I. The Globalization of American Literary Studies and the Emergence of the Planetary Literary System

The field of American literary studies is undergoing a reconfiguration from a nationalist to a global analytic frame that has effected profound alterations in the concepts that the field depended upon, the institutional sites through which the field operated, the structures that guaranteed it, and the kinds of subjectivities that it required. American literary studies had formerly been organized around an agreed upon set of theoretical assumptions and methodological procedures that underpinned americanists production of literary knowledge. Scholarship in American literary studies was grounded in a limited number of objects that were produced at the intersection of periodizing and generic concepts. Americanist scholars rendered the field’s themes and values compatible with an ideological consensus about what rendered the United States exceptional. But the global movements of transnational capital and migratory labor responsible for the deterritorialization of nation-states have also disrupted the nationalist paradigm that interconnected American literary works, literary history, culture, and nation. The globalization of the literary realm has resulted in a shift in interpretive attention away from explanations of how literary works function in relation to national cultures and towards an examination of how postnational literatures participate in the formation of deterritorialized contexts. 1.

In reinstituting American literary studies outside a nationalist denominative, these processes of globalization have disconnected American literary history from its exceptionalist orientation. 2. In their abrogation of the
foundational statements correlating the scholarly prerogatives of American literature with the formative values of U.S. society, recent postnational iterations of the field of American literary studies have also delegitimated the consensual fictions that had previously organized the American literary studies community. In posing insuperable challenges to each of the constitutive elements—the literary object, historical periodization, generic classification, literary practitioners—that formerly stabilized the field, globalization has also communicated the crisis in the nation-state to americanists who required the mediation of US nationalism as the grounds for the coherence of their field identities.

The postnationalizing effects of globalization on the field of American literary studies has solicited intensely felt yet contradictory responses that have rendered the term “postnational” ideological in the Gramscian sense that it has become an essentially contested category. A growing number of americanist critics have taken up the term “postnational” as a banner under which to give expression to their allegiance to transnational formations—the Black Atlantic, transnational feminism, Aztlan, the Pacific Rim—that do not depend upon the territorial state as the most effective way to combat injustices in the global economy. But postnationalism has also fostered chauvinistic reactions from americanists who have invoked the term to describe the United States as the superstate empowered to inscribe the foundational terms in the U.S. political vocabulary—capitalism, free enterprise, freedoms of expression and access, competitive individualism—within the newly globalized economic order.

It is because it goes above the nation-state and goes below it at the same time that globalization has resulted in these contradictory manifestations of the postnational. When it is articulated to the conceptual needs of global relationships caused by shifts in the world economy, the term postnational describes the effect on the nation-state of the new global economic order which
no longer finds in it a vehicle appropriate for the accumulation of capital or the regulation of labor. But when it describes the translocal solidarities of Transnational Advocacy networks like Oxfam, or Amnesty International, or of the international projects of feminism, Act-Up, and the Green Party, that exist outside and work across territorial borders, the postnational signifies processes of resistance that keep globalization in check even as they simultaneously produce a very different sense of it. The one model demonstrates how a single planetary system tightens its grip on the most distant of global backwaters; the other model brings a more complex system into view that is at once decentered and interactive. The former depends on transnational capitalism and the global economy, the latter on peoplehood and imagined diasporic communities.

Insofar as they are informed by profoundly different political and theoretical commitments and levels of analysis, the processes supportive of globalization from above might seem utterly irreconcilable with the planetary movements that propagate the imperatives of globalization from below. But in a series of groundbreaking essays that she has recently published, Wai Chee Dimock has attempted to change the contours of the discussion concerning the relationship between these two forms of globalization as well as their significance for American literary studies. At the very moment in which the reorientation of the field of American literature produced changes that seemed outside literary scholars’ control, Dimock has proposed that literature itself should be construed as one of the chief agents of globalization responsible for this reconfiguration.

More specifically, Dimock has argued that the denationalization of the discipline of American literary studies should be understood as having been effected by literature’s power to violate the sovereignty of state territories and to cross the temporal barriers set up by periodizing accounts of literary history. Rather than complaining about American literature’s vulnerability to the forces
of globalization, Dimock has described the planetary literary system as the 
agecy responsible for having liberated American literature from its temporal 
and spatial constraints: “I propose a more extended duration for American 
literary studies. I call this deep time…For the force of historical depth is such as 
to suggest a world that predates the adjective American. If we go far enough 
back in time—and it is not very far—there is no such thing as the United States. 
This nation was not yet on the map, but the world was already fully in 
existence.” 6.

According to some accounts of world history, literature itself is a relatively 
recent addition to world history that emerged with the enlightenment as a way 
to produce public spheres that would represent the interests of a national 
citizenry. But according to Dimock, planetary literature functions as an agency 
within world historical processes that undermine nationalism from within. In 
Dimock’s account of its genealogy, American literature has not been disrupted 
by the recent acceleration of globalizing processes; American literature was, like 
all national literatures, the result of a mistaken categorization. It is because 
literature has always been global in its reach, as Dimock has explained her 
criterion for designating this mistake, that it is perforce irreducible to the 
provincializing homogeneities informing the study of national literature.

Unlike scholars who describe globalization as a profound rupture with 
modernity, Dimock has adopted a world systems approach that describes world 
literature as the agent of the very long historical process responsible for the 
production of literary modernity. Planetary literature does not work in 
conjunction with the historical progression of nation-states, its trans-territorial 
nature links it to the encompassing global processes—like Islam and the Roman 
and the Ottoman Empire—that were the primary agents responsible for the 
unfolding of world history. By thus aligning planetary literature with the 
historical processes that have effected the integration of the planet, Dimock has
reversed the received understanding concerning the relationship between globalization and literature. As a long-term participant in world history, literature requires globalization theory as a template that is better suited to explain its staying power than nationalist paradigms. Dimock employs this reversal to celebrate the sovereignty of planetary literature at the height of the threats globalization has been described as posing to national literatures.

Dimock’s planetary orientation to literary studies would appear to have enabled her to restructure the field’s crises and internal divisions into a formation that subsumes reactionary and radical postnationalist positions alike. It is because literature has always been a global formation, Dimock observes, that it is perforce irreducible to the provincializing assumptions informing the study of national literatures. As the composite effect of the acts of reading of global readerships, planetary literature brings into play disparate sets of temporal and spatial coordinates that exceed the finite scope of the nation. Rather than being territorially predicated and bounded by the geographical map, planetary literature holds out to its readers dimensions of space and time that are so dispersed that they can never be confined to that cartography. When resituated within Dimock’s deterritorialized planetary context, the contradictions between globalization from above and globalization from below would appear to merge into this syncretic formation that adapts national literatures to the otherwise disorganizing forces of the global economy. Upon redescribing American literature as one of tributaries of the planet’s literary system, Dimock recommends that literary scholars embrace rather than oppose the globalization of American literary studies.

Dimock has demonstrated how this planetary matrix would reshape our understanding of American literature in the essays “Deep Time and World History” 7. and “Non-Newtonian Time: Robert Lowell, Roman History, Vietnam War” 8. In each of these essays, Dimock described global literature as an
emancipatory force able to liberate American literature from the nationalistic proclivities of its practitioners. But Dimock might be described as having inaugurated American literary globalism in a truly path-breaking essay that she published in the PMLA in 2001 entitled “Literature for the Planet”. In this essay, Dimock supplied postnational American literary globalism with an origin narrative that connected the postnationalism from above through which the movements of planetary literature exceeded the containment powers of the Russian state with the forces of postnationalism from below that Dimock associated with a Russian writer’s struggle to resist Joseph Stalin’s despotic rule.

“Literature for the Planet” wholly reconceptualizes the rationale for literature departments. In this essay, Dimock does not complain about the threats the forces of globalization pose to literature as a scholarly discipline, nor does she recommend procedures whereby literature departments might accommodate themselves to such threats. For Dimock it is not a matter of the processes of globalization uprooting national literatures from their foundations. In Dimock’s estimation, any effort to confine literature within a nationalist paradigm is bound to result in the reactionary essentialism that she finds typified in the Stalinist state.

The disorientation experienced by literary scholars at the recent disruption of their field serves as the affective backdrop for Dimock’s origin story. This essay drew upon the anxieties attending globalization’s effects on the study and teaching of literature so as correlate the emergence of the new paradigm with the representation of an act of dislocation that was infinitely more catastrophic in its effects. The discomfort literary scholars may have experienced at the emergence of literary globalism paled when juxtaposed to the following account of Osip Mandelstam’s harrowing encounter with the Stalinist state:
The year was 1934, a year in which Osip Mandelstam lived in constant terror. Just a few months before he had committed political suicide by reciting a satirical poem on Stalin.... Mandelstam’s arrest came as expected. On the night of 13 May, 1934, about one in the morning, came a knock on the door. Mandelstam was taken by the secret police to their headquarters in the Lubiansk Prison, interrogated and later sentenced to three years of exile in Cherdyn. (173.)

According to Dimock, the deep temporal continuum undergirding the literature of the planet was revealed at the very instant in which state agents forcibly removed Osip Mandelstam from the spatio-temporal coordinates that had formerly oriented his relationship to the persons and events in his everyday life. After his arrest, Mandelstam’s renewed his relationship to literature by placing a copy of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* in the pocket of the jacket that he wore when the police removed him. Dimock explains Mandelstam’s inclusion of Dante’s medieval poem *Divine Comedy* among the very few articles that he carried along with him to Vtorya Rechka as the manifestation of the power of planetary literature to reinstate him within a literary domain that was irreducible to the spatial and temporal coordinates of the nation-state: “It was not trivial that the medieval poem was still around, after hundreds of years, and in the Soviet Union no less. Its very existence gave Mandelstam a different reference point—dimensions of space and time, not reducible to the arm of the Soviet government. Mandelstam’s love of Dante—the physical presence of the poetry inside his pocket—suggests that there is much to be said for literature as a continuum. This continuum extends over space and time, messing up territorial sovereignty and numerical chronology.” (174)

Dimock’s dramatic account of the Russian state’s suppression of Osip Mandelstam’s dissent and its dislocation of him from the precincts of the Russian state supply the scenario through which she acquaints her readers with the extraordinary spatial and temporal coordinates of the literature for the planet.
Literature for the planet can do without the categorizations of historical periods and geographical nations because these specificities are comparatively oppressive, transitory and contingent.

Not stuck in one national context—and saying predictable things in that context—a literary text becomes a new semantic template, a new form of the legible, each time it crosses a national border. Global transit extends, triangulates, and transforms its meaning. This fact alone challenges the power of the territorial as a determining force in literature. The space-time coordinates of any text are not only fluid when they first come into being, poorly captured by the map of geopolitics, they are also subsequently and unforeseeably revisable, influenced by their temporal and spatial displacements to play new tricks with static borders of the nation.” (177)

According to Dimock, it is the estranged sovereignty of this lifeform that triggers the implosion of nationalist constraints, and engenders the auto-heteronomy of the literature for the planet. As a planetary form whose spatial and temporal determinants are resistant to the nation-state’s powers of containment, planetary literature subsequently filled in the vacuum left in the wake of the implosion of nation-based literatures. If the sovereignty of literature as a planetary phenomenon derives from its capacity to transgress the boundaries of nation-states and to subvert retroactively the temporal antecedents of nation-based literary histories, this sovereign realm could not be contained within the borders of the Soviet State that persecuted Mandelstam.

In representing the origins of “literature for our planet” within this scenario, Dimock has deployed Mandelstam’s literary relationship with Dante as a pretext necessary to understand the operations of planetary literature. The return of deep time to a man who had quite literally run out of time becomes a privileged site for calculating the relative merits of planetary literature over Russian literature. Mandelstam’s transhistorical literary affiliation with Dante is portrayed as disclosing the sovereignty of a literary power that was contemptuous of the Russian state’s efforts to subdue its proliferation. In
Dimock’s representation of it, Mandelstam’s exchanges with Dante did not merely evade the repressive apparatus of the Russian totalitarian order; they accomplished the transplantation of his literary works within the complex network of exchange and translation constitutive of the planetary literary order. “For the continuum between Dante and Mandelstam tells us (if nothing else) that the nation-state is not all, that when it comes to the extended life of the literary objects the inscriptive power of the state is not complete, just as its jurisdictional power is not absolute.” (175)

The operations of deep time and infinite space inherent to planetary literature resulted in a synchronization of Dante’s and Mandelstam’s literary projects that Dimock has described as a “relativity of simultaneity”. After these conjoined operations disembedded Mandelstam and Dante from out of their restrictive local contexts and relocated them within the sovereign domain of planetary literature, their literary affiliation instantiated an example of the planetary literature that materialized the object of Dimock’s study.

Dimock has borrowed the categories--deep time, alternative simultaneities and nonsynchronous nows--for thinking about literature’s role in the processes of globalization from Einstein’s relativity theory. Dimock’s essays transfer the symbolic capital sedimented within this scientific terminology onto the archives in which the works of planetary literature are inscribed. In transporting the unimpeachable epistemological authority of Einstein’s theoretical concepts onto the discourse designed to explain planetary literature, Dimock has supplied this global institution with a master language to which nationalizing paradigms must default and defer.

However the concepts that Dimock has drawn from the field of Einsteinian meta-physics tend to mystify the role that the global economic order has played in the integration of Dante’s and Mandelstam’s writings within the planetary literary system. If the “deep time” of the planet was chiefly responsible for
decontextualizing Dante’s and Mandelstam’s literary practices from their cultural environments and for transforming them into literary commodities, world history’s longue durée would appear to have been informed by the global forces that have emerged in the recent acceleration. Indeed the symbolic deficit induced by the collapse of the nation and empire as established mediations for literary exchanges was not filled up by Einsteinian relativity theory. It was the global marketplace in literary goods that supplanted the nation-state as the agency responsible for determining the relative valuation of Dante’s and Mandelstam’s writings.

No piece of writing can partake of the “deep time” of the planetary literary continuum unless it is first taxonomized as a literary work. However before a literary work can attain the valuation Dimock has discerned in Dante’s and Mandelstam’s writings, it must have accumulated sufficient cultural capital in literature departments to justify its elevation to the rank of the canonical. Insofar as it is not a “natural” lifeform, planetary literature depends upon the continued viability of the institutions through which its archives are reproduced, preserved, translated and circulated. It is difficult to imagine how either Dante’s or Mandelstam’s writings might have survived as forms of “literature” without the support of the network of affiliated institutions (libraries, anthologies, national literature departments) responsible for their interstate literary commerce within the global literary marketplace.

Dimock tacitly acknowledged this network when she delineated the nationalist topographies and historical periods that distinguished Osip Mandelstam’s twentieth century Russian from Dante’s fourteenth century Italian literature. But Dimock then treated these nation-based and historical determinations (and the network of global institutions responsible for their reproduction) as pretexts for a demonstration of the ways in which the sovereignty of planetary literature exceeded the governance of the Soviet Empire
as well as that of any other authority whose provenance was less extensive than the planet.

Even though her descriptions of Mandelstam’s political and literary transactions ostensibly refer to events that took place in the past, however, Dimock’s historical assertions are logically future-oriented in that they are made to predict the emergence of a planetary literary system in the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Empire. US liberal values might be described as the invisible historical intermediary that has operationalized the future-orientation within Dimock’s historical narrative. The core political values of US liberalism supply the terminology that tacitly link Dimock’s account of Mandelstam’s traumatic encounters with the Stalinist state with her representation of Mandelstam’s literary relations with Dante Alighieri.

Dimock’s account of Stalin’s efforts to suppress Mandelstam’s writing takes place against the backdrop of the cold war. The literary exchange Dimock represents Mandelstam as having undertaken with Dante has compensated Mandelstam for the loss of power to dissent against the Stalinist state. The proto-Americanist freedoms of expression, access and mobility are the agents and outcomes of these symbolic exchanges. It is these core Americanist values that have exceeded Russia’s powers of containment and that the literature for the planet has disseminated through every simultaneity. Moreover the imaginary passports that planetary literature has issued to Mandelstam and to Dante to facilitate their travel across the time and space presupposes a planet whose topography is saturated with these neo-liberal values.

As should be clear from these observations, I find Dimock’s account of the emergence of planetary literature especially valuable for its having worked through the anxieties attendant to the redefinition of American literary studies as American literary globalism, and for the invention of the paradigm of planetary literature through which she has accomplished this feat. But I nevertheless do
have questions about the forms of analogical reasoning through which she has produced the equivalence between planetary literature as a form of globalization that propagates Americanist liberal values from above and Mandelstam’s subversion of Russian nationalism from below.

Dimock engenders this equivalence by way of an unstated homology and a substitutive displacement. Dimock constructs a homology between nation-based orientations to the study of literature and the reactionary essentialism typified in the repressive apparatus of the Soviet State. This homology subliminally correlates national literature professors’ anxious responses to the forces of globalization at the outset of the twenty-first century with Osip Mandelstam’s terrorization by the Stalinist State in the middle of the twentieth. After producing these equivalences, Dimock has substituted Mandelstam literary exchanges with Dante for the crimes against the state of which Mandelstam stood accused by the state police. And following her characterization of the Mandelstam-Dante relationship as a metonym for planetary literature, Dimock effectively replaced Mandelstam with planetary literature as the agency accused of being an enemy of state: “Aiding and abetting the population of nows, all unsynchronized, literature stands accused as the enemy of the state.” (175)

But the same “relative simultaneities” (with Dante) through which Osip Mandelstam was described as having evaded statist control also perforce disallowed any content to be attributed to these “nows” other than as signifiers of such evasions. By turning the literary relationship between Osip Mandelstam and Dante Alighieri into the origin of planetary literature, Dimock has abstracted the specific political complaints that Osip Mandelstam lodged against the Stalinist state. And this suppression of its political content tends to conceal the cross-national literary and political movements with which Mandelstam’s literary dissent was then affiliated.
Dimock’s planetarization of Mandelstam’s literature is the effect of two inter-related acts of deterritorialization. Mandelstam’s writing is described as having become planetary when it exceeds the Stalinist state’s efforts to contain its movement within the confines of Russian geography, and when it surpasses Mandelstam’s efforts to tether this life form to his historically specific resistance to Stalin. Dimock has differentiated the planetary literary system from Russian territorialization on the one hand and from Mandelstam’s extraterritoriality on the other hand. And she has described the sovereign power of planetary literature in terms of its capacity to deterritorialize Mandelstam’s writings from two of the contexts—Russian literary history, formations of political resistance—from which they had formerly drawn their vitality. But if these deterritorializing effects are construed as the benchmark criteria that are determinative of planetary literature, Osip Mandelstam’s literary resistance to the Russian state would not meet the minimum standard for inclusion under this categorization.

Osip Mandelstam did not in fact aspire to effect the deterritorialization of the poetry he addressed to the Stalinist state. In his poetry he cultivated a respect for a vernacular style of speaking and writing that prevailed before the Russian Revolution. Indeed insofar as his poetry required that specific historical context for its efficacy, would not Mandelstam have construed planetary literature’s deterritorialization of his writings as a form of suppression comparable to the Russian state’s dislocation?

After the “deep time” of the planet subsumes the incompatible temporalities underpinning Dante Alighieri’s and Osip Mandelstam’s highly localized practices into literature’s continuum, the “literature for the planet” resulting from this “relative simultaneity” lifts the tragic weight of history from Dante’s and Mandelstam’s writings. But the task of regulating the historical periodization and nationalist provenance of departments of Russian literature was irrelevant to the juridical and penal operations that followed his arrest.
Moreover, the police agents who came knocking on Mandelstam’s door in the early morning of May 13, 1934 did not invoke Mandelstam’s readings of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* as warrant for their detention of him. The proximate reason for his deportation was what Mandelstam’s interrogators at the Lubyanka Prison referred to as a political slander directed against Stalin (“the father of the peoples”) that they found evidenced in the following line from the poem in *The Second Moscow Notebook* entitled “The Stalin Epigram”, “We are alive but no longer feel the land under our feet.”

Dimock’s erasure of the power relations that shaped Mandelstam’s struggle with the Stalinist state coincided with the emergence of “world history” and “globalization’ as encompassing epistemological categories that deprived nation-states of their structural causality. But “world history” and “planetary literature” are themselves period concepts that were developed within the paradigm of global modernity. In privileging the expansionist imperatives of transterritorial movements like Islam or the Roman Empire, Dimock’s world history model tends to lose sight of subnational grassroots political movements like the one with which Mandelstam associated his poetry.

The end of nation-based history that both “world history” and “planetary literature” presuppose has recently been invoked by Samuel Huntington and Francis Fukuyama as a justification for the nearly unchallenged dominance of the planet by the United States. In staging the emergence of planetary literature in these terms, Dimock has invested the unimaginably *longue durée* of deep planetary time with the comparatively modernist rationality of US liberal democracy. Michael Geyer has explained the orientation to events represented by exponents of world history in terms of the control that the dominant world power exercises over this discourse, In “dominating the world through its mastery of the technical and material means of global integration”, Geyer observed, the US as the global hegemon has not merely subordinated every
locale on the globe to its market logic it has also managed to control the discourse describing “the direction and outcome of world history.”

Dimock’s account of the operations of planetary literature would appear to engender an equivalence between the globalization of American literary studies and the americanization of the planet. After the dismantling of the Soviet Union, the United States did indeed become the world. But Mandelstam’s fatal struggle with the Stalinist state did not materially contribute to this outcome. Nor did the United States play a role in Mandelstam’s conflict with Stalin. Given Mandelstam’s political and economic views, it is doubtful that Mandelstam would have found Roosevelt’s New Deal a viable alternative to socialism. Indeed had Mandelstam attempted to enter the United States as a political refugee from the Soviet Union in 1934, it is quite likely that US immigration authorities would have denied him entry on the grounds that he was an unwanted political alien.

As we have seen, Mandelstam’s literary relationship with Dante did not enable him to evade state agents. But if Mandelstam’s literary relationship with Dante across temporal and spatial boundaries could not interfere with the horrific experience of Mandelstam’s exile and death, what relationship does the continuum of planetary literature bear to the gravity of these catastrophic historical events? Can literature become instrumental to the survival of individual as well as collective forms of life without announcing itself thereby in collusion with the global hegemon? Can the writings of authors like Osip Mandelstam, who have been removed by the state from the planetary system emerge as a form of literature? If their writings are construed by the state as representative of a threat to its continued existence, how would the literary practices of writers like Mandelstam manage to find their way into print let alone elude the state’s efforts to suppress them? During the time of the bipolar organization of the planet, what happened to the literary works of individuals whose writings both the USSR and the USA found inimical to their statist prerogatives? If the literature for the planet
appears to disseminate American liberal values globally, can American literature be globalized by literary practices that are incompatible these values.

In an effort to address these questions I want to offer an alternative origin story of the emergence of American literary globalism in an event that took place nearly two decades after Mandelstam’s displacement from his homeland when C.L.R. James quite literally deployed an Americanist literary masterwork to contest the state’s classification of him as an enemy of the state. However before addressing those questions within the context of an event that took place a half century ago, I want to supply as a context for these question the planetarization of the emergency state mentality that was responsible for Osip Mandelstam’s exile and for C.L.R. James’s deportation.

II. We Extraterritorials in the Planetary Homeland State

Earlier I mentioned that Dimock’s analytic frame appeared to conflate the processes of globalization that take place from above with the planetary forces opposed to it emerging from below. Insofar as it transmits the values of the global marketplace, planetary literature unquestionably participates in globalization from above. But after Dimock deletes the political content from Mandelstam’s writings and transfers the material force of Mandelstam’s dissent onto planetary literature’s formal subversion of the territorial state’s powers of containment, she would appear to have disassociated his project from the cross-national political movements in which Mandelstam then participated. The deterritorializing effects of planetary literature may appear emancipatory when they are represented as the operation responsible the liberation of Osip Mandelstam’s literature from the repressive measures of the Stalinist state. But insofar as it dislodges Mandelstam’s writings from their local contexts and resituates them within its transterritorial
planetary domain, has not the literature for the planet also re-enacted the
deterritorializing operations that it was the aim of the global hegemon to
normalize?

Questions concerning the relationship between processes of globalization
operating from above and from below the nation-state become especially vexing
when the global hegemon represents itself as at once the agent and the victim of
processes of globalization. After it described preemptive strikes against others’
homelands as a necessary form of domestic defense against terrorist attack, the
Bush administration erased the distinction between the aggressor and the victim.
The preventive measures associated with the so-called “war on terrorism” also
threatened to erase any viable distinction between globalization from above and
globalization from below.

If the values of sovereignty and freedom of expression that Dimock has
associated with the literature for the planet are also expressive of the planetary
status of the global hegemon, what relationship to it should American literary
globalism take up when the global hegemon violates civil liberties? Can the
literature for the planet continue to value operations of deterritorialization when
the global hegemon undertakes the dislocation of entire populations from the
ways of life in which they are embedded?

After 9/11/01 the citizens of the United States underwent just such a
generalized dislocation when they were required to sacrifice the rights and
liberties that defined the civic condition of their belonging to the United States
and to reexperience themselves as a population under the protection of the
Homeland Security State. When President Bush declared a state of emergency,
the national peoples were rendered nonsynchronous with the state and relocated
within an extraterritorial space that the emergency state called the “Homeland”.
The Homeland Security State that emerged in the wake of the attacks on the
Pentagon and the World Trade Center was not identical with the landmass of the
continental United States. The “Homeland” referred to the unlocatable order that emerged through and by way of the US people’s generalized dislocation from the nation as a shared form of life.

The “Homeland” Bush invoked to legitimize the state’s emergency actions does not designate either an enclosed territory or an imagined community. The Homeland secured by the emergency state redescribed the entire planet as the space that the US security apparatus was required to police in its war against global terrorism. Insofar as it is describable as the relationship between the state and the population that comes into existence after the USA declares a state of global emergency, the Homeland named a form of global governmentality whose territorial boundary was everywhere and whose center was nowhere.

The Homeland Security Act put into place a state of emergency that positioned the national peoples in this unlocalizable space that was included in the Homeland through its exclusion from the normal political order. As the unlocalizable place the population was ordered to occupy when the state entered the site of the exception to the normative order, the Homeland named the structure through which the state of emergency was realized normally. In effect, the Homeland Security Act authorized a biopolitical settlement that reduced the U.S. population into a biological mass that the emergency state was empowered to defend against biological weapons of mass destruction. 13.

This biopolitical settlement coincided with the state’s decision to construe the populations it governed as undistinguishable from unprotected biological life. Insofar as the Homeland State’s biopolitical imperative entailed regulating the life and death of the population that it governed, the Homeland state’s biopolitical jurisdiction became global in its extensibility. The biopolitical settlement constructed by the provisions of the Homeland Security Act first subtracted the population from the forms of civic and political life through which they recognized themselves as a national people and then positioned these forms
of life—the people, their way of life—into non-synchronous zones of protection with the promise that their future synchronization would resuscitate the nation-state.

The Homeland State thereby represented the population as a vulnerable biological formation that could play no active role in the Homeland’s ordering of things and whose collective vitality must be administered and safeguarded. But after the Homeland Security Act described the population under the Homeland State’s governance as indistinguishable from unprotected biological life, this legislation also produced an indistinction between two highly asymmetrical constituencies of the population—the Sovereign people with Rights and the disposable peoples lacking rights—that the Homeland State needed to taxonomize in distinctly different biopolitical categories.

As the political philosopher Giorgio Agamben has explained, this dualism is inherent to the concept of the people, “We the People” is an internally antagonized phrase. It contains a dialectical opposition between two opposed poles. The set of the people as an organized political body, on the one hand; and on the other, a subset of the people as a fragmentary multiplicity of needy and excluded bodies. The Sovereign National People who are the repository of the sovereign will authorizing the policies of a nation-state have been normatively constituted out of the exclusion of the homeless people. 14.

After the Homeland State alienated the Sovereign People from the political and civil rights they were understood to bear, however, it could not depend upon this political distinction to sustain their differentiation from the unhomed people. The biopolitical settlement had reduced all of the people to the condition of unprotected bios. In an effort to install a distinction between these two populations, the Homeland State invented the category of the “detainee”. 19.

Through the construction of detention centers in which the detainees were interned, the Homeland State produced a distinction between the Sovereign
People the state protected from injury and the people the state was free to injure and to kill. The detainee demarcated a limit point that installed a biopolitical distinction between the two peoples—in stripping the detainees’ political status of any predication other than mere flesh, the Homeland State made them coincide with the state’s monopoly over the decision concerning the exception. The detainee’s body named the threshold over which the state’s exemption from its own rules passed over into fact. 15. The vulnerable population under the state’s protection became the counterpoint of the disposable population of detainees whose putative endangerment of the protected population required the state to take them into its protective custody.

If the Homeland designates the sphere in which the national peoples are included when they are dislocated from their national ways of life, it is describable as an order lacking localization within the nation. The detainment centers and Camp X-ray added localization lacking order to the Homeland which is construable as an order lacking localization. 16. But whereas the Homeland names the space in which the exception is realized normally, the detainees’ condition of unprotected flesh negatively regulated the dislocatees’ relation to the homeland.

On Guantánamo Bay, the Homeland State produced persons who were exceptions to the laws that protected the due process rights of citizens and were exceptions as well to the Geneva Conventions that endowed prisoners of war with the right to refuse to respond to interrogation. Stripped of the rights of citizens and prisoners of war, these persons were reduced to the status of naked flesh. As the embodiments of animated flesh whose lives the state could terminate according to decisions that were outside juridical regulation, these unlawful combatants were invoked by the state to justify its positioning of itself as the occupant of the space of exception to the rule of law. The planetarized
Homeland state thereby arrogated to itself its power to operate beyond the jurisdiction of the laws that regulated the world of nations.

After it dislodged territories across the entire planet from their geopolitical coordinates and resituated them in the Planetary Homeland State, the global hegemon would appear produced a planetary condition of generalized deterritorialization. But in the wake of the planetary state’s generalized dislocation of populations from the ways of life in which they were embedded, how can the literature for the planet accomplish its signature deterritorializing effects without reenacting the operations of the deterritorializing hegemon? Moreover, after the global hegemon claims the right to censor the processes of globalization that are critical of its biopolitical settlement, how can the forces associated with globalization from below successfully resist this censorship. If the entire planet has been deterritorialized by the global hegemon, how can what we have called globalization from above be distinguished from globalization from below. How can a writer elude the deterritorializing strategies of a global hegemon that has placed the world’s peoples and emplacements outside themselves? How can figures from whom the conditions of territorial belonging have been removed, like Osip Mandelstam in the Siberian labor camp or the detainees in Guantanamo Bay, find a planetary dwelling in which to survive?

III. The Exile of Osip Mandelstam: In between Deterritorialization and Extraterritoriality

The planetary literature that Dimock has analyzed demands the liquidation of the nation-state and other circumscribed territories so as to reveal the qualities of “deep time” and “infinite extensibility” that territorial paradigms have suppressed. In an effort to explain its extended viability, Dimock sets the
longue durée of planetary literature in a relation of opposition to the extinction of Mandelstam as a biological lifeform and to the Russian empire as a collective form of life. As a “non-biological” form of life planetary literature is not subject to the debilitating life cycle of the human species that produce and consume it. “We can think of it [literature] as an artificial form of ‘life’: a form of extension and duration not matching that of the nation and perhaps not coming to an end with the nation’s demise--not biological like an organism or territorial like a nation but vital all the same and durable for that reason.” (177).

Dimock has designated the time of the emergence of this “alien” life form as 5/13/34, the date on which the Russian state subjected Osip Mandelstam’s to a catastrophic reclassification in status. Following the state’s recategorization of him as a state enemy, Mandelstam underwent an horrific transformation from the condition of being a Russian citizen the continuation of whose existence mattered to the state and into a displaceable body whose relocation outside the national territory rendered him a form of vulnerable corporeality that the state held in its custody.

In the wake of the state’s sentence, Mandelstam became a lifeform with no place in the national territory of which he was formerly a part. It was the state’s deterritorialization of Mandelstam’s body that enabled Dimock to think of Mandelstam’s writings as outside the state’s control. Moreover, the precarious biological condition to which Mandelstam was reduced thereafter empowered Dimock to stipulate the nonbiological status of planetary literature as the basis for its extended viability. But Dimock’s valuation of literature as an “alien” and “nonbiological” form of life tends to undervalues literature that is produced as a way of preserving a body as well as an embodied way of life. Osip Mandelstam was unlike Dimock, however, in that he construed the poetry he composed in exile as a vital practice of embodiment that was crucial to his biological survival.
The state agents who interrogated him in 1934 did not initially condemn Mandelstam to certain death in a Siberian forced labor camp. They instead supplied Mandelstam with an opportunity to rehabilitate himself by sentencing him to spend the next three years of his life in a space that they believed fit the crime of his having written the line in “The Stalin Epigram”: “We are alive but no longer feel the land under our feet”. 17.

More specifically, the Russian state quite literally took the ground out from under Osip Mandelstam’s feet when they asked him to serve three years of political exile in any city of his choosing that lay outside “system of twelve” major cities of Russia. Mandelstam chose to serve his allotted time in Voronezh, a city that was located about three hundred miles southeast of Moscow. Following this choice, Mandelstam’s NKVD (the precursor of the KGB) agents permitted Mandelstam’s wife Nadezhda to accompany him to Voronezh, and to copy down any poems that he composed while in residence there. They also allowed Mandelstam to continue to discuss his poetry with Natasha Stempel, a young literature teacher Mandelstam described as his muse.

During the three years he served in Vorozhev, Mandelstam undertook the composition of the poems that Nadezhda later assembled in the Three Vorozhev Notebooks. Voronezh was akin to the Homeland Security State in that it concretized the state’s power to uproot Mandelstam from the locale in which he was embedded. In conceptualizing his Vorozhev Notebooks as a kind of textual homeland, Mandelstam addressed these poems in part to the Russian state as an act in defiance of their efforts to displace him. Writing became his mode of bearing witness against the injustice of the Russian state as well as a way of surviving its injustice through the texture of that witness. Mandelstam inhabited the lines of poetry he recorded in Voronezh as if they intricated his bodily tissues within a more enduring form of embodiment.
After his deportation, Dimock placed Mandelstam’s writings in the timeful continuum of planetary literature they were said to share with Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. “Literature for the Planet” emerged as an irreducibly deterritorialized dimension of Osip Mandelstam’s literature that could not be subjected to the Russian state’s powers of relocation. But in focussing upon this dimension, Dimock tends to lose sight of the ways in which Mandelstam returned to writing as the materialization of an alternative form of territoriality, a textual homeland through which Mandelstam survived as a form of biological life that was nevertheless irreducible to biology.

The readings of Dante that Dimock has cited to accomplish his relocation within the domain of planetary literature were written before his exile. The planetary literary system circulated the work Mandelstam produced before his exile by dislodging it from the context in which it had been embedded. But after he was deported to Vorozhev, Mandelstam did not stop writing nor did he understand the literature that he produced there as possessed of the deterritorializing powers that Dimock has assigned them. Moreover, the volume of Dante that he carried into exile did not instrumentalize the production of a transterritorial and transhistorical bond. When he alluded to Dante in poem 41 of the second volume of *The Voronezh Notebooks* entitled “The worn grandeur of my shoes”, Mandelstam correlated Dante’s physical discipline of composing his poetry while walking the paths close to Mount David with his own practices of composition: “He can still remember the wear and tear on his shoes and the worn grandeur of my soles”. By way of this correlation Mandelstam sought quite literally to recover the footing that the state had taken out from under him. The tropes, stanzas and rhymes that Mandelstam produced in Vorozhev supplied Mandelstam with a way of inhabiting and being inhabited by a poetic form of dwelling. The text of the poems that he produced after his relocation thus replaced the homeland Mandelstam had lost after the state exiled him.
Dimock has characterized planetary literature as that which lacked a place either in Stalin’s Russia or in the extraterritorial spaces into which Mandelstam was exiled. But the deterritorializing powers Dimock associates with planetary literature do not extend to the extraterritorial space that Mandelstam was compelled to occupy in Voronezh. After he was banished to Voronezh, Mandelstam wanted emplacement. After he turned the texture of the writing he produced there into extensions of his bodily tissues, he inhabited the body of his poetry as a more enduring form of corporeality.

While he was in exile, Mandelstam invented a form of writing about Russia that took the place of the Russia from which he was banished and that supplied him with a form of biological survival. But insofar as Mandelstam construed the poems he produced in Voronez as a resource for and extension of his biological survival, The Voronezh Notebooks would perforce be excluded from the literature for the planet defined as populated by nonbiological lifeforms. But rather than excluding the writing that Mandelstam produced under conditions of exile in Vorozhev from the literature for our planet, I wish to propose that it was the extraterritorial status of the writing that Mandelstam produced there that constitutes the defining trait of planetary literature.

It was the extra-territoriality of Mandelstam’s writing at Vorozhev—its status as an outside that was more intimate to Mandelstam’s feeling of human belonging than physical occupation of a territory—that enabled him to survive the most horrific acts of displacement. Ironically, The Voronezh Notebooks supplied Mandelstam with a literary dwelling that was more internal to Mandelstam’s imagined homeland than the writing he composed before his exile. Indeed the poetry that he produced after the Russian state deterritorialized him gave Mandelstam access to a literary extraterritoriality that undermined the state’s efforts to dislocate him. But how can extraterritoriality become a literary resource in a planetary system that is structured in its exclusion?
IV. Literature for Extra-Territorials in the Time of Planetary Emergency State

Dimock invoked the moment of extreme danger in which Osip Mandelstam found himself on May 13, 1934 as foundational to the emergence of the planetary literary system. But it was not until after he returned to Moscow from Vorozhev in 1937 that the state decided to sentence Mandelstam to a death sentence in the Siberian camps. On May 3, 1938, Mandelstam was rearrested and ordered to serve five years in a Siberian labor camp. Following the state’s sentencing of him, Mandelstam was driven off in a lorry. Osip Mandelstam wrote his last recorded poem to Natasha Shtempel on May 4, 1937. He died on December 27, 1938, of heart failure on the way to Vladivostok.

The forced labor camp to which the Russian state sentenced Osip Mandelstam in 1938 was differentiated from Vorozhev by the abrogation of his right to narrate or write about his condition there. While Mandelstam’s *Three Vorozhev Notebooks* supply ample testimony to his capacity to resist the incursions of the state, no record exists of the writing Mandelstam might have undertaken after he was rearrested and sentenced. 5/3/38 marked the traumatized instant in which Mandelstam was placed outside the temporal coordinates through which the Russian state kept its records. The temporal punctum into which Mandelstam then vanished completely dismembered him from the domain of recorded literature and history.

Despite the obstacles posed by the repressive powers of the state that banished him, there nevertheless did (and still do) exist what might be called extraterritorial circuits of communication that placed into circulation forms of writing produced by persons like Mandelstam who had been rendered extraneous to the planetary literary system. 19. In an effort to suggest the ways in which this informal process of circulation and exchange might supply an
alternative understanding of literature for our planet, I want to propose June 10, 1952, rather than May 3, 1934 as the date marking the emergence of American literary globalism. It was on this date that state agents interrupted the Trinidadian critic C.L.R. James’s research for the book he intended to write that summer on Herman Melville and removed him to Ellis Island. While he was detained there awaiting deportation hearings, James began work on *Mariners Renegades* and *Mariners: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In*. 20.

After World War II, the national security state did not merely change the rules of the game of American politics. The rules and constraints through which the state regulated political discussion and debate altered American politics as drastically as had the Homeland Security State after 9/11/01. The state’s declaration of a global war against world communism. authorized the partitioning of the globe into Three Worlds: the First World included member nations who embraced liberal democratic values, the Second World gathered under its banner the countries committed to the propagation of communism globally, and the Third World designated the newly decolonized populations of the so-called underdeveloped countries. This partitioning required political struggles that took place nationally and internationally to represent themselves within the discourse of the Three Worlds.

The political rationality that legitimated the rules of this new game did not merely occupy a place within an already existing civil society. It instituted a public sphere as the terrain wherein political actors would normatively interiorize the rules and regularities upon which the new game of politics depended for its legitimation. This newly instituted public sphere was described as having been established by a rule of law that demanded as the precondition for its regulatory powers the autonomy of capital, owners and the market. Prior to the inauguration of the cold war, the public sphere was defined as a space that
facilitated the non-coercive exchange of opinions and beliefs of every variety imaginable. But after the state defined the United States role in the world in terms of its global opposition to communism, only political ideas that presupposed the values of the free market, private property and the autonomous individual could be exchanged by subjects who had normatively internalized these values.

The boundaries of the newly instituted public sphere were constituted out of the exclusion of political rationalities—revolutionary anti-colonialism, trade union socialism, communism—that had formerly been permissible forms of political expression. As representatives of the terrain over whose political disposition the First World struggled with the Second World, immigrants from the newly decolonized “Third World” countries, like C.L.R. James were obliged to extirpate processes of thinking and interaction that did not conform to these rules.

Because of his agitation on behalf of laborers’ rights, James was represented by the state as a migrant from the Third World whose political activities posed a threat to the American way of life. After the state pronounced him a security threat, James underwent a drastic change in juridical status that might be described as a dis-interpellation. Rather than categorizing him under any of the legal social positions—resident alien, national subject, prospective citizen—through which colonial immigrants were empowered to exercise their rights and liberties, the state rendered James subject to the force of the law but deprived of the rights and privileges of a legal human subject. Having been stripped of every social and political prerogative, James was reduced him to the status of unprotected flesh.

In the wake of this shift in his political standing, James was relocated on Ellis Island, a transfer station where the state herded up all of its unwanted residents in preparation for their complete removal. Ellis Island had been
consecrated in the national imagination as the port of entry through which strangers, exiles, and political refugees passed on their way to becoming naturalized as US citizens. But in turning Ellis Island into a deportation center, the Immigration and Naturalization Services disaggregated the Island as well as its population from the national territory. Upon removing the conditions of social belonging and political agency from James and his fellow detainees on Ellis Island, the state catastrophically transformed Ellis Island into a scene of generalized social death.

At the time INS officers took him into state custody, James had been working on an interpretive study of Herman Melville. After having been uprooted from his everyday habitat by agents of the national security state, however James turned his detainment on Ellis Island into the occasion to return to his interpretive labors. James correlated the state agents’ forcible separation of him from the condition of universal humanity with the traumatic events that the Pequod’s crew had been compelled to undergo under the governance of Captain Ahab. James also depicted the site of generalized social death on Ellis Island as a historical correlative for the catastrophic shipwreck that the crew were compelled to undergo at the conclusion to Melville’s novel. The homology that James adduced between the narrative fate of the crew and the political fate of the refugees on Ellis Island drew upon an equivalence that James discerned between the state’s violence towards him and the interpretive violence americanist critics directed against the crew.

Moby Dick was not for scholars of American literature merely an object of analysis; it had become one of the planetary agents responsible for the global hegemonization of americanist values. Melville’s novel provided American literary studies with a frame narrative that included the same norms and assumptions out of which the public sphere was organized. This frame narrative accumulated its cultural capital through scholarly readings of Melville’s novel
that reproduced, transmitted, and distributed normative assumptions that rationalized U.S. global dominance.

The protocols that were tied to cultural axioms and interpretive norms that lay sedimented within this frame narrative ratified the United States exceptionalist status in the world community. The frame narrative rationalized the liberal values of freedom and individual autonomy that americanists described as responsible for the progressive movement of world history. After *Moby Dick* was made to predict the world scale antagonism of the cold war, the narrative provided the state with an image of itself as overcoming the totalitarian order to which it defined itself as opposed. This frame narrative thereby assisted in structuring the constitutive understanding of the society that it purported to represent.

But while he was on Ellis Island, James did not subjectivize the interpretive attitude that normalized US hegemony. James instead interpreted this americanist text by way of the mediation of the disporic movements of the mariners renegades and castaway whom scholars in American literary studies had written out of the frame narrative for which Ishmael’s liberal values had served as the principle of integration. The crew were placeholders for the forms of life that the world historical processes responsible for global integration forcibly deleted from the planet. In justifying their displacement, americanist literary scholars had allegorized the crew’s submission to Ahab’s overpowering will as a prefiguration of the masses under totalitarian rule. In describing them in terms of this discredited population, this line of interpretation treated the crew as if they were simply marking time until the traumatic shipwreck took their lives.

In short, the viability of the frame narrative presupposed the non-survivability of the crew. The crew’s absence from the representations and themes organizing the interpretive consensus about the frame narrative was believed crucial to the production of the narrative’s coherence. But in his
interpretation of *Moby Dick*, James rethought the global reach of American freedom from the perspective of characters who were its victims. Construing Ellis Island as a site of resistance to the system’s powers of emplacement and exclusion, James produced a mode of literary survivability for the mariners, renegades and castaways whose catastrophic deaths had been justified by the americanist interpretive community. In deploying *Moby Dick* to transmit the crew’s disqualified forms of knowledge and narratives, James opened up an interdiscursive space through which he undermined the state’s axioms and norms.

As characters who lacked adequate representation in Melville’s text, the mariners, renegades and castaways belonged to a temporal dimension that could not be synchronized into simultaneity either with the frame narrative or with the planetary system that hegemonized its values. The mariners, renegades and castaways were internal to Melville’s narrative, but the americanist interpretive community nevertheless represented them as external to the frame narrative through which they inculcated americanist values globally. As an outside that was already inside the novel, the mariners, renegades and castaways produced a break in the seamless narrative of US global power that James turned into a extra-territorial dwelling space. James thereafter deployed this discontinuity in time and space into a performative that empowered him to produce breaks in the seamless narrative of US global power.

Insofar as it added the matters that the americanist literary critics had normatively excluded from their interpretations, James’s interpretation *Moby Dick* could not be included within the archive of planetary literature. The insights James recorded in *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In* were not derived from the culture he described with such brilliance. James’s commentary transformed his status as a
detainee into the factor that enabled him to criticize received definitions of nation, home community and belonging.

If the site of his detention constituted a radical interruption of the interpretive position he had formerly subjectivized, James found a comparable interruption of authorial intentionality within the following passage from *Moby Dick*:

“If, then, to meanest mariners, and renegades and castaways, I shall hereafter ascribe high qualities though dark; weave round them tragic graces; if even the most mournful, perchance the most abased, among them shall at times lift to the most exalted mounts; if I shall touch that workman’s arm with some ethereal light; if I shall spread a rainbow over his disastrous set of sun; then against all mortal critics bear me out in it, thou just Spirit of Equality, which has spread one royal mantle of humanity over all my kind!” (17)

Rather than representing an event that has already taken place within the narrated action, the passage inscribes the scene from within which the narrating “I” is still deliberating over how to do narrative justice to his book’s actions, characters and events. As such, the scene alludes to the novel’s surplus eventfulness, the possible shape of the narrative that has not yet settled into Melville’s novel. The time in which this scene takes place is not continuous with the action as already narrated within *Moby Dick* nor does it coincide with the narrating instances of the subject of narration. The passage introduces a difference between the manner in which the narrating “I” is predisposed to narrate the crew’s actions and the constraints that the narrator-protagonist, Ishmael, has imposed. When James takes up this passage that gives expression to the possible enunciations of a narrating subject, who is other than the narrator-protagonist Ishmael, he deploys it as an authorization to wrest interpretive authority away from Ishmael. At the site of this unfulfilled narrative contract,
James aspires to relate a narration that has not yet been narrated and that Ishmael will not narrate. 21.

In the title that he affixed to his book, James designates the site upon which he performed his writing—“the world we live in”—as a continuation of Melville’s scene of writing. And he construes his acts of writing as one of the possible referents for the clause “I shall hereafter ascribe.” The passage took on this allegorical significance for James because it designated a space of interrupted intention within Melville’s novel that was the correlative of the space James had occupied when the agents of the national emergency state had interrupted his commentary on “the story of Herman Melville” James thereafter reconceptualized this passage as the site where Melville’s literary project had been interrupted and required the supplemental account of his experiences on Ellis Island (“the world we live in”) for its completion.

After quoting this passage from *Moby Dick*, James remarked that it is clear “that Melville intends to make the crew the real heroes of his book, but he is afraid of criticism.” (17) This statement has not merely provided this scene with an interpretive gloss. In the act of enunciating this statement, James has split himself into at once an interpreter of “the story of Herman Melville” but also a narrator-mariner who would relay the narratives of his fellow mariners that Melville was afraid to write. After discovering that the position in which he finds himself bears a direct analogy to the forms of protest and power in the novel, James undertakes the project of narrating the narratives that Melville would have written—were he not “afraid of criticism”

Melville’s scene of writing thereby became the locus for a change in James’s position from the “you” who was subject to the law’s power to the “I/We” capable of doing narrative justice to Melville’s crew. James wrote from a position in between the Jamesian “I” the cold war state had dis-interpellated and the “I” Melville had promised to the mariners in the passage James cited.
When James resumed his interpretive project on Ellis Island, he substituted the untenable position in which the culture had placed him for this as yet unoccupied narrative position within Melville’s text. As the proleptic actualization of the intention to heroicize the mariners that Ishmael did not, James reentered the scene of narration that in not having been completely narrativized, remained available as a non-synchronous narrative resource.

But James did not turn to *Moby Dick* to synchronize a literary relationship with Herman Melville. James was unlike Osip Mandestam in that he lacked any literary subjectivity that preexisted the position he occupied when he produced his commentary on *Moby Dick*. Rather than taking up a preexisting subject position through which to engage in a literary relationship with Melville, James was interpellated to the mariners’ position through the “spirit of equality” that mandated him to supply narratives for the characters who could not become integrated within the market logic that the frame narrative of *Moby Dick* was circulating throughout the globe. In writing about Melville’s narration from the position of characters who had not been wholly subjectivized within “the story of Herman Melville,” James quite literally produced those previously unwritten subject positions. The lifeworld from which he had been dispossessed when he was transferred to Ellis Island was supplanted by the form of life James assumed through his subjectivization of this unoccupied subject position within Melville’s text. If his acts of writing restored the pronominal privileges of the first person singular that the state had removed from James when it declared him a subversive, what James wrote about produced the first person plural privileges for “we” mariners, renegades, and castaways who were also lacking in subject positions in Melville’s text.

James construed the “spirit of equality’s” interpellation of him as a textual remedy for the state’s banishment. The state had denied James the *habeas corpus* right to produce an account of his actions and intentions, But James recovered
this right of narration when he occupied the subject position through whom the mariners, renegades and castaways would be supplied with the narratives Melville had promised. After the spirit of equality interpellated James to the signifier “mariners, renegades and castaways”, James filled in the empty site of the state’s dis-interpellation with the narrations of characters that the frame narrative had represented as undeserving of survival.

But the “spirit of equality” did not link James to the preconstituted position of the unmarked, disembodied citizen-subject. James considered the “universality” of the disembodied subject to be a stand-in for the sovereign power of the state apparatus that had declassified him. The “spirit of equality” instead interpellated James to the position of these subjectless subjects who were in need of James’s body for their survival. As their physically material referent, James quite literally subjectivized the figures who were lacking in subjectivity within Melville’s narrative. Rather than personifying the unmarked disembodied subjectivity to which abstract universals were appended to produce the fiction of universal citizenship, James articulated the indelibility of his unprotected flesh to the mariners, renegades and castaways’ unactualized right to the narratives that Melville had promised.

Because he lacked any other form of secure placement, James’s subjectivization of the crew’s as yet unnnarrated narrative position became for James on Ellis Island what composing poetry had been for Mandelstam at Vorozhev; namely, a resolutely corporeal exercise. The material activity of writing enabled James physically to embody the subject position through which he spoke back to the powers of state that intended his physical expulsion. Writing thereby provided James with a way to inhabit and keep record of his biological presence within a geography for the bodily excluded. As he resumed daily the practice of writing about *Moby Dick*, the role of Melville interpreter
inhabited a Jamesian body otherwise denied any position the state was obliged to recognize.

After James quite literally took up residence within this incompletely realized passage from *Moby Dick*, he turned this site into an arena for the inscription of the crew’s unactualized narratives. Whereas previous interpreter’s had characterized the crew’s mass death at sea as punishment for their having submitted to Ahab’s totalitarian will, James represented the breakdown of Melville’s promise as the rationale for the crew’s catastrophe. But James’s restoration of the mariners’ missing narration also entailed the production of knowledge that Melville had not granted them in *Moby Dick*.

In associating his argument with the U.S. national security state with the mariners’ disqualified narratives, James transformed the terrain of *Moby Dick* into an alternative public sphere. Throughout the cold war, the newly decolonized countries acquired significance through their alignment with one or the other of the global hegemons that identified them with the systems of representation through which they administered and controlled their territories. However in his commentary on *Moby Dick*, James refused the discursive rules requiring that he identify himself with either Russia or the United States. Rather than agreeing to be constituted out of these categories of identification, he suspended the cold war’s rules of discursive recognition and disrupted the bipolar logic that the discourse mandated.

Because his commentary could not be stably located for or against either of these positions, James’s reading opened up a space that was internal to *Moby Dick* but extrinsic to the frame narrative that imposed the cold war’s rules. James’s extraterritorial literary strategy was designed to cause the territorializing imperatives of the First and the Second Worlds to appear reversible rather than mutually exclusive. James might be described as having set himself against cold war rule by way of his identification with a secondary rule—to do narrative
justice to the crew—that was internal to its code. The unacknowledged knowledge of the "meanest mariners, renegades and castaways" thereafter constituted alternatives to both forms of rule.

In transmitting knowledge that brought into focus the power differentials of the political rationalities of the Three Worlds, James’s commentary on the mariners’ narratives bent the system of rules that had formerly regulated the interpretation of *Moby Dick* in a direction that linked it to historical processes that exponents of world history had ignored. James’s reading associated the crew who were victims of the processes of global integration in the nineteenth century with persons who were comparably victimized by the global processes that the US continued in the twentieth. If world history lost track of subnational, anti-colonialist movements and diasporic movements that had not somehow already been encompassed either by the national or the imperial, the mariners’ narratives materialized a political formation at the site of this elision that called forth a past that had been repressed by the categorizations of world history.

James’s commentary unfolded within a network of economic, political, and cultural exchanges whose routes were written off the official cartographies. Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker have described the historical formation with which James associated his castaway reading as a “hydrarchy”. 22. The hydrarchy was a maritime world of labor and community-building whose members were not regulated by the rule of law that rationalized the values of the global marketplace. The hydrarchy was populated by rogues, beggars, sailors, vagrants, and itinerant workers. These stateless, heterogeneous, geographically dispersed, mutlinational, and mutiracial peoples participated in global diasporic routings that were off the maritime state’s charts. The highly uncontrollable, motley spaces on the ships of the hydrarchy differed from the regulated spatialities of the colony, the nation, and the plantation. If the accumulation of
international capital depended upon the exploitation of Atlantic labor, these embodiments of living labor effected breaks in that process.

In producing what might be called the right to the right to narration for the characters who had been denied it in Melville’s text, James disrupted American literary studies’ monopoly over the interpretation of *Moby Dick*. In creating a site within the symbolic order for the communication of the crew’s formerly excluded knowledge, however, James tacitly transformed this knowledge into the basis for an alternative social order.

Overall *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways: the Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In* communicated two asymmetrical commentaries—about *Moby Dick* (“the story of Herman Melville”) and about Ellis Island (“the world we live in”). James’s interpretation of *Moby Dick* circulated through the official channels interconnecting the relays in the planetary literary system. But in recounting the narratives of his fellow detainees, James communicated the literary contraband of persons whose exclusion from the territories of both global hegemons—Russian communism and US market liberalism—rendered them extraterritorials in the planetary system. When James transmitted these narrations through the literary vehicle that had formerly silenced them, he produced a form of literature for the peoples without literature that could not be included within the extant planetary literary system.

But the literary formations that emerged at the site of this dual transmission should not to be understood as less developed forms of planetary literature. The renegades’ literatures are emergent in the sense that they communicate a different sense of the literary object, as well as its addressees and by way of modes of transmission that cannot be readily comprehended within existing theoretical and methodological hegemonies. James interconnected these two processes of literary transmission—planetary commentary on Melville’s story and the extraterritorial recountings of the experiences of occupants of Ellis
Island—by way of an informal economy of the production, transmission and distribution of knowledge.

The symbolic exchange James effected when he turned “the story of Herman Melville” towards “the world we live in,” also changed the contours of Melville’s narrative. In adding accounts of the knowledges produced by the mariners and renegades on Ellis Island at the conclusion of his interpretation of Melville, James imagined an ending for the crew on board the Pequod. that was different from the fatal wreck to which Melville had consigned them James’s final chapter “A Natural but Necessary Conclusion.” added to his commentary on Moby Dick the heroic parts that Melville had promised the “spirit of equality” the “mariners, renegades and castaways” would play. But the new knowledges that James produced about Moby Dick and the “world we live” could not be integrated within the frame narrative that set Ahab’s totalitarianism into opposition to Ishmael’s liberal democracy. The deportees’ stories mounted forces of resistance to both of the superpowers comprising this bipolar apportionment of the planet. When he added to the frame narrative the non-integratable accounts of his fellow mariners, renegades and castaways from Ellis Island, these stories disrupted the norms sedimented within its frame. James thereby directly linked these alternative forms of literary production to the international social movements whose imperatives they corroborated.

After he added their stories to it, James transformed Moby Dick into a medium that endowed these political refugees with the properties of free expression and mobility normatively associated with Melville’s literary masterpiece. But upon passing their untold tales through his commentary on Moby Dick, James also effected a revolution in the field of transmission. Rather than continuing the literary protocols through which it had undertaken the americanization of the globe, Moby Dick was quite literally overtaken in James’s
text by the mariners, renegades and castaways who communicated their refugee accounts throughout all of the diaspora networks across the globe.

The detainees on Ellis island communicated by way of informal symbolic economies that materialized an interdiscursive space: “They pass to one another political articles in the popular press, and they discuss and fill in from personal experience”. The detainees endowed this space with forms of discursive creativity through which they communicated alternatives to the bipolar dispensation of the planet that *Moby Dick* was made to communicate. After he transmitted their untold narratives James transposed the detainees’ interdiscursive space into a geopolitical power. Their discursive creativity transformed this canonical masterwork that had been harnessed on behalf of circulating american values to deliver alternatives to it.

In writing about Melville from within this passage that had not yet been fully subjectivized, James also multiplied the temporalities in which *Moby Dick* might be interpreted. James’s commentary on *Moby Dick* could not engender a “relative simultaneity”-- the empty homogeneous “now” interconnecting James and Melville within the timeful continuum of the planetary literary system—because the state’s deportation of him has rendered him non- nonsynchronous with the continuum undergirding the planetary literary system. However the accounts of the mariners that James added to his commentary did generate a radical futurity. The mariners renegades and castaways shared the same chronotope—they occupied a place that is placed outside the social order and they hoped for a new world. But the temporality animating the mariners’ tales was neither the eternal present of the literary classic, nor the past definite that historians deploy to keep track of completed past actions, nor was it the present perfect, the what has been of who we now are, of the literary memoirist. The events recounted within their narratives are more properly understood as transpiring within the future anterior.
The future anterior links a past event with a possible future upon which the past event depends for its significance. The split temporality intrinsic to the future anterior describes an already existing state of affairs at the same time that it stages the temporal practice through which that state of affairs “will have been” produced. In *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World we Live In*, James represents a past event—the collective revolt that did not take place in the past—as dependent on a future event—the dismantling of the global emergency state—by which the crew’s revolt will have accomplished it. When he links the revolt that had not taken place on the *Pequod* with the possible future repeal of the state’s emergency measures, the future repeal returns to the past to transform this virtual revolt into what will have been its literary precedent.

As characters who lacked adequate representation in Melville’s text, the mariners, renegades and castaways belonged to a temporal dimension that could not be synchronized either with the americanist frame narrative or with the planetary system that hegemonized its values. These figures did not produce a simultaneity with the past, and they called for a futurity that is not the future of the present. Their narratives might be described as producing a future for a past that world history excluded as the precondition for synchronizing the planet with the time kept by the global marketplace. This past that had not yet become present could not become present within the themes, characters and representations organizing the frame narrative that *Moby Dick* was made to represent. It could only become present within the extraterritorial space by means of which the formerly excluded becomes more inclusive than the included. The extraterritorial past of the radically altered future:

...will also consist of that which is refused from construction, the domains of the represed, forgotten and the irrecoverably foreclosed. That which is not included is exteriorized by boundary as a
phenomenal constituent of the sedimented effect called construction will be as crucial to its definition as that which is included; this exteriority is not distinguishable as a moment. Indeed the notion of the moment may well be nothing other than a retrospective fantasy of mathematical mastery imposed upon the interrupted durations of the past. 23.

James’s description of his fellow castaways’ knowledge also characterized his own project’s relation to the state. Having been classified by the state as an exception to democratic norms, James has discovered a way to turn the extraterritorial space in which the exception is located to his rhetorical advantage. Giorgio Agamben has analyzed the space of the exception with great precision. An exceptions “cannot be included in the whole of which it is a member and cannot be a member of the whole in which it is already included.” 24. When they are included within a political order, exceptions name what that order must exclude to achieve unity and coherence. Because they name the limit to a polity’s inclusiveness, exceptions also produce what might be described as the illusion of an enveloping border for the members of the nation-state who have not been excluded. As the member that the nation must exclude in order for the state to achieve coherence and unity, exceptions also designate the figures that a state produces when it establishes a historically specific concretization of the universalizing process known as nation-formation. But since the space of the exception cannot be integrated within the statist order, it also designates what we have called the space of extraterritoriality. Extraterritoriality names what is included within the planetary system as what must be placed outside the planetary order to produce the appearance of orderliness.

If the Global Homeland State has erected a planetary order in which the peoples across the globe have been deterritorialized, the peoples of the planet are
in need of the extraterritorial literary imagination of writers like C.L.R. James on Ellis Island and Osip Mandelstam in Vorozhev whose internal extraneity to the planetary order can engender alternatives to it. When the literature for we extraterritorials emerges, the Homeland State of Emergency that has presently enveloped the planet will itself vanish into the punctum out of which it originated.

Endnotes


2. A succinct account of this dynamic can be found in Frederick Buell, “Nationalist Postnationalism: Globalist Discourse in Contemporary American Culture”, *American Quarterly* 50 (September 1998): 548-592.

3. For various perspectives on the influence of these transnational movement on postnational American Studies, see the various contributions to *Postnational American Studies* ed. John Carlos Rowe (Berkeley: Univeristy of California Press, 2000).


10. In his “Introduction” to Richard and Elizabeth Mc Kane’s translation of The Voronezh Notebooks Victor Krivulin observes that “Before the Revolution, the ideals of the revolutionary terrorists were alien to Mandelstam. And after the revolution, he was sickened by the official exaltation of the ‘People’s Will’. But in the last years of his life, especially in the Voronezh period, as witnessed by the memoirs of his widow, he felt an unexpected and growing sympathy for those people, who looked on their own (and unfortunately others’) lives, as just a sacrifice for the liberation and happiness of the Russian peasant.” The Voronezh Notebooks: Osip Mandlestam Poems 1935-1937, translated by Richard and Elizabeth Mc Kane (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1996). P.17


13. My discussion of the biopolitical settlement as well as my understanding of the state of emergency and the space of the exception is indebted to Giorgio Agamen’s remarkable discussion of the internally antagonized concept of the “people” and the Concentration Camp as the nomos of modern life in Means without End: Notes on Politics (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).


16. Agamben has proposed that the modern nation state was organized out of a the nexus that correlated a determinate localization (the land) with a determinate order (the state) as these are mediated by the state’s rules for the inscription of bare life. But the state’s localizations necessarily produce dislocated peoples whose disorderly movements exceed the political that would order these errant forms of life in a determinate space by way of juridical rules. Means without End: Notes on Politics (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) pp. 19-20.

17. The line is taken from The Second Moscow Notebook, and is quoted by Victor Krivulin in his “Introduction” to The Voronezh Notebooks: Osip Mandlestam


19. Victor Krivulin claimed that while he was in Voronezh, Mandelstam “does not ‘write, but literally speaks out, screams out and voices his poems.” The Voronezh texts were handwritten by his wife to his dictation. The last poem attributed to him was memorized by a campmate in 1938 ‘Black night, clustrophobic barracksm, plump lice”The Voronezh Notebooks: Osip Mandlestam Poems 1935-1937, translated by Richard and Elizabeth Mc Kane (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1996). Pp 21 and 14.


21. For further discussion of these points, see Donald E. Pease “Doing Justice to C.L.R. James’s Mariners, Renegades and Castaways, boundary 2 vol. 27, no.2 summer 2000, p. 1-20.


24. Giorgio Agamben, Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life (Stanford: Stanford University press, 1998). p. 24. The exception the state produces to engender the limits to the rule of democratic governance might also be understood to embody the rule that has produced the exception. As the limit internal to the national order but external to its conditions of belonging, the exception can consent to this non-position, or turn the limit into legal grounds for supplanting the entire order.