Shoes*,<sup>33</sup> Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex* finds attachment ungrounded by brands that have surpassed territoriality:

You used to be able to tell a person's nationality by the face. Immigration ended that. Next you discerned nationality via the footwear. Globalization ended that. Those Finnish seal puppies, those German flounders – you don't see them much anymore. Only Nikes on Basque, on Dutch, on Siberian feet.<sup>34</sup>

In Jonathan Franzen's *Freedom*, the corrosion of social values is attributed to an intensified attachment to screens:

'This is what was keeping me awake at night', Walter said. 'This fragmentation. Because it's the same problem everywhere. It's like the internet or cable TV – there's never any center, there's no communal agreement, there's just a trillion little bits of distracting noise... All the real things, the authentic things, the honest things are dying off. Intellectually and culturally, we just bounce around like random billiard balls, reacting to the latest stimuli.'<sup>35</sup>

Despite this thematic prominence, Berthold Schoene finds it 'astonishing' that, in the wake of both the utopian cosmopolitanism of the early 1990s and the traumatic sense of global terror in the twenty-first century, 'British contemporary literary history should have remained largely untouched by these massive contextual upheavals, indicative of a major, quite literally epoch-making world-political mood swing'.<sup>36</sup> Largely untouched by British literary history, perhaps and maybe even by literary history more broadly. But not entirely so,<sup>37</sup> and especially not in terms of what is variously understood as hypertextual, new media, or electronic writing. Often regarded as the literary expression of the global age, this writing appears to escape the regional or local constraints that are imposed by the materiality of the printed book, to offer unrestricted opportunities for distribution, and to constitute an open textuality that is universally accessible by any reader with a networked device. What such a literature also promises, though, is a reinvention of the reader's citizenship and cultural location: no longer circumscribed by nation or ethnicity, communities of reading and interpretation now seem to be shaped by cultural codes that are formed around shared interests rather than physical

proximity. When treated as a democratizing force, hypertext is thus seen to activate readers who, navigating their own routes through texts and critical strategies, have become the authors of meaning.

A frontier-traversing and distributed medium that animates or actualizes the subject-as-agent, hypertext for Jay David Bolter is where programming and writing come together, providing 'a dynamic interconnection of a set of symbolic elements' which are 'not limited in size or location'.<sup>38</sup> This dislocated symbolic system is often associated with the emergence of a literary textuality that either forges new horizons (with electronic writing, Loss Pequeño Glazier writes, 'the making of poetry has established itself on a matrix of new shores'<sup>39</sup>) or is wholly detached from place and territory (the nomadic writing that mobilizes what Mark Amerika describes as a 'cyberpsychogeographical drift'<sup>40</sup>). For Jaishree Odin, however, hypertextual writing – and what she more broadly terms the 'Net aesthetic' – allows not the expression of newly attained global identities, but the articulation of postcolonial experiences: challenging notions of unity and linearity that have been central to a Eurocentric cultural imaginary, hypertext instead provides minority writers with an alternative cognitive and cultural map which allows space and identity to be conceived as multivalent and negotiable. 'The hypertextual and the postcolonial are ... part of the changing topology that maps the constantly shifting, interpenetrating and folding relations that bodies and texts experience in information culture', she writes, 'Both discourses are characterized by multivocality, multilinearity, open-endedness, active encounter and traversal'.<sup>41</sup> This openness or multilinearity should not, according to Odin, be understood as the expression of a displaced and dispersed diaspora, but instead provides 'multiple points of articulation'<sup>42</sup> from which specific forms of embodiment can be represented and reinvented.

Odin judiciously warns against allowing hypertext to disappear evanescently into a contourless datascape, since such a move would see the singularity of minority populations obscured by the world as an amorphous virtuality. But what this cautionary note further acknowledges, if implicitly, is that the global demands to be read according to a correspondingly nuanced attention both to the patterns of its hegemony and to the socio-cultural interruptions it effects. 'Globalization', Sneja Gunew writes, 'is often glibly invoked as a homogenizing force but, paradoxically, it yields useful meanings only when

analyzed within very specific locations'.<sup>43</sup> If this emphasis on the world as an always-situated entity disputes attempts to harness globalization to postcoloniality, then elsewhere a sense of the conjunctions and disjunctions that bind and separate these experiences is being finessed.<sup>44</sup> Suggesting a poetics that balances postcoloniality with globality, Emily Apter proposes that 'While there are obvious historical and pedagogical reasons for maintaining geopolitical relations between dominants and their former colonies, protectorates and their client states ... there are equally compelling arguments for abandoning postcolonial geography'; what comparative literary studies therefore needs, if it is to extend its restricted geopolitical frame, is a sense of 'linguistic contact zones all over the world'.<sup>45</sup> For Suman Gupta too, approaching globalization by way of existing approaches to writing and cultural location risks eliding the particular ways in which fictional texts engage thematically with global culture, but it also potentially neglects the global contexts and directions that have come to shape literary studies more broadly. It is necessary, Gupta writes, 'to take into account unexpected, or at least unfamiliar, directions that are opened up for literary studies in coming to grips with debates about globalization'.<sup>46</sup> Charting these emerging directions would provide a sense of how the political economy of literary textuality is changing access to, as well as the production, distribution, interpretation and ownership of, texts. And what attention to this economy reveals, Sarah Brouillette observes, is a simulacrous openness to national differences which legitimates hegemonic narratives of global diversity and universality: 'The more literature associated with specific national or ethnic identities enters the market, the more the market, despite increasing concentration and globalization, can make claims to inclusivity and universality that justify its particular form of dominance'.<sup>47</sup>

But, as McLuhan's reading of *King Lear* reveals, it is not just the recent reshaping of narratives around the idea of the global, and it is not just today's frontier-rupturing technologies that are resulting in a sense of how literary textuality responds to concepts and contexts of the global. Neal Stephenson's *Baroque Cycle* and David Mitchell's *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet*, for example, locate global exchanges and technologies – perhaps even a global informationalism – at the beginning of European expansionism, implicitly endorsing Immanuel Wallerstein's, as well as McLuhan's, uneasiness with the idea that planet-wide affiliation suddenly materialized in an age that is

uniquely informational. Tracing the beginnings of world culture not to the emergence of today's technologies, but to the ethic that accompanied early capitalism, Wallerstein writes that:

The world in which we are now living, the modern world-system, had its origins in the sixteenth century. This world system was then located in only a part of the globe, primarily in parts of Europe and the Americas. It expanded over time to cover the whole globe. It is and has always been a *world-economy*.<sup>48</sup>

This extended history of modernity's world economy sustains Jean Howard's treatment of England's international trade which, between 1550 and 1650, was establishing planetary networks and already becoming global. Alongside this expansion of trade there emerged technologies which facilitated both a traversal of the globe and a sense of connectedness between the world's populations, including 'advances in mapmaking; the development of maritime insurance to protect investors from losses at sea; the increasingly widespread use of bills of exchange and other financial instruments that made it unnecessary to transport large sums of money to distant markets; improved navigational instruments'.<sup>49</sup> And it is to the dramatic spaces of public theatre – to Jonson, Marlowe and Shakespeare – that a sense of this early movement into the world can be traced: the early modern stage 'was affected by international trade and in its turn created narratives that made change intelligible, if not always consistently'.<sup>50</sup>

Similarly questioning attempts to situate global movements and flows as symptoms of the contemporary, Kevin O'Rourke and Jeffrey Williamson claim that 'The similarities between the globalizing world economy after World War II and before World War I are far more striking than the differences'.<sup>51</sup> Reading Kipling and Conan Doyle, Elleke Boehmer finds such similarities manifest in the communication grids that established transnational networks and facilitated nationalist solidarity among colonized populations at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries:

The world of British Empire one hundred years ago, too, was wired as never before — at that time by telegraph cables, and, more metaphorically, by railway networks and steamship travel. Moreover, British and colonial subjects at the time imagined themselves in this way, as interconnected, cross-cabled, while many of their activities and aspirations were informed by the existence of