moral standards and metaphysical precepts—although the latter two scholars in particular also understand the novel as the purveyor of lower, contingent, “empirical truths.” These are such complex matters that Kliger might have been more precise in his use of the term “truth” in the close readings by which he refutes such assumptions.

That quibble notwithstanding, Kliger has written a sophisticated and inspired book. The readings of the novels are consistently compelling, and his constellation of concerns affords him local insights into the texts that are extremely valuable; his interpretation of the epigraph to *Anna Karenina*, for example, which emerges from his notion of the novel’s dual temporal framework, is one of the first that I have found truly satisfying. In general, his critical agnosticism, his claim to provide a “map of reading” (42) rather than any definitive answers, and his close attention to the subtleties of the texts pay homage to the notion that the best theory of the novel is novels themselves. The result is challenging, provocative, and exciting.

Emma Lieber
*Rutgers University*


This collection of essays reflects on the stakes of cultural criticism that apprehends a global perspective. The outgrowth of a conference organized to explore the consequences of “globalization” as the current dominant investigative paradigm in the humanities and humanistic social sciences, the volume explores what happens when scholars “[take] ‘the world’ … as a … unit of analysis.” Immanuel Wallerstein’s assertion of a world-system made up of interrelated core, peripheral, and semi-peripheral areas as the most relevant lens for social analysis offers a key organizing feature with which contributors to the book measure the kind of globality achieved by scholarly pursuits in humanistic disciplines. The work traces the benefits of this systemic focus in four parts that comprise investigations into the historical relationship of academic disciplines and the development of a capitalist world-system, as well as a series of case studies that examine the usefulness of Wallerstein’s conceptions of system for examining literature, history, law, and ethics on a global scale.
The “red thread” connecting the essays is the question of whether a Wallersteinian world-systems model or a humanistic focus on the contingent and “unsystematizable” offers the best mode for investigating global inequality. What several contributors propose—and Wallerstein concurs in a reflection titled “Thinking About the Humanities”—is that prioritizing historic and specific responses to global relationships risks reifying global asymmetries. According to Wallerstein, scholars are all, whether implicitly or explicitly, investigating the nature of the “capitalist world economy.” We would do well to reflect on the relationship of the contingent to the system, lest we end up celebrating the peripheral without making room to conceptualize the way out of the periphery.

Part 1, “System and Responsibility,” features essays by Richard E. Lee and Bruce Robbins that productively examine the interconnection of humanities—a particular way of knowing tied to specific methods—and world-system on a broad scale. In “The Modern World-System: Its Structures, Its Geoculture, Its Crisis and Transformation,” Lee charts the concomitant development of specific “knowledge structures” and “historical social systems” (27). Specifically, Lee traces how the creation of the “modern fact,” exemplified by a merchant’s balance sheet proving profit, not usury, relates to modern disciplinary formations dependent on “scientific” notions of objectivity and rationality separate from questions of value—a direction of inquiry relegated to the humanities. As the world economy runs out of peripheries that can be incorporated into a system of continued accumulation, Lee argues that we have also reached a transition point in terms of the knowledge structures constituted within world-capitalism that present us with a political choice, namely, whether to allow questions of value to inform new epistemologies. In his piece “Blaming the System,” Robbins challenges the humanities’ claim to a critical capacity that stems from its focus on the contingent, the nonsystemic phenomena that can signal agency and action against oppression. Without a recognition of the system from which it speaks, Robbins claims, the humanities run the risk of praising the evidence of inequality, even as its methods aim to critique it.

In part 2, “Literature: Restructured, Rehistoricized, Rescaled,” Franco Moretti and Nirvana Tanoukhi examine the scalar dimensions of global literary histories. In “World-Systems Analysis, Evolutionary Theory, Weltliteratur,” Moretti argues that both evolutionary biology and Wallerstein’s “world-systems” theory can help us properly historicize seemingly contradictory but “true” trajectories of literary progress: the development of distinct literary characteristics over time and the diffusion of similar literary modes across space. Evaluating world literature according to these models negates
the antagonism between old, “quality” texts and contemporary, “relevant” works in debates on canon formation, since old and new texts entered and circulated in the world in historically distinct ways. Like Moretti, Tanoukhi calls for the need to historicize scalar models used to “measure” boundary-crossing texts. In her essay “The Scale of World Literature,” Tanoukhi critiques the reified “literary landscapes” that fix the postcolonial novel as an example of “anxious compromise” between the “center’s” forms and peripheral content, and thus the object of a “not-quite modernity.” This kind of landscape derives from a cartography that “maps” a space outside the logic of global economies, but is ahistorical because it ignores how the map serves the social conditions of the literary historian.

Part 3, “Respatializing, Remapping, Recognizing,” reflects on methodologies best able to attend to the role of the state or region in analyses of global phenomena—a specification some find missing in Wallerstein. In “The Space of the World, Beyond State-Centrism?” Neil Brenner argues that researchers—including Wallerstein—who theorize changing “worldwide social space” in terms of “de-territorialization,” offer important ways to make sense of transnational connections. Understanding “territoriality” in terms of its diminution, however, results in the inability to analyze the continued, though shifting, function of the state in global relations. In “Cartographies of Conception: Ocean Maps as Metaphors for Inter-area History,” Kären Wigen argues that ocean-mapping practices offer a way to understand historical conceptualizations of the relationship between a “global commons” and a particular land mass. Wigen correlates ocean-mapping paradigms from the early modern to contemporary periods with various modes of conceptualizing inter-area history; for example, she notes similarities between the contemporary practice of mapping ocean basins and the historiography of crossroads and borderlands. Wigen emphasizes that various modes of understanding interconnected spaces are necessary, and need to inform professional historical training and pedagogical practice in the academy. Tani E. Barlow’s “What Is a Poem? The Event of Women and the Modern Girl as Problems in Global or World History” examines the deployment of modern girl images in early twentieth century Asian advertising to demonstrate the limitations of Wallerstein’s insistence on continua, as well as Asian historians’ critiques of Wallerstein’s peripheralization of Asia. Modern girl images represent a practice both contingent to regional commercial traditions and related to the modern category of “women”: they do not refer to an imported image, but neither are they readable as a regional phenomenon.

The volume’s final section, “Ethics, Otherness, System,” investigates the history and possibility of human interconnection in the context of global inequality. Helen Stacy deconstructs the commonsense understanding of
international law as a practice grounded in universal equality. In her essay “The Legal System of International Rights,” Stacy traces the way that international legal regimes, from the early modern period to the present human rights regime, actually reinforce conceptions of some groups’ superiority over others. David Palumbo-Liu explores Wallerstein’s take on Frantz Fanon’s critique of racist rationality to argue for the possibility of an ethical way of “knowing” about the other. In “Rationality and World-Systems Analysis: Fanon and the Impact of the Ethico-Historical,” Palumbo-Liu highlights the significance of Wallerstein’s reflections on the connection that Fanon drew between rationality and racism. As Palumbo-Liu points out, Wallerstein’s description of Fanon’s insistence on identifying the historical relations that undergird views of the rational caution against deployment of the rational in defense of abstract and unjust truths on a world scale.

This collection of essays on the ways of knowing about interconnection and inequality in modernity offers valuable insight to humanities scholars expected to undertake interdisciplinary work that incorporates a global perspective. The volume demonstrates critical perspectives on theorizing “the world,” but it also shows that ways of knowing that mark our scholarly identities are tied to patterns of accumulation and exploitation in global capitalism. In light of this focus, the lack of reflection on Gayatri Spivak’s work on knowledge production in the context of a global capitalist system is disappointing. Despite this absence, the volume succeeds at explaining why it is a propitious time to reflect on the future ways of knowing about inequality. As Gopal Balakrishnan postulates in the volume’s final essay, “The Twilight of Capital,” the current crisis of capital demonstrates the “[outer boundary]” of the contemporary world system that will usher in the end of the university, and the end of a particular way of knowing.

Marike Janzen

University of Kansas


If this study is to be noted and remembered, it will perhaps because of the constraints it places on commonplace references to Blanchot’s literary criticism. To write not on “X’s Literary Criticism” but on “X and Literary Criticism” is to suggest a distance, a relationship that must be decided on rather than assumed. Accordingly, here, Blanchot’s writing is considered in relation not only to literary criticism, but also to literary theory, philosophy, and the subtle differences between these and other modes of thought.