Global Narratives: Globalisation and Literary Studies

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One of post-colonialism's enduring projects has been the attempt to describe or understand the discursive component of Empire. Founding texts such as Edward Said's *Orientalism,* argued that a complementary and necessary culture of imperialism existed alongside the economic and political structures of colonisation.[1] The claim of such work was that this culture discursively produced ideas about difference that justified the European subjugation of other races and made possible the political expansion of the European states. The attempts to extend this analysis to describe a current culture of globalisation have been limited and in some ways unsuccessful. Without repudiating the methods of post-colonialism, it is necessary to recognise that changes to the structures of international relations have seen an attendant shift in the accompanying patterns of discourse. While, undoubtedly, many of the discourses that animated colonisation remain in place, the disavowal of a continuity between globalisation and earlier imperialist or colonising phases of modernity is one of globalisation's characteristic movements. It is, therefore, insufficient to simply identify the persistence of imperialist discourses, 'without significant challenge',[2] in ways that are insensitive to new cultural formulations brought about by structural changes in international relations.

Just as importantly, literary theory has lacked models for analysing the cultural content of globalisation because the dominance of social-science or media-studies analyses has led to a concentration on globalisation's cultural structures. Typically, in one of the most influential recent accounts of the 'cultural dimensions' of globalisation, Arjun Appadurai addresses culture as an adjectival phenomenon rather than nominal artefact; preferring to talk of the cultural as 'those differences that either express, or set the groundwork for, the mobilization of group identities' rather than culture as 'substance'.[3] This tendency is evident in many of the

attempts to develop an effective literary theory of globalisation, which frequently identify globalisation in the structures of circulation and commodification of post-colonial texts. In acknowledging the degree to which texts are always and only read within the context of certain structures of distribution, such work has been important for demonstrating how a post-colonial analysis can be expanded to describe globalisation's containment of difference within international structures of exchange. Nevertheless, just as post-colonialism has been able to elaborate its general analysis of culture by indicating characteristic narratives or tropes within individual textual examples, it should still be possible to identify globalisation with a thematic content that is observable at the textual level within these wider structures of distribution.

The concern of this essay is to elaborate a prefatory account of how globalisation can be understood as a textual characteristic. While mindful of Susie O'Brien and Imre Szeman's caution against searching for 'a literature of globalization', I draw short of their conclusion that 'all literature is a literature of globalization.'[4] The point is not to demonstrate that certain types of texts 'explicitly thematize the processes of globalization'; the point is to demonstrate how these processes are thematised and what this indicates about the ways that globalisation has restructured the concept of internationalism, with particular reference to the notion of difference. These questions are central to social scientists' accounts of globalisation, which, despite substantial disagreement, usually identify globalisation as a process by which the salience of the nation state has gradually given way to international structural formations. Globalisation is often associated with the declining monopoly of the state, which is seen as under threat from the legislative influence of international governmental and quasi-governmental organisations (such as the United Nations, the European Union or the World Trade Organisation) and from increasingly transnational corporations, which have encroached on the public sector.[5] In economic terms globalisation is represented as 'a process of emergence of global product markets and global organisation of production'.[6] This takes the form of free trade areas, reducing the regulatory role of the state over economic activity; the increased mobility of capital, with corporations able to easily relocate production to more favourable locations; an increased migration for certain key workers, but also an increased economic inequality at a regional level, which forms a

powerful inducement for migration more generally; and a homogenisation both of commodities and of the models for transaction between the corporation and the consumer.[7] A commonly related feature of globalisation is the increase in electronic mediation (involving high levels of vertical and horizontal integration), which is seen as leading to patterns of cultural consumption that cannot be mapped onto the political geographies of traditional state formations. Furthermore, because of the ease with which electronic media can be transported across national boundaries, the ability of the state to regulate their content is significantly reduced. These processes of political, economic, social and media convergence combine to paint a picture of a world in which traditional political structures are in decline, where the private sector has an increasingly influential role and where social, economic and hence cultural practice is increasingly homogenised.[8]

The question for literary studies is how these political, economic and social descriptions of globalisation are made relevant for an analysis of textual material. Most of the attempts to address this question have tended to treat texts as objects of globalisation (as commodities capable of being circulated in global markets or as the shibboleths of geographically dispersed group identities) rather than as narratives capable of signifying globalisation in ways that can make it meaningful. For example, Graham Huggan largely interprets globalisation in relation to the systems of production and distribution of cultural difference within global economic systems. Where he is concerned with texts it is principally with their capacity to become commodified markers of difference in evaluative systems that are driven by institutions within European and North American metropolitan centres.[9] Similarly, although Appadurai identifies Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* as emblematic of the 'mass-mediated sodalities' that he takes to characterise globalised modernity, he is principally concerned with the social role that this text is asked to play rather than with the narrative of globalisation that it contains.[10]

In seeking to describe globalisation's cultural content, the most common model that literary critics have chosen to identify has been the duplication of their own discipline across national boundaries through the internationalisation of English literatures and literary criticism, as a universalising discourse. Simon Gikandi, for example, has pointed to 'the privileging of literary texts – [and] the disciplines that teach them – as the exemplars of globalization'.[11] This involves

both the identification of works such as Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as 'world texts' and tracing the 'cultural turn in global studies' to F. R. Leavis's association of 'the study of English literature with a particular set of institutions and practices, such as the university and culture, which became, paradoxically, influential in the postcolonial world because of their ability to invoke the national and the universal (or global) in the same discourse'.[12] Paul Jay has advanced a similar, if separate, argument by suggesting that we are witnessing a 'postnational' phase of English literature as a series of 'cosmopolitan' and 'diasporic' writers enter into its field of study.[13] It should be noted, however, that Jay's sense that English literature developed 'along the lines of a political map' is somewhat misleading.[14] While 'American literature' usually refers to the literature of the United States, rather than of the Americas in general, the ability of 'English literature' to stand for literature in English as well as literature by the English has meant that it never wholly corresponded to the sort of national literature that Jay suggests. Indeed, it was this very ambivalence that allowed it to develop into the international method that both Jay and Gikandi identify. Furthermore, there is a question about the degree to which post-colonialism has been used to insulate 'English literature' from these post-nationalist forces. Where post-colonialism functions as an adjective applicable to certain types of texts rather than certain types of reading strategies, the term effectively clusters African, Asian and Caribbean writers together in order to leave the 'English' writer pristinely unaffected by global developments in English-language writing. Yet these objections only illustrate the relationships between the idea of a national literature and globalisation, in so far as it is emblematic of what Appadurai has called '*production fetishism*', where the 'locality … becomes a fetish that disguises the globally dispersed forces that actually drive the production process'.[15] If Appadurai imagines production fetishism as an ideology accompanying economic production (and, for that matter, as something new), the idea of a national tradition intrinsically asserts the belief that literary influence can be mapped onto the political geographies of nationality in ways that are paradigmatic of its discursive effect.

Although Gikandi's essay is organised around two important ways of understanding globalisation – as 'celebration' and as 'crisis' – that could potentially serve as the organising poles for the narratives of

global discourse, both his and Jay's essays concentrate on the degree to which 'English literature' functions as a structure of textual analysis that bears the marks of globalisation.[16] Accordingly, their concern is primarily at the level of structures and institutions of culture rather than with the individual text. Indeed, in so far as they emphasise international convergence these descriptions form a natural corollary to social science accounts of globalisation in ways that lead them to serve as an instance of a global discourse. What these essays most obviously share with other, more general, accounts of globalisation is a desire to name certain processes or tendencies as global. Arguably, this desire enacts globalisation by corresponding to Roland Robertson's definition of globalisation as the '*structure* of any viable discourse about the shape and "meaning" of the world as a whole'.[17] Robertson defines globalisation in these general terms because he is concerned less with the specific conditions that globalisation comprises than with 'a particular series of developments concerning *the concrete structuration of the world as a whole*'.[18] This interest in the way that worldliness is realised through the processes of organisation, and in particular 'the production and reproduction of "the world" as the most salient plausibility structure of our time', offers a definition of globalisation that seems open to an exploration of its discursive figuration. For literary studies, Robertson's model suggests that the criticism of globalisation should seek to explain how particular narratives of convergence gesture towards ideas of global salience or worldliness in general. Centrally, this will concern the way in which new forms of universalism are articulated through references to disinterested or unmediated flows of economic, political or social activity.

In suggesting that globalisation can be defined as the discourses of convergence within contemporary organisational structures, the intent is not to draw the radically post-structuralist conclusion that globalisation constitutes solely a change in discourse unaccompanied by substantive changes in the way that economies, political organisations and communications operate. However, these structural developments do not in themselves constitute globalisation, if only because of the high degrees of continuity with earlier forms of structural organisation. Globalisation must be properly understood as a change in the manner in which these processes are narrated or explained, so as to suggest a growing interconnectedness but also a diminishing variance of experience at the global level. To talk of the convergence of international financial markets as globalisation is to suggest an ethically utilitarian

phenomenon where the distribution of capital across the globe is increasingly equal. Accordingly, advocates of globalisation frequently point to unfettered capitalism as a kind of redemptive system which, despite being plagued with manifest inequalities, will ultimately prove able to equitably distribute resources within and between nations. While this version of globalisation is strongly resisted by the anti-globalisation movements, they too tend to imagine alternative models of globalism that are founded on concepts of global equity.[19] In this context, globalisation needs to be understood as the meta-structure for explaining such economic developments rather than any actual convergence which may arise from them. While critics such as Huggan, Gikandi and Jay have sought to identify the influence of this meta-structure governing the distribution, criticism and reception of textual material, it should still be possible to locate its manifestation within specific texts as they express the idea of internationalism.

The idea of globalisation as predominantly a narrative structure modifies, if only slightly, Appadurai's claim that globalisation's combination of migration and mass-mediation creates post-national imagined communities that operate beyond the limits of the state. Although he recognises the discursive or imaginative element of globalisation, this is, for him, the product of 'global cultural flows' or *'scapes'*, which allow subjects to inhabit *'imagined worlds'* that compete with the official 'imagined communities' of the nation.[20] Appadurai characterises globalisation as a phenomenon brought about by dispersed subjects consuming the same cultural products in the context of the knowledge that subjects in other locations are doing the same. This corresponds to his adjectival view of culture, because it this knowledge of simultaneity that helps to produce particular types of (global) group identities.[21] Where I distinguish myself from Appadurai is in the degree of emphasis I place upon the act of narration. Just as Anderson sees national coherence being reinforced by 'the newspaper reader, observing exact replicas of his own paper being consumed by his ... neighbours',[22] Appadurai implies that globalisation is constituted by the position of the individual consumer as an inhabitant of certain global flows. By contrast, I am suggesting that globalisation is principally the representation of consumption and production as activities that take place within a global system irrespective of how they are actually organised. The type of shared consumption that Appadurai describes need not take place, so long as the experience of consumption can be represented as global.

This may be a fine distinction and to illustrate its significance it is necessary to give some examples of how such narratives of globalisation might operate. However, before doing so, it seems necessary to distinguish this view of globalisation from the concept of the post-modern, particularly Frederic Jameson's version of post-modernism as the 'cultural logic of late capitalism'. It may be that the relative absence of globalisation as a literary classification can be explained by the widespread adoption of post-modernism as an aesthetic category in literary studies and, in Jameson's version, the post-modern closely resembles social-science classifications of globalisation.[23] Although he does not employ the term globalisation, Jameson's description of 'aesthetic innovation and experimentation' as 'the superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination' and of the growing influence of 'multinational business' implies a correspondence between post-modernism and globalisation.[24] If we substitute the word globalisation for post-modernism, Jameson's influential contribution could stand as a general theory of globalisation's discursive content, characterised by the pervasive use of pastiche, a fetishised relation to the real, a resistance to hermeneutics and the diminished potential for affect. However, while there is much in Jameson's account of post-modernism that is useful for thinking about the sort of cultural products that globalisation might produce, there does seem value in distinguishing between globalisation specifically and post-modernism in general. In particular, taking a lead from post-colonialism, a focus on globalisation serves to emphasise the types of transcultural exchanges that are implied or occluded within the concept of a global culture or cultural milieu. Indeed, globalisation's emphasis upon globality and the universalist or humanist implications that arise from this term should be distinguished from a post-modernism that is often seen as comprising a radical disruption of such concepts. In so far as 'postmodernists insist [that] we cannot aspire to any unified representation of the world', globalisation's production of worldliness might be seen as antithetical to post-modernism so defined.[25] Such a distinction emphasises the degree to which globalisation needs to be understood as a mode of narrating certain economic or political transformations rather than being seen, as Jameson's work perhaps implies, as the reflective expression of certain forms of economic and political convergence.

Narrating Globalisation: Some Examples

The remainder of this essay will consider the way that globalisation is narrated by three different texts.[26] The three chosen narratives constitute globalisation in quite different ways, and the manner in which these texts engage with the idea of globalisation is shaped, to a large extent, by their genre and by the situatedness of their authors in different relations to international structures of power. Furthermore, only one of these narratives explicitly addresses globalisation, so that reading them as global narratives requires a particular critical mode of address. It would be quite possible to read these texts in different ways and the texts considered here are open to being read in more conventionally post-colonial terms. As I demonstrate below, a criticism of globalisation is a criticism that seeks to identify how texts narrate the concepts of worldliness, convergence and universalism within the frame of a supposedly intensified internationalism.

The first example I want to examine is an official narrative of globalisation articulated in a recent essay by Tony Blair, the UK Prime Minister, written in the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York. Characteristically, Blair represents globalisation as an irresistible process but one that can be beneficially shaped or reformed along liberal lines. As Blair puts it: 'The issue is not how to stop globalisation. That is in any case futile: as the Chinese proverb has it, "no hand can block out the sun." The issue is rather how we use the power of community to bring the benefits of globalisation to all' (120–21). By likening globalisation to the sun's diurnal cycle Blair implicitly identifies it as an inevitable and natural process, which he explicitly asserts cannot be stopped. This comparison of globalisation with the sun removes it from the realm of governability, and suggests that it is a phenomenon lacking a centre, shining equally on 'every nation' (119). It also implies a connection between globalisation and enlightenment, drawing upon the associations of modernisation and development which so readily attach themselves to descriptions of globalisation.

Interestingly, these associations are rendered through Blair's uses of a 'Chinese proverb' which, in itself, adds nothing to his argument, functioning purely as a rhetorical flourish. However, symbolically, this proverb also enacts an instance of globalisation. By borrowing freely from another culture (albeit in a translated and deracinated form) Blair implies the availability of different local cultures for

serviceable use in a single global culture. Revealingly, for a theory of globalisation as narration, the portability of Chinese proverbial wisdom forms part of a justification of political and economic convergence: Blair's demonstration that culture is no longer contained within national boundaries is used to reinforce the futility of resisting other kinds of global flows. Blair's argument appears to figuratively erase difference by presenting otherness as part of a unifying globalism. This corresponds to his overarching narrative of globalisation which, although 'beyond our control' (124), must be managed (120) to deliver a sort of homogenisation as equality.

Nevertheless, the basic description of globalisation that Blair offers is profoundly ethnocentric and deeply culturally normative. He paints the dangers of globalisation as the instability of the non-Western world infecting Western democracies. Claiming that the attacks on the World Trade Center 'brought home the true meaning of globalisation', Blair argues that, 'In this globalised world, once chaos and strife have got a grip on a region or a country, trouble is soon exported. ... It was, after all, a dismal camp in the foothills of Afghanistan that gave birth to the murderous assault on the sparkling heart of New York's financial centre' (119). Among the horrors of globalisation, then, is the idea that, despite manifest inequalities in development, underdeveloped regions appear capable of influencing developed ones. Blair's solution to such problems, couched in distinctly liberal terms, is to make 'dismal' regions like Afghanistan as similar to 'the sparkling heart of New York' as is possible. Such 'globalisation', he claims, need not trample 'on local sensibilities' because it represents 'the values of liberty, the rule of law, human rights and a pluralist society [that] are universal and worthy of respect in every culture'. However, in order to 'make the whole world more stable', these supposedly universal values need to be 'spread' through increased trade flows, facilitated by the WTO (122), and greater involvement for the private sector in managing public finances (121).

The view of globalisation that Blair presents marks the subtle shift from imperialist to global ideas of international culture. Blair disrupts traditional divisions between the centre and the periphery by suggesting that globalisation has rendered the centre international: globalisation is a process that affects 'every nation' and that can only be managed by international quasi-governmental organisations and by increasingly transnational private capital. Furthermore, while imperialist doctrines equated economic development with

civilisation, these two were not commensurate: in Marxist terms, civilisation included superstructural elements, like Christianity or national languages, as well as structural components such as 'free' trade. In Blair's depiction of globalisation, development and civilisation are directly entwined. Local cultural difference is more tolerable because these local peculiarities are available for co-option by a unitary global culture and because these types of minor differences are secondary to a set of universal values that supposedly already exists in all cultures. Furthermore, the pre-eminence of these universal values over minor cultural differences is consolidated by development, making it appear disinterested in relation to culture in ways that imperialist notions of development were not.

It is necessary to be sensitive to the way that Blair's text is governed by its generic conventions; written in his capacity as the British Prime Minister, his essay seems to stand as a policy statement in the face of shifting priorities for international relations.[27] Nevertheless, Blair's conflation of development and civilisation into a single notion of globalisation may be a key aspect of globalisation as narrative. Significantly, the discursive implications of Blair's narration are made evident through a comparison with other attempts to narrate globality. As such, these comparisons illustrate the value of seeking to identify globalisation as a thematic concern of individual texts. One such comparison is with Nuruddin Farah's *Gifts,* which appears to reject Blair's contention that globalisation cannot be resisted. Indeed, Farah indicates a potential alternative and oppositional version of globality within the context of international agencies that readily equate civilisation and development.

For the most part, *Gifts* presents a strikingly mundane story revolving around the figure of Duniya and her family as she enters into a relationship with the widowed Bosaaso. Even the seemingly pivotal event of a foundling child, brought into Duniya's home by her daughter Nasiiba, proves to carry limited symbolic weight when the child's sudden death is passed over briefly and without fuss (125–32). Yet this apparent mundaneness is intersected by a narrative of international relations which suggests that an acute realisation of the limits to national sovereignty pervades everyday life. Globalisation, in the form of international aid, constitutes the metaphoric content of Farah's novel, both at the structural level, where personal and international relations are compared and contrasted, and in the imagery used by individual characters. For instance, Duniya uses the concept of African

dependency to reject Bosaaso's offer of lifts to and from work (20–21). Similarly Duniya's twins, Mataan and Nasiiba, openly discuss with Bosaaso the politics of giving through a comparison between homelessness in Mogadiscio and homelessness in New York, highlighted by a diplomatic incident between the U.S. and Poland (172–73). Furthermore, the novel is interspersed with information relating to Somalia's position in a global economy through extracts from newspapers relating to the politics of aid. These extracts often appear to have their own narrative, so that a report of 'over a dozen Third World countries' refusing 'dairy products from the European Community ... because they are suspected of being contaminated by ... Chernobyl' (21) is succeeded by a report of the EC using 'economic and political pressures' to impose 'its mighty will on the Ethiopian President' and oversee the distribution of aid in Ethiopia (144–45). However, they also possess a symbolic relation to the main narrative. The report of Africa's refusal of EC aid follows on immediately from Duniya's rejection of Bosaaso's giving. Similarly, the report of Ethiopia's compliance comes after a dinner date between Duniya and Bosaaso, where their conversation touches on female dependency and male proprietary attitudes towards women (143). The newspaper report that follows this episode can, therefore, be regarded as providing a potential commentary on Duniya and Bosaaso's interpersonal relations.

These news stories find an interesting counterpart in the novel's use of Arab folk-tales that offer a similar commentary on gifting (70–71, 113) and, as a whole, it can be seen as an exploration of the rights and responsibility of giving and receiving as a general practice. However, the use of the news media works to undermine the distinction between the national and the international by suggesting a profound correspondence between actions in the local and the global sphere. *Gifts* depicts a community in which the minutiae of the everyday are shot through with a persistent realisation of the limits and curtailments to national sovereignty in a global context. The novel's characters appear to be exemplary of Appadurai's concept of globalisation, situated within global scapes that allow them to incorporate the patterns of international relations into the structures of their everyday lives. Significantly, through the discussion of gifts as reciprocal objects that can be accepted or refused as well as offered, the novel manages to identify globalisation as a process in which non-elite nations remain agents. If the African nations are seen to capitulate before Western 'pressures' in the newspaper narratives, the corresponding relationship

between Duniya and Bosaaso ends, if ambivalently, in a mutually desired 'marriage' that Duniya can choose to receive. Farah's novel then challenges the idea of globalisation as simple convergence by identifying an open contest between conflicting interests as the circumstances governing international contact. Such a narrative may still constitute a liberal interpretation of globalisation – seeing it as a form of social contest much like the classic liberal interpretation of the public sphere and representative government. Liberal nationalism still appears to be the implied alternative to globalisation. However, unlike Blair's vision, Farah rejects the inevitability of hegemonic globalisation, reading globalisation instead as a negotiated point of entry into the international sphere that is plagued by a seemingly familiar politics of power.

The final text that I wish to consider is J. M. Coetzee's *Youth,* which, of all the texts examined here, is the one that addresses globalisation most obliquely. Nevertheless, when read as a narrative of globalisation, the novel appears to merge cultural and economic models of internationalism into a unified process of commodification in ways that resemble the equivalence between development and civilisation in Blair's official globalisation. The novel's narrative, of an expatriate South African attempting to realise his youthful sexual and artistic fantasies in London, seems to evoke familiar post-colonial narratives of migrancy, cultural dependency and 'writing back'. Throughout the novel the protagonist, John, maintains a contrast between a culturally inferior South Africa and a civilised Europe. For instance, he regards London as one of 'two, perhaps three places in the world where life can be lived at its fullest intensity' (41) and, even though this illusion of English cultural supremacy is routinely punctured by England's hostility to 'the life of the mind' (49), he continues to believe that South Africa is culturally retarded. When his inadequacies as a poet lead him to write prose, he is disquieted by his decision to set his short story in South Africa, believing that this makes it 'minor' and seeing 'no point in trying to publish' a story that 'the English will not understand' (62). The use of an Eliotic or Leavisite critical vocabulary gestures constantly towards a universalism that rejects Joyce for his provincial attachment to Ireland (67) and prizes poetry because of its dislocation: its 'action can take place anywhere and nowhere' (62–63).

Throughout the novel, his belief in cultural universalism is satirised, perhaps most notably when, during a period of

unemployment, he realises his ideal of artistic sensitivity dozing on Hampstead Heath:

> he folds his jacket into a pillow, stretches out on the greensward, and sinks into a sleep or half-sleep in which consciousness does not vanish but continues to hover. ... The faraway cries of children, the birdsong, the whirr of insects gather force and come together in a paean of joy. His heart swells. *At last!* he thinks. At last it has come, the moment of ecstatic unity with the All! Fearful that the moment will slip away, he tries to put a halt to the clatter of thought, tries simply to be a conduit for the great universal force that has no name.
>
> It lasts no more than seconds in clock time, this signal event. But when he gets up and dusts off his jacket, he is refreshed, renewed. He journeyed to the great dark city to be tested and transformed, and here, on this patch of green under the mild spring sun, word of his progress has, surprisingly, come. (117)

The bathetic quality of his experience is highlighted by Coetzee's use of the pathetic fallacy and John's desire to take this seemingly insignificant event as proof 'that he belongs on this earth': and, despite his epiphany, John continues to be unable to write. Consequently, through a combination of the political restrictions upon foreign nationals and economic necessity, he is forced back to work in a business environment. Significantly, while *Youth*'s narrative content largely comprises John's speculations about art, the necessity of work is a major structuring force behind the events of the novel. Arguably, the account of the business world shifts the novel's register from a post-colonial mode to a global one.

Notably, in line with many accounts of globalisation, the world of commerce appears to be one that is expanding to occupy spheres normally associated with art or with public culture. For example, although the government determines legislation on immigration, it is private companies, in the form of John's employers, that certify his entitlement to reside (80, 140). Moreover, the idealised internationalism of the artistic world – characterised by its cosmopolitan resistance to nationality – seems more easily realised by a commercial preference for skills over nationality: for instance, it is through work that he makes a friendship with the Indian programmer, Ganapathy, who shares his silent solidarity with the Vietcong (152–53). Both his employers seek to emphasise their significance beyond any national borders. International Business Machines is associated unequivocally with a post-national globalisation when

John claims that 'IBM is not Britain', and situates it in some ultra-modern business space which exists adjacent to the nation even while it resides within it (110). The British computer firm that he goes on to work for styles itself 'International Computers' even as it frames its aspirations in terms of a national industry (142–43). Similarly, for both companies, John is drawn into Cold War politics through the military applications of his work. On both occasions he is acutely conscious of the wider ramifications of his contribution, seeing himself as having 'furthered British plans to bomb Moscow' (83) and 'lent himself to evil' in a 'quarrel between Britain and America on one hand and Russia on the other' (164). Perhaps most tellingly, when he begins to work for IBM he imagines their corporate philosophy, identified through the ubiquitous logo 'THINK', as offering the possibility of pure intellectualism that he has consistently associated with art.

> What is special about IBM, he is given to understand, is that it is unrelentingly committed to thinking. It is up to employees to think at all times, and thus to live up to the ideal of IBM's founder Thomas J. Watson. ... At its headquarters in White Plains, New York, IBM has laboratories in which more cutting-edge research in computer science is performed than in all the universities of the world together. Scientists in White Plains are paid better than university professors, and provided with everything they can conceivably need. All they are required to do in return is think. (46–47)

As an image of globalisation, the depiction of a private corporation funding pure intellectual activity is a striking one, especially as it is framed around a contrast with universities as the representatives of obsolete public institutions. While this ideal of corporate innovation is itself satirised – such as when John eventually leaves IBM because they cannot fulfil his social as well as his economic needs (108) – this satire takes place against the apparent failure or inadequacy of traditional forms of culture. So the alternative to IBM's corporate intellectualism is John fighting to stay awake against the tedium of Ford Madox Ford's fictitious novel *Mr Humpty Dumpty* (56). Notably, John's belief in South African cultural inferiority extends to the business world, leading him to state that 'there are no computers' in South Africa (145). Like his view of South African art, its lack of computers is directly linked to South Africa's racial politics and, in ways reminiscent of Blair's essay, this perhaps suggests development as the cure for these politics.

If both the artistic and business models of international or global culture are parodied in the novel, they are treated more sympathetically at the moments where they converge. For instance, late in the novel John uses International Computers' Atlas machine to randomly select words from Pablo Neruda's *The Heights of Macchu Picchu* and strings 'together pseudo-poems made up of phrases generated by [the] machine'. Although these 'Neruda poems' are treated ambivalently in the text, with John unclear about the fairness of composing poems by this method, they are published in a Cape Town magazine, affording him some local notoriety for the only time in the novel (161). Perhaps more tellingly, the world of international art-house cinema comes to form a more satisfying union between industry and art by commodifying otherness in a way that allows John to appropriate difference. Using cinema as 'his refuge from IBM', John's 'eyes are opened to films from all over the world' (48). As a form of 'mediascape', the transportability and translatability of films provide John with an international art that is more cosmopolitan than his Eurocentric conception of literature.[28] Ironically, this art form relies upon similar business processes to those of IBM but these are occluded through the emphasis on the cultural object instead of profit (possibly recalling IBM's emphasis on pure thought). Tellingly, it is through the international distribution of local culture in the form of a commodity that John seems able to fully satisfy his cultural desires.

While watching Satyajit Ray's *Apu* trilogy, John is gripped by the musical soundtrack, identifying something there that he had not previously found in 'Western music': 'a joyous yielding of the reasoning comprehending mind to the dance of the fingers' (93). This picture of intellectual detachment anticipates his Hampstead epiphany later in the novel, and is perhaps reminiscent of earlier orientalist fantasies about the mystical East. Nevertheless, it is differentiated from these earlier models of cultural othering, by the fact that John is able to reproduce the cultural effect while, at the same time, erasing cultural difference through a simple act of commercial acquisition. After seeing Ray's films, he searches London's record shops for Indian music:

> and in one of them finds an LP of a sitar player named Ustad Vilayat Khan.... He does not have a gramophone of his own, but he is able to listen to the first ten minutes in the shop. It is all there: the hovering exploration of tone-sequences, the quivering emotion, the ecstatic rushes. He cannot believe his good fortune. A new continent, and all for a mere nine shillings! (93–94)

Like John's attitudes towards other forms of art, his views here seem to border on parody. In particular, the claim that 'a new continent' can be bought 'for a mere nine shillings!' seems deeply ironic, and resonates with the rhetoric of both New World discovery narratives and nineteenth-century explorations of Africa. Furthermore, his assumptions about the continental scope of this music are rejected by the Indians that he meets in England, who have much more conventional notions of development, appearing dismissive of India's 'primitive' backwardness in contrast to Western modernity (94, 148–49). Nevertheless, the ability of the commodifying process to distil India into a single artefact performs a similar cultural turn to that which appears in Blair's essay by using cultural identification as a mask for economic integration. In this case the cultural artefact stands, contradictorily, as an instance of both commodity and production fetishism. In the sense that Marx understands social relations as only evident 'in the act of exchange', John's ability to realise Indianness through the acquisition of its commodified culture suggests the expanded sphere of social relations that globalisation entails.[29] However, to the degree that this transaction involves non-Indian processes of production and distribution – such as the London record shop, for example – its status as 'Indian' occludes the globalisation of production under a veneer of localism.

In terms of a prefatory method for analysing globalisation as a discursive entity, Coetzee's novel is a helpful example. His work is not a novel about globalisation as such, and its pervasive ambivalence prevents the narrative from completely endorsing or critiquing globalisation. Yet this ambivalence may be characteristic of globalisation in the ways that it narrates the relations between culture and locality, culture and economics, and international transculturation. This ambivalence seems particularly in evidence in the way that the commodification of culture reconstitutes the relation of art to locality. The status that is attributed to the LP of sitar music connects Coetzee's text to Gikandi and Jay's theories of literary globalisation, and to Appadurai's concept of imagined worlds. For Gikandi and Jay, globalisation challenges the association between literature and nationality that is fundamental to institutionalised literary study. While for much of *Youth* John wishes to see art as universal (global), the LP's representativeness – its metonymic relation to nationality – seems to reconstitute the connections between art and the nation that globalisation is assumed to upset. However, by

being transformed into a commodity, Indian art is able to simultaneously disrupt this nationalisation by gesturing towards an expanded set of social relations that are enabled by a global economy. If the sitar music can express 'a continent', John's ability to purchase it in London indicates an expanded, international, range of connections that unpick the correspondences between nation and culture. In other ways, John's pleasure in the LP represents the sort of globalisation that Appadurai finds in cultural consumption. John inhabits a global imagined sodality by believing that he shares the cultural experience of the Indian population. Yet, by expressing this idea through John and then gently parodying it, this incident appears to highlight the discursive character of globalisation, suggesting that it depends upon myths of origin and simultaneous consumption rather than upon empirical processes of convergence. In so far as Coetzee's novel begins to articulate a set of contradictory and complex cultural relations that depend upon a reconfigured notion of universalism purportedly brought about by an increased international convergence, this analysis may point the way towards further investigations of globalisation as the thematic content of literary texts.

Notes

1. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 1978).
2. Ibid., 301.
3. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Public Worlds (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 12–13.
4. Susie O'Brien and Imre Szeman, 'Introduction: The Globalization of Fiction/the Fiction of Globalization,' *South Atlantic Quarterly* 100.3 (2001): 610–11.
5. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson, 'Globalization and the Future of the Nation State,' *Economy and Society* 24.3 (1995), Masao Miyoshi, 'A Borderless World? From Colonialism to Transnationalism and the Decline of the Nation State,' *Critical Inquiry* 19 (1993), Saskia Sassen, *Losing Control?: Sovereignty in an Age of Globalization*, University Seminars/Leonard Hastings Schoff Memorial Lectures (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).
6. Jonathan Perraton, 'The Global Economy: Myths and Realities,' *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 25.5 (2001): 672.
7. Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson, *Globalization in Question: The International Economy and the Possibilities of Governance* (Cambridge: Polity, 1996), George Ritzer, *The Mcdonaldization of Society*, New Century ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA; London: Pine Forge, 2000).

8. The characterisation of culture as homogeneous is, of course, contested and someone like Appadurai points to the potential for heterogeneity within global systems that have detached culture from space.

9. Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London: Routledge, 2001), 140.

10. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 8–9.

11. Simon Gikandi, 'Globalization and the Claims of Postcoloniality,' *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 100.3 (2001): 632.

12. Ibid., 633, 650.

13. Paul Jay, 'Beyond Discipline? Globalization and the Future of English,' *PMLA* 116.1 (2001): 33.

14. Ibid., 32.

15. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 41–42.

16. Gikandi, 'Globalization', 629.

17. Roland Robertson, 'Mapping the Global Condition: Globalization as the Central Concept,' in *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, ed. Mike Featherstone, A Theory, Culture and Society Special Issue (London: Sage Publications, 1990), 17–18, my emphasis.

18. Ibid., 20.

19. The term 'anti-globalisation movements' needs to be treated cautiously: see George Monbiot, *The Age of Consent: A Manifesto for a New World Order* (London: Flamingo, 2003), 2.

20. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 31, 33.

21. The acknowledged model for this view is Bendedict Anderson's description of print capitalism, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nations*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 1991).

22. Ibid., 35–36.

23. Following Lawrence Grossberg, O'Brien and Szemen, 'Introduction', suggest that globalisation has come to replace the term post-modernity (605–6). However, for reasons that I elaborate here, it seems worth retaining an analytical distinction.

24. Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 5.

25. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 41, 47–48, 52.

26. Tony Blair, 'The Power of World Community,' in *Re-Ordering the World*, ed. Mark Leonard (London: The Foreign Policy Centre, 2002), Nuruddin Farah, *Gifts* (London: Serif, 1993), J. M. Coetzee, *Youth* (London: Vintage, 2002). Future references appear in the text.

27. His suggestions for reform of the UN Security Council (122) make the subsequent dispute over Iraq feel more premeditated than it has been popularly portrayed.

28. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 35.

29. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, ed. Frederick Engels, Vol. 1, 3 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1970), 73.