



The Long Space

Time has more than one writing system.

—Henri Lefebvre

In a poignant sequence in *Jalan Raya Pos (The Great Post Road, 1996)*, a documentary about Pramoedya Ananta Toer, the writer lights a *kretek* cigarette and takes out the trash.¹ It is refuse that contains sheets of manuscript, testimony to the scourge of writer's block. Pramoedya goes into his backyard and over to a pile of rubbish. He empties out the bin, then delicately arranges the papers before setting light to them. It is another day in the life of Indonesia's most celebrated writer, then under a form of urban arrest—a time and place seemingly outside the busy intensity of interpretation and yet a chronotope deeply inscribed in the contemporary world (of letters, of globalization, of intellectual engagement, of postcoloniality as an open parenthesis on decolonization). For what is this scene if not one that passes by while what has passed by has an obtuse purchase on the present, one that allows this tableau to drift while hermeneutics remains secure in its operative logic, concrete or abstract, anglophone or at least European, translating time into space when the former fosters someone else's agency? The author watches the manuscript burn in the knowledge that he too has been part of this delenda, but survived.

Such living on (*sur-vivre* in the Derridean sense) offers a vital polemic: it is a measure of persistence, determination, endurance, and the meaning of a specific time/space in transnational literature. It is out of place *and* time, perhaps, to invoke time as significant for postcolonial writing within globalization. Yet however we choose to ground transnational cultural relations, it remains the arena in which one hails writers,

including Pramoedya, within the reach of circulation on “this Earth of mankind” (or what Erich Auerbach once provocatively termed *irdischen Welt*).² Asserting that Pramoedya and three other writers—Wilson Harris, Nuruddin Farah, and Assia Djebar, the focus of this study—are largely out of step with a postmodern global episteme is not the point, for they are equally if not more discontinuous with each other, and deliberately so from my perspective. The persistence relates to an alternative understanding of narration, a logic of form not simply outside world literature, the world republic of letters, global comparatism, or normative transnationalism. If this argument partakes of a current time of crisis, it is through a crisis in time, material contradictions embedded in the unfinished business of ending empire. Writing takes time, but in transnational trilogies and tetralogies, duration in dynamic place is a crucial chronotope of decolonization, one that must claim time differently to narrate the fraught space between more obvious signposts like Bretton Woods and Bandung. Reading takes time too, and these extended narratives accentuate time’s purchase on their comprehension. All extended narrative does this, but the long space is bound to the concrete predicaments of postcolonial narration as transnational critique.

I locate the long space in the extended novel of postcoloniality beside itself. A relatively narrow approach—and one that often relies on theoretically inspired close reading—it will, however, substantiate some broad materialist claims. If they are not a horizon of the literary and the social, or culture and society, these claims yet form an *almacantar* by which their current constellation may be judged. The polemic is occasioned primarily by the event of reading inspiring fiction, but also by the manner in which they speak to several key issues of cultural debate: world literature and how it may be determined; the links and breaks between the terms postcolonialism, transnationalism, and globalism; the noncoincidence between literary institutions and the literary; the meaning of form for postcolonialism; the at-once vexed relationship of the novel to nation formation in postcolonial states; postcolonialism as other than the luxury of Western or Westernized cultural elites; critical transnationalism as an interruption of the logic of information retrieval in global circuits of knowledge and power; and the event of colonialism as not historically settled. This is not just a list but an itinerary, and one that cannot rest easy with the mantra that culture is the preeminent form of politics in our time and that

when we feel global we participate ineluctably in wresting freedom from the crushing realm of necessity. One cannot negotiate these challenges as if yet another Western critic, by checking off a list, is freed from the privileges of power that produce that subject position. The measure of the itinerary is the polemic it fosters that will deploy the long space as the organizing trope for disputation among them. Indeed, the complex register of the long space is the means to argue beyond the realm of propositional faith that Wilson Harris extravagantly terms “numinous inexactitudes.”³ I cannot leave the long space there, although Harris is most at home in shamanic indeterminacy.

Extended novels are coterminous with the history of the novel, and merely to note extension would require an analysis no less voluminous, a critique that would include the novelization of epic, the consonance of seriality with the commodification of the publishing industry, the related phenomenon of the emergence of the leisured reading class, and an irrepressible will to universalism requiring a dedication to expanded capacity in order to scale its desire. No formula can capture the difference of *Remembrance of Things Past*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Pallisers*, *Cities of Salt*, *USA*, *Journey to the West*, *Don Quixote*, *Clarissa*, and so on and so forth, although a few formulas, such as the one which says that narration might cheat the brutish brevity of being human, are as unsurprising as they are insufficient. That the philosophy of the novel so often suspends engagement with the extended narrative form acknowledges such pervasiveness only to underline that elemental persistence is as everyday as it is a bar on substantive theorization.

Because this argument is about a logic of form for which the long space is a shorthand, I wish the following to refract the nature of the extended transnational narration to be discussed later. Provisionally, I offer three propositions gathered by a fourth. These concern institution, world literature, nation, and chronotope. I will explain each one briefly in terms of the itinerary, then in more detail around the meaning of the long space for the project as a whole. While accepting Jameson’s admonition to always historicize, that historicity now must face the prospect—also marked by Jameson—of an end to temporality, one that would truncate the continuing work of decolonization.⁴ Fortunately, at the macropolitical level the supposed inevitabilities of globalization are being sharply rethought, and important questions are challenging the forms of socialization on offer in the neoliberal world beyond Cold War inertia. None of these oppositional

discourses carry guarantees or deadlines, and in that spirit the *long* in my title refers also to future persistence, a mode of engagement more extensive than the exigencies of the present and a level of commitment consonant with the task of facing the enduring facility for exploitation in global integration. The formation of form is that which is most protracted and conjures all kinds of mixed temporalities, aesthetic registers, sharp contradictions, and poignant revisions like this comment by Jameson: “the momentous event of decolonization . . . is a fundamental determinant of postmodernity.”⁵ To fathom the time of form I offer the following.

First, if we can accept Mikhail Bakhtin’s sense that chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied, is this specific to postcolonial writing and how?⁶ Chronotope is not any old coordinate of time and space but that figural semantic process allowing narration to proceed to form. In every space of postcoloniality, marked by nation or locale, movement or embeddedness, inscription or orality, culture refracts duration: not just that colonialism was endured, but that its figures of time did not absolutely displace or dismantle local forms of temporality. The transnational chronotope does not contend that time’s arrow, a dubious chronologism of “post” as “after” in postcolonialism, confirms the end of colonialism, but rather accentuates the distillation of specific coordinates in its moment (or a process of moments for which I use the term *eventness*).⁷ The transnational aspect is a level of interdependency, and indeed in correlating colonialism and postcolonialism the long space is interdependency as extension. Since there is little uniformity in colonialism or decolonization, one should mark this difference by writing chronotopes, a multiplicity more accurately reflecting the contrasts between say, the decolonizing expressions of Somalia and Guyana, Algeria and Indonesia, and indeed between writers and the nations by which they are “tagged” (Farah currently lives in South Africa, Harris in England, Djebbar in France and the United States; Pramoedya lived most of his life in Indonesia). Yet it is possible to acknowledge the uniqueness of event that specifies the break from colonial dominion in each instance, while positing a logic of chronotope for all. The weakness of Bakhtin’s formulation emerges from the tendency to read “knots” as content markers *sui generis* rather than as abstractions on the means of time/space at stake. The lure of content is unavoidable and I succumb to it without apology. The aim, however, is something more ambitious, which is to take chronotope as a

constitutive problem of transnational narration, a knot that is a key to the ways through which postcoloniality can be expressed. While the long space is not exactly a writing system of time in Lefebvre's sense, it nevertheless takes time seriously enough to elaborate its purchase on being in the world.⁸ One must be able to imagine history in order to change it.

Second, because this study draws on transnational literature from Guyana, Somalia, Indonesia, and Algeria, I am attempting to ask some questions of the resurgent category of "world literature." The paradigm of the long space indicates unfinished business in decolonization that constitutes a problem in resuscitating Goethe's original declaration to Eckermann in 1827: "National literature is no longer of importance, it is the time for world literature, and all must aid in bringing it about."⁹ What concept of time is at stake in world literature's effulgence and, indeed, what sense of "world" that accompanies it? Does not world literature return on the wings of globalization and is it freely interpreted at the very moment when temporality is drained from its inclusive magnanimity? "World" offers the imprimatur of transnationalism as that which is beyond nation and its suffocating prescriptions. It is the passport with copious stamps and extra pages; the ward of book covers with exotic names and palm fronds; the impress of a massive translation machine sufficient to convert there to here in hardback, paperback, or digital download; the substantive component that, once grasped, relieves one from the agony of parochial discernment. And, most important, the *world* in world literature is studiously neutral and requires no further qualification: it is the twenty-first-century ghost of nineteenth-century aestheticism that at once announces the best that has been thought and said. Indeed, for all the assumed neutrality, world literature has the drab hierarchization of petty-bourgeois desire. At the very least it allows one to consume postcolonialism without that nasty taste of social struggle in which a reader's own cosmopolitanism may be at stake. If all of Goethe's pronouncements were mysteriously lost, the term *world literature* would still have to be invented for it is dialectically bound to the inevitabilities of commodification in which all that is solid not only melts into air but is globally circulated.

Franco Moretti has rightly emphasized that "world literature is not an object, it's a *problem*" and one that he has approached, somewhat controversially, through world systems analysis, geometric design, and statistical chunking.¹⁰ He favors a notion of *long* as distance (as in distant

reading) rather than as duration, a novel solution to the forbidding difficulty, and quantity, of worlds of difference that tends to suspend the issue of strife in accumulation on a world scale for, well, accumulation on a world scale. This is a simplification of the nuance Moretti provides, although perhaps no more reductive than the tabulations of *Graphs, Maps, and Trees*. The long space is not just “a thorn in the side, a permanent intellectual challenge to national literatures” in the manner of Moretti’s world literature, but a specific world of time that does not exclude the strategic value of nation in global endeavors, negatively in nationalism’s role in territorial expansion and positively in national delinking from a world of imperial inclusivity.¹¹ World literature is set as a task not as a statistical formula, a thorn that is the oneiric function of the long space in a transnationalism otherwise eliding postcoloniality.

Our third keyword and corresponding thesis concerns *nation*. Nation seems like the anachronism of anachronisms: it parades its habitual out-of-timeness by raising flags in the face of transnationalism, regionalism, economic and political blocs, and continental integrity. But it does this in both senses of the phrase “raising flags”; it celebrates its longevity in the ritual of nationalistic display while also serving as a warning to all those who believe its fictive assemblage somehow negates the material substance of its collectivity. It is ironic that Renan’s 1882 lecture “What Is a Nation?” carries a pointed admonition on the necessity of forgetting to achieve national polity when this amnesia is artfully produced by postnational arguments.¹² Assia Djebar, while wary of any nation idea, particularly as it writes Algerian woman, uses anamnesis to rethink nation rather than fold it back into its prechoate possibility in colonialism.¹³ The ambivalence of nation trembles in postcolonial writing, a flag of eventness that must be studied for its unique process and not simply as the failed-state syndrome ideologically serving state dependency or neocolonialism. Rather than jettison the nation idea, it is more useful to consider its ideologies and strategic interests on a case-by-case basis, particularly when specific nation formations have clearly stood for liberation from colonial subjugation. The fictive corollary in Benedict Anderson’s “imagined community” thesis is not a measure of truth versus falsehood but imagination’s claims on collectivity, whose fungibility is understood from Anderson’s readings of Asian politics and literature, through the Philippines and José Rizal, and Indonesia and Pramoedya. In the conceptual oscillation between Anderson’s

insights on the nation/colonial nexus and the “spectral comparison,” a paradigm of transnationalism can be articulated, one whose coordinates trace nation narration as possibility in the trilogies and tetralogies I consider. Literary criticism’s major flaw in reading Anderson is to offer him as a literary critic and thereby freely indulge in constructing literary homologies from his grammar of nations. Anderson’s facility in languages certainly informs a literariness, but the criticism itself concerns nations and formations of state however deft his choice of literary examples. The result has been an aestheticizing of government structures and histories at some distance from the politics of reading Anderson employs. No doubt I am guilty of this “translation,” but on the whole my invocation of nation begins from its fully material manifestation in decolonization and its determinate facility for the long space. The long space says that nations need time (“generations” says Balibar), and even if the novel, or the seriality of novels, cannot tell time in quite the same way, extended postcolonial fiction comes closest to figuring the nation’s abstract expression: it is coextensive with nation ontology as an abstraction.¹⁴

Both world literature and nation are unthinkable outside a logic of institution, a complex matrix of legitimizing mechanisms—from governmental infrastructure, schools, media industries, or “departments” of various kinds, to ideological reflexes that bind worldviews from moment to moment in a manner just cohesive enough to appear a material second nature. David Damrosch signals this institutional aura in world literature by asking “Which literature, whose world?”—questions that consider his own positioning while opening the door to other relations of legitimation.¹⁵ Franco Moretti, however, understands that the febrile connections of institution and legitimation require a declarative reduction in scale that neatly specifies the force of his intervention: “the way we imagine comparative literature is a mirror of how we see the world.”¹⁶ It is an answer to Damrosch’s questions (even if, chronologically, the questions are an answer to Moretti), but let us think of it briefly as a statement on institution. It is true the way we imagine comparative literature is a mirror of how we see the world, but then how we imagine is a mirror of how we see the world and the reason for comparative literature’s necessity is at best qualified. Skepticism traverses the logic from historical contradiction, not opinion. The mirror of comparative literature has not been shattered by declaration but by the social and political upheavals of at least the last fifty

years. This is not to announce the eclipse of Comparative Literature (or English) departments but to note that interdependence on a world scale may require *imagining* that possibility. That which coordinates national literature in the imaginary schema of nation is not trumped by world literature; rather, this institutional logic produces world literature as its reflex. It follows that the extant conditions of institution as national legitimation are intrinsic to world literature, and should a world literature develop beyond that legitimizing matrix it will, perhaps, be called literature.

These theses or positions are not in parallel and are as oddly arranged as my literary examples. The galvanizing trope is the chronotope, for it accentuates the coordinates of space *and* time in the otherwise problematic constellation of the other three. Bakhtin only hints that the chronotope could do more work than its prominence in Goethe, Dostoevsky, or Rabelais, but it must do so here for at least two related reasons. First, it is a conduit between the sensuous particularity of the text and philosophical abstraction, a time for world in both cases that is not anathema to an understanding of institution, institutions of literature, and national institutions of literature. It facilitates a scale of comparative outsideness. One thread that connects the writers and the critical paradigm is, to borrow from Edward Said, a “precarious exilic realm,” a condition that does not entail actual exile to fathom its logic but a notion of outsideness, or exotopy, a sometimes literal but more insistently figural border sensibility.¹⁷ Said reads this as an intellectual vocation, a committed engagement in the public sphere; for me this signals a responsibility in scale. If the exilic and exotopic keep coming back in this text, it is to confirm that the intimacy of reading has an extimacy of effects beyond it.

Second, if I push chronotope to transnationalism it is to further discussion on time’s claim on that which is presented as its superadequation. The idea that nations require time must be supplemented since this can be deployed to blunt transnationalism’s history, one much longer than the term itself. I use postcolonialism within transnationalism to problematize this elision by introducing time/space coordinates into the latter’s otherwise slick immediacy. The effect is not just one of catechresis but of slowing down, of marking duration with duration, of saving time by using it. Chronotopic critique, however, is not a means to fight speed and space: its strategy is to insinuate time/space coordinates in transnationalism, the better to specify what is living and dead in their conjunction. In this man-

ner one can read, as Djébar puts it, “the cries of just one second stretched blue as far as the horizon.”¹⁸

We know that colonialism offered a world to be inscribed. Gayatri Spivak calls this process “worlding,” whereby Europe, for instance, projects an aura of blankness onto the world, specifically the Third or developing world, to produce a space for subsequent inscription.¹⁹ A complex process of presencing and othering is implied in worlding, and it did not expire with the declarations of independence often interpreted to herald postcoloniality. The problem requires first, a fairly precise elaboration of the concepts of space and time involved, and second, the ramifications of the introduction of literary form onto this terrain. The long space is an abstraction on how the literary concretizes the social as a counter to the historical inscription of the colonial and its attendant meanings. The production of space regulates a logic of state that deludes itself into believing it is the quintessence of development and the pinnacle of civilization. If space as a concept is contaminated by production as projection (the space of worlding), how can the long space resist the worlding of this episteme? The postcolonial writer must continually struggle to de-scribe space as the Other of colonialism. Consciously or not the space of postcolonial writing brings alternative histories to bear on the processes of anticolonial narration. The long in long space is the irruption of local history into the truncated temporalities of globalization and transnationalism in their hegemonic formations. Critiques of postcolonial literature as cultural transnationalism are not possible unless the local comes sharply into view—not simply as content, but as a structural articulation of cultural difference within the narrative. This does not provide a blueprint applicable to every element of postcolonial cultural expression. Yet how irruptions of the local are formulated must be registered within postcolonial criticism, especially to head off repositioning all postcolonial texts as native information.

The long space considers the production of narrative against the destructive effects of the colonial moment, but is not limited to that valence. Just as Fanon attacks Sartre’s preface to an anthology edited by Senghor (because Sartre enlists *négritude* for a class struggle defined by Western history), so the long space must problematize the notion that transnational cultural form is reactive to what the West has bequeathed.²⁰ What the novel, for instance, formalizes can be displaced by the space in which it is engaged. Writers who entertain this challenge may be heralded by

primarily Western cosmopolitan literati, yet a different field emerges if one begins with the form and content of the long space as agonistically dialogic. The long space stares Janus-faced into the detritus of colonial aesthetics while glaring wide-eyed at the paradoxes of the postcolonial. Cultural transnationalism does not exclude the contaminated conditions of my time/space, as if that does not contribute to the historical contradictions of cultural “exchange” at this juncture. If Arif Dirlik’s point that postcolonialism begins when diasporic “Third World” intellectuals make their way in the West contains a grain of truth, then this is no less true of Western “discoveries” of “Third World” fiction.²¹ Nevertheless, the aesthetic may still be used to investigate what remains unassimilable outside that devoutly wished embrace. And this is also why the challenges of the long space are not simply relevant to a distrusted colonial episteme.

Spatial concepts are common in contemporary cultural critique because the metaphors and materialities of space have become more creatively enmeshed. Space is often enjoined theoretically to do the work of time. The long space, however, invokes time as an aesthetic apparatus for the production of space. This can be elaborated in a number of ways. There are modes of postcolonial writing that challenge the dominance of abstract space over material space within discourses of modernity. It is the latter’s concept of the production of space that Lefebvre explicitly challenges in Hegel, enough to construe him dialectically. Interestingly, Lefebvre characterizes his own intervention as “the long history of space” and, while one must remain wary of the speculative and aesthetic reach of Lefebvre’s history, it provides a theoretical and political correlative in the current work.²² Indeed, the significance of transnational trilogies and tetralogies lies in their articulation of the conceived and lived spaces (the representation of space and spaces of representation) of postcoloniality, a critique prompted by Lefebvre’s transgression of conventional narratives of space. That *histoire longue* in French oscillates between history and story continues to provide its own provocation.

Another register for the long space as transnational chronotope derives from concepts of culture themselves. The *long* in long space also finds inspiration in Raymond Williams’s *The Long Revolution*.²³ This is not an unproblematic association, given the generally Anglocentric and organicist predilections ascribed to Williams’s work. Yet in the opening pages to *Orientalism*, Edward Said commends Williams (alongside Gramsci and

Foucault) for demonstrating a central approach in his own work: “We can better understand the persistence and the durability of saturating hegemonic systems like culture when we realize that their internal constraints upon writers and thinkers were productive, not unilaterally inhibiting.”²⁴ Said highlights Williams’s readings of nineteenth-century colonialists and imperialists, and he mentions *The Long Revolution* in this regard. Yet this same contrapuntal reading can now be applied to Williams himself.

The genesis for Williams’s concept of the long revolution lies in the conclusion to *Culture and Society*: “The forces which have changed and are still changing our world are indeed industry and democracy. Understanding this change, this long revolution, lies at a level of meaning which it is not easy to reach.”²⁵ Williams’s approach explores culture as a source of such understanding, as multiple expressions of “a whole way of life.” Culture is, paradoxically, profoundly ordinary in that its generality and fecundity dialectically inflect and affect the revolution in industry and democracy. This is one reason why Pramoedya’s daily routine should not pass by. Culture thus emerges as the third term in the idea of the long revolution:

Yet there remains a third revolution, perhaps the most difficult of all to interpret. We speak of a cultural revolution, and we must certainly see the aspiration to extend the active process of learning, with the skills of literacy and other advanced communication, to all people rather than to limited groups, as comparable in importance to the growth of democracy and the rise of scientific industry. . . . Of course, this revolution is at a very early stage. . . . This deeper cultural revolution is a large part of our most significant living experience, and is being interpreted and indeed fought out, in very complex ways, in the world of art and ideas. (*The Long Revolution*, 11–12)

These words were published in 1961 and, while we may quibble with how “advanced” is being imagined and how culture may advance, they still resonate today. The level of correspondence is less important than the mode of historicity and the interrelationship of economics, politics, and culture implied. What is long about the revolution is counterintuitive because its processes are drawn out and are difficult to assess. Wars of independence in colonial territories are experienced as an intense rupture with imperialist domain. Yet, whatever the violence and instability of those moments, it is striking that writers (“in the world of art and ideas”) have often taken a much more protracted imaginative engagement with

the culture and history at stake in such crises. Their structure of feeling, to borrow from Williams again, seeks to articulate not just the promise of the postcolony, but the long and complex sinews of industry, democracy, and culture in which it is precipitate. Although I am less sanguine than Williams that critics and criticism can enjoin this effort, writers are not outside the revolution Williams invokes and such a process, however we might rethink its terms, continues.

The *long* in Williams's *The Long Revolution* usefully posits a project rather than a historical description. Indeed, Williams's procedures require a nuanced imaginative and somatic grasp (a structure of *feeling*?) not always associated with history or sociology. Significantly, one understands what constitutes a methodology in Williams not just by reading the trilogy of works that established his reputation (*Culture and Society*, *The Long Revolution*, and *Communications*), but through his trilogy of novels: *Border Country*, *Second Generation*, and *The Fight for Manod*.²⁶ The abstraction of the "long revolution" is given aesthetic reach by Williams's deeply personal if emotionally edgy fictional exploration of the "knowable communities" and "complex seeing" of his creative fiction. Without laboring the point, the trilogy evolves through the chronotopes articulating a community in Williams's vision. It is long precisely because the nature of that deep structure requires it. The crux is whether the form betrays a level of unknowability in the communities portrayed. For his part, Williams believes that such knowledge depends on duration and the intensity of experience. In the third novel, Robert Lane asks Matthew Price (the central figure) whether his book took a long time to write. Price replies, "It took a long time because it had to be lived" (*Fight*, 38). In effect, the *long* in the long space considers duration and length in fiction by questioning whether the levels of mediation in experience are merely the substance of knowledge and windows on the real of community existence. The long works of fiction at issue are embroiled in similar yet specific historical conditions that do not lend themselves easily to the categories of experience Williams elucidates. I want to draw from the theoretical stimuli of his works without flattening out important changes on the aesthetic terrain. At the very least this means taking account of Gauri Viswanathan's point that even when Williams acknowledges a link between English social formations and matrices of imperialism, his narration of nation typically suppresses the conduit between national and imperial structures.²⁷ What is transnational

about postcolonial fiction often explores the tension in that relationship precisely to figure what is and is not possible under conditions of postcolonial nationhood. From this perspective, the long space interrogates the long revolution, particularly since the industrial, democratic, and cultural progress the latter describes have often proceeded through colonial subjection. That Said, a friend and admirer of Williams, would write *Culture and Imperialism* is a more obvious answer to the significant lacunae in Williams's culturalist mode.²⁸ Said examines how culture narrates the imperialist project. Said's basic premise, not unique but uniquely nuanced, is that the English novel of the nineteenth century (one of Williams's key interests) contributes to and solidifies continuity in the English imperialist project, at once confirming its reality while projecting a fantasy of its logical consistency in terms of culture and civilization. This "regulatory social presence" (*Culture and Imperialism*, 73) is not just a symptom of the novel's ideological work, but is a subtext of the entire narrative of progress redolent in Eurocentrism and Orientalism. Just as cartography maps out a space for the projection of Western meanings, so the novel can distill this territorial desire as a quintessence of aesthetic practice. Said's readings of the novel, particularly those of Kipling, Forster, and Conrad, foreground European dominion as appropriate to a cultural tradition that, because of the ideological trajectories of imperialist consciousness, still resounds today. Said is at his best in *Culture and Imperialism* when he unpacks the regulatory norms of empire in the great tradition of the English novel as institution. He is on less certain ground, however, when he tracks the ways in which decolonizing and postcolonial writers disturb, destabilize, and attempt to transform imperialist cultural discourses. Said's comments on Achebe and Ngũgĩ, for instance, are always insightful, but do not evince the level of engagement he has extended to Forster or Conrad. This is not to wish that Said had been more of a critic of postcolonial fiction—like Aijaz Ahmad in *In Theory* wanting Said to have been more of a Marxist—because this would miss the actual substance of his intellectual contribution.²⁹ Said's intervention provides a theoretical link between the massive rethinking of the tradition of the novel in the West and *what could be done* in the formal analysis of the novel of decolonization. Two strategies in particular recommend themselves.

First, Said accentuates the novel's participation in the aesthetic, ideological, and political struggles over space: "The appropriation of history,

the historicization of the past, the narrativization of society, all of which give the novel its force, include the differentiation of social space, space to be used for social purposes" (*Culture and Imperialism*, 78). In *The Long Space* specific trilogies and tetralogies deconstruct this space of appropriation. I argue that transnational culture entails a broader, egalitarian, and conflictual novelistic space of negotiation than the hegemonic "worlding" currently imagined. While transnational space can be discussed in a myriad of other cultural forms, the contestable terrain of the novel is particularly acute because of its role in the differentiation of social space to which Said alludes. A significant number of problems emerge from this emphasis, including: the role of the novel in bourgeois social relations, the function of the novel for cosmopolitanism and transnational commerce, and the extent to which what Bakhtin calls "the novelization of discourse" now exceeds the perquisites of what we identify as the novel itself. This is only to acknowledge that cultural comparatism is highly contestable in the social differentiation of space on a world scale. The long space reappropriates the imaginative terrain by literally lengthening the form, but it simultaneously questions the nature of transnational inclusivity by elaborating that cultures take time. Here again, Said provides a pertinent provocation through contrapuntal reading.

Briefly, this draws on Said's considerable acumen in comparatism in which he attempts "to think through and interpret together experiences that are discrepant, each with its particular agenda and pace of development, its own internal formations, its internal coherence and system of external relationships" (*Culture and Imperialism*, 32). The contrapuntal analysis reads the imperial archive against the grain by articulating its sharp disjunctions with and elisions of social space according to other discourses and by exploring how its legitimizing narratives, the novel included, problematize the identitarian modes of, for example, Englishness or Frenchness. Such "new knowledges" are vital and constitute a struggle over structures of feeling in comparative critique. Yet the real challenge for cultural transnationalism is contrapuntal *writing*—the ways in which the artist makes the form her own. The long space refers to a critical mode of engaging transnational fiction and the writing out of postcolonial difference. Contrapuntal writing can, then, be joined to other terms, "de-scribing empire," "un-thinking Eurocentrism," and "decolonizing the mind," to borrow from the titles of works in the field of postcolonial critique. It is a primary mode through

which the space of the transnational can be dialogized, rather than recolonized by avatars of West/Rest dichotomies.

Another opening onto persistence is a resolution on the daunting tasks of intellectual engagement hinted by “a precarious exilic realm.” Said, in his introduction to a new edition of Auerbach’s *Mimesis*, outlines this enduring heritage common among philologists. He suggests even Auerbach’s admittedly Eurocentric view emphasized “the possibility of understanding inimical and perhaps even hostile others despite the belligerence of modern cultures and nationalisms, and the optimism with which one could enter into the inner life of a distant author or historical epoch even with a healthy awareness of one’s limitations of perspective and insufficiency of knowledge.”³⁰ This was a comparatism hewed by Said himself “whose underlying and perhaps unrealizable rationale was this vast synthesis of the world’s literary production transcending borders and languages but not in any way effacing their individuality and historical concreteness.” The drawbacks of such comparatism, however, are legion not least because its tradition (like that of Williams) is so intimately entwined with the great age of European imperialism that shared its desire to transcend borders but tended to efface a good deal more in the process. Philologists were not the well-versed foot soldiers for European expansionism, despite pertinent evidence of collusion in the project. The problem was more infrastructural, in the way institutions of learning were conceived according to national and regional prerogatives, a manner that gave the rapacity of the West a logical consistency. In addition, the prodigious expertise required of philologists (consider, for instance, the range of reference in *Mimesis* and the languages invoked) seemed to exceed the capacity to teach it. As Said points out, Comparative Literature departments sought to develop such expertise but, with a few notable exceptions, the epistemological frisson primarily took place in academies and departments of a different order in France and Germany before the Second World War, for which Comparative Literature has been a vibrant specter. The lesson of persistence, then, with its coordinate in time, speaks to duration in a new temporality with decolonization as a conditional limit. That Said turns in this direction (particularly in *Culture and Imperialism*) deepens his prescience, and in time he may also be read not just as a philologist but as a transitional figure of cultural transnationalism, an interlocutor in a global dialogic more worthy of the term.