Thinking about how to approach the question, “What comes after globalization?” shaped early deliberations around this book project in early 2020. Ideas about what a post-global world might look like departed from the increasing indications of a fundamental historical shift: after thirty years of shaping the world, the current phase of accelerated globalization appeared to be coming to an end. However, if at that moment our reflections focused on phenomena such as climate change, global migrations and inequality, and the surge of nationalism across the globe, nobody could presage how the soon to follow events of the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine would intensify this notion of finding ourselves at a historical threshold, where the exhaustion of the globalist project becomes evident once and for all.

From 1989 onwards, the historical present has undoubtedly been dominated by optimistic and progressive discourses of all-embracing global integration, borne by the ideals of economic and social liberalization (King 2017). It has also been steeped in optimism, both in terms of the philosophy of history (Fukuyama 1992) and in terms of technology, as promoted by the digital revolution. However, since at least the turn of the millennium, the dark sides and asymmetries of what Ulrich Beck has termed the “world risk society” (Beck 1999) – with its globally networked societies, economies, and cultures – have also grown more and more apparent (Stiglitz 2002, Appadurai 2006, Hirst et al. 2009, Turek 2017, Diamond 2018, Hüther et al. 2019). Today, there are unmistakable, fundamental cracks in the formerly hegemonic manner in which the world has been ordered and perceived from a Western perspective. Over the past fifteen years, wide-ranging developments have debunked the optimistic paradigm of globalism – whose manifold inequalities and dead ends certainly have been glaringly visible for most of the world’s population since 1989. It is telling that only with the accelerated succession of global crisis also affecting the Western centers of this globalist optimism – financial crises, epidemics, military conflicts, and new waves of both migration and displacement – a new process of reflection on the past decades has been triggered.
All of these recent trends have led to a manifest exhaustion of said globalization paradigm – yet they have not dismantled related forms of global connectedness (O’Sullivan 2019). Hence, when we invoke the advent of a post-global era, this makes no claim that worldwide phenomena of networking and integration have been discounted or discarded. Rather, this emerging concept is considered an attempt at a critical discursive and epistemological response to the production, consequences, and asymmetries of globality itself. The term of “post-globality” has been little used until now (Flew 2020). However, we consider it a useful framework to discuss the complex implications of the mentioned process of exhaustion of the globalization-paradigm, as it allows for subsuming and critically discussing other approaches to these phenomena, while not losing sight of new constellations of global relatedness.

Contrary to concepts such as “deglobalization” (Bello 2005, James 2018), which are fixated on world trade and economic policy dimensions, our notion of post-globality not only aims to integrate the philosophical and aesthetic dimensions of the problematic economic, ecological, social, and technological dimensions of exhaustion, but to understand them as fundamentally dialectic. The prevailing notions of a “[n]egative globality” as “the underside of the great narrative of global modernization” (Moreiras 2001: 51) and the loss and exhaustion of a determinate kind of world (Siskind 2019) are accompanied by the creation of new perceptions and inventions of alternative (post-)global forms of life.

Doubtlessly, much has been said in recent years in the debates for and against the legitimacy of “global” perspectives in the fields of literary and cultural studies, particularly within the paradigm of World Literature mirroring these sort of philosophical and political discussions (Apter 2013, Moser/Simonis 2014, Cheah 2016, Mufti 2016, Müller/Siskind 2019). In some cases, the terms of “world” or “globality” have been dismissed and supplemented by alternative concepts such as “planetarity” (Spivak 1999), “other globes” (Ferdinand et al. 2019), or “earth literature” (Stockhammer 2018). This is not the place to recall or to examine these concepts in detail. Rather, we would like to highlight the shared assumption of these works regarding the potential of fiction and narrative as a place of world-making and of (self-)reflexivity about perceptions of living in a world shaped by processes of globalization. “Globalization” is a phenomenon that – due to its complexity and abstractness – can only be grasped in the form of (ever-competing) imaginaries (Pratt 2018) and narrative(s) – as recent publications in the field of political sciences, law, and economy have also underlined (Roberts/Lamp 2021). For what the contributions in this book aspire to is less an intervention into ongoing conceptual debates, even if some of the articles do address this aspect, but more an investigation of concrete examples – texts, films,
works of art – to show how processes of transforming notions of globality are represented and reflected in specific artistic practices.

Approaching the post-global in contemporary works of art (and particularly in literary texts) raises the question of how these works draw on discourses and images of globality on a thematic scale but also on the level of form. Numerous studies on world literature have posited the existence of a specific form of "global novel" (Hoyos 2015, Ganguly 2016) or of a so-called “plot of globalization” describing “the use by contemporary authors of the traditional literary device of entrelacement, or ‘multi-strand narration,’ as a means of representing the intricate and problematic ties that bind us together in the age of globalized capitalism” (Beecroft 2016: 195). However, if we assume that “literatures operating in certain cultural environments are prone to employ specific formal features adapted to the specific contexts in which they find themselves” (Beecroft 2016: 195), the crucial question would be how post-global aesthetics with their increased conscience of the dialectical character of globalization reflect this in their creation of artistic forms, using for example dialectical continua such as connection/exclusion or entanglement/disentanglement. Metaphor and allegory as preferred forms of representation of globality come into play, as well as genre and narratives forms, such as dystopian narratives or archival fictions. Further, we assume that all kinds of post-global aesthetics are crucially influenced by a questioning of the epistemological conditions and implications of changing notions of the world and the question of what practical, normative dimensions contribute to processes of “world-making” in the current period of diverse and rapid upheavals in global systems of order. The incorporation of non-Western epistemologies (Santos 2008), such as indigenous cosmologies and post-anthropocentric approaches, as well as literary traditions of the post-colonial Global South (Cheah 2016, Burns 2019) represent an important dimension of most of the contributions in this book.

With its focus on these sorts of transformations on the level of aesthetic form, this book equally opts for a shift of perspective regarding the fact that a predominant strain of research within world literature studies over the past decade has focused on material exchange processes of a globalized market (Müller 2022). With this volume we seek to move away from questions of the spatial widening of material circulation in order to focus in on the artistic exploration of the post-global in Latin American literatures and cultures. However critically the institution of literature and the status of this medium may be considered in the present, we insist on its role as a privileged space for enacting discrepancies of perception, as Jacques Rancière postulates, pointing to its ability to intervene in the “relationship between practices and forms of visibility and modes of saying that carves up one or more common worlds” (Rancière 2011: 4). Especially in
regard to the ambivalence of globalization processes, whose perception and assessment are characterized by divergent perspectives, we can take up Rancière’s contention that literary works are able to depict this “distribution and [...] redistribution of space and time, place and identity, speech and noise, the visible and the invisible” as a paradigmatic illustration of the “distribution of the perceptible” (Rancière 2011: 4).

The example of Latin America serves as an observational microcosm of the ambivalences posed by the globalized experience of the world over the past decades. The past three decades of intensified global interconnectedness have neither solved nor prevented a myriad of problems in the region: ongoing massive social inequality, economic instability, the continued destruction of ecosystems, the persistence of endemic violence, new surges of political and social polarization, waves of migration, and failures of the state in some countries of the region, most notably Venezuela. In fact, one might hypothesize that many of the listed phenomena, especially in the economic and ecological realms, have been exacerbated, if not caused by the negative side effects of globalization processes, which have disproportionately impacted Latin America (García Canclini 2014). All of these effects have been navigated and enacted in many works of 21st-century Latin American literature. Especially since the late 2000s, as the contributions in this book aim to show, numerous distinct aesthetics emerged, aesthetics that squarely address the experience of “world exhaustion” outlined above.

These questions are discussed in the five chapters of this book, the first of them being dedicated to theoretical approaches to the problem of the post-global from Latin American perspectives. The next four chapters are organized around thematic focuses, each of which represents a different symptom of today’s globalization phase which lends itself to the exploration of post-global aesthetics. The contributions of chapters two and three focus on problems subsumed under the concept of Anthropocene narratives (Dürbeck/Hüpkes 2020). Within globalized economic and social relationships, the ambivalences of world exhaustion processes and asymmetries are perhaps most readily visible in the global flows of resources and merchandise and their attendant ecological consequences. Over the past thirty years, with the liberalization and expansion of world trade; the addition of enormous new consumer markets, especially in Asia; and the march of technological progress, the exploitation of Latin American resources has escalated to an unprecedented scale. The global asymmetries of these processes are made visible by differing local perspectives. Products which get sold in the supermarkets or processed in the factories of Europe, North America, and Asia are often sourced from Latin America, where they are extracted using processes with deeply problematic ecological and social implications. The destructive interconnections of
global production chains across the region range from clearcut logging in the Brazilian Amazon, to soybean monoculture in Argentina for cattle feed, to the extraction of Chilean lithium deposits for electric car batteries. Consequently, these issues increasingly appear in contemporary Latin American literature (and other art forms) (Hoyos 2019). At the same time, these writings and media draw on an immense corpus of imaginaries and fictions that look back on Latin America’s long history as an arena of (post)colonial resource extraction and the corresponding elimination of ecosystems complete with their human, zoological, and botanical diversity (Beckman 2013). It is against this backdrop that the post-global literatures of Latin America portray the problematic ecological and social repercussions of the region’s involvement in the contemporary and historical dimensions of global economic cycles. Apart from this, in the context of discussions around defining the Anthropocene as the latest geohistorical era, Latin American perspectives (Ulloa 2017) have increasingly tackled the collapse of traditional epistemological borders between humans and nature (Latour 1999) as a subject for aesthetic reflection.

As the contributions to chapter four show, a further point of interest when taking a post-global aesthetics perspective on Latin American literatures and cultures is the revolutionary potential of the digital transformation that has already had a radical impact on Latin American societies. Over the past twenty years, this key aspect of a post-global writing practice has drawn increasing attention from both scholarship and publishing (Gainza 2018). Experiences of digitality are invariably marked by how forcefully it penetrates virtually every aspect of human life. They are also shaped fundamentally by its ambiguous utility, which pairs productive world creation with new phenomena of affective alienation and exploitation (Staab 2019, Nassehi 2019). Although the egalitarian promise of the world wide web was initially at the core of works engaging with the onward march of digitalization, more recently the focus has been placed on global asymmetries (Chan 2014), stemming from the West’s technological head start, and on regional opportunities. Here, literature exposes the tensions between world creation, in the sense of new ways of enacting contemporary life in the digital realm, and phenomena of large-scale world exhaustion extending as far as the breakdown of mental health caused by media consumption, which must always also be inextricably considered “world consumption” in the context of a global audience.

The final chapter of this book addresses the dimensions of migration and displacement representing an ongoing challenge – though tragedy might be a more suitable term – for the post-global world and for Latin America in particular. Even after the age of ‘classic’ exile and migration literature from Latin America, which came out of the politically repressive regimes of the 1970s and 1980s,
issues of forced displacement and migration remain a central aesthetic subject. Latin American literatures especially draw on new phenomena of world creation and exploration, as Siskind (2019) describes with regard to “end of the world” experiences. The hope that the prosperity pledged by globalization would also offer Latin American societies an exit from past social, political, and economic polarizations and instabilities has proved illusory. In many cases, links to new transnational phenomena have had their own grievous repercussions in specific national contexts. For example, Mexico’s decision to sign the NAFTA free trade agreement with the United States and Canada did not bring newfound economic and social stability. Quite the contrary, the arrangement caused serious domestic economic upheaval and an unprecedented wave of violence, accompanied by ever-clearer indications that the state was failing. Similarly, the example of Argentina’s national declaration of bankruptcy in 2001 gave early evidence that individual countries’ dependency on international legal and financial regimes, such as those of the IMF or WTO, could, in some cases, wreak havoc on their societies. Even in places such as Venezuela or Bolivia, where political projects were launched within alternative transnational ideological and economic alliances in the early 2000s, their political and social horizons two decades later are dominated by civil war-like conflicts and massive waves of displacement and migration. Those same trends continue to affect the chronically unstable countries of Central America as well as Haiti in the Caribbean. Especially given ever-tightening US immigration policies, more and more of these countries’ nationals emigrate to other Latin American countries, establishing new patterns of intra-regional migration and producing new forms of migration narratives as well.

This book is the outcome of a conference entitled “Post-Global Aesthetics: 21st Century Latin American Literatures and Cultures” that took place in June 2021. It was the closing conference of the European Research Council Consolidator Grant project, “Reading Global. Constructions of World Literature and Latin America”, realized at University of Cologne between 2015 and 2021. The shift in perspective from the project’s focus on material dimensions of the global book market to post-global aesthetics of contemporary Latin American literatures allowed for looking back on the achievements and the limits of this project whose realization would not have been possible without the generous funding by the European Research Council, the commitment of its team members, and the exchange with numerous colleagues from all over the world. We would like to thank to all of them, as well as to Valeska Díaz, Ceylan Küfner, and Jordan Lee Schnee for their valuable work in realizing the conference and editing this book’s manuscript.
Works Cited


