Introduction

This reader is designed to introduce students to some of the ways that the world has been woven into a system of interrelated but far from completely integrated processes, interactions, and transformations since long before the beginning of the Common Era. We will be concentrating on patterns of transmission, dispersion, exchange, and interconnection throughout the world that are primarily historical, ideological, or cultural. But even as we examine the historical emergence and consequences of global belief systems and cultural forms and practices, we will also need to look at important changes in global politics, sociology, and economics. Our aim will be to see how global formations, de-formations, and re-formations, at even the most ideational and subjective levels, have altered the way the world is now assumed to function as some kind of coordinated, or at least concatenated, system. We will also be interested in how scholars analyze and evaluate such phenomena.

The terms "global" and "globalization" are fraught with so many complications and discontents that one almost wishes one could substitute others in their place. As now used, globalization conjures up in many minds a spectacle of instantaneous electronic financial transfers, the amoral operations of the capitalist free-market, the erasure of local cultural differences, and the expansion of Western, but most especially American, power. This is hardly an attractive prospect, and when it is coupled with the world-wide evidence of increasing economic inequality, worsening degradation of the environment, heightened rivalry among ethnic groups, spreading militarism, the expansion of religious nationalism, normalization of the use of terror, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, globalization becomes associated in many minds with some of the most destructive forces on the planet.

In the face of such a specter, it is small comfort to learn that globalizing trends have, since World War II, also made possible a threefold increase in the world's per capita income, reduced by half the number of people living in direst poverty, reinforced the desire to work for nuclear disarmament, lent support to the war against terror, helped expand the environmental movement, and encouraged the organization of literally thousands of international groups and non-governmental organizations

(NGOs) devoted to addressing various social, political, and economic grievances and the relief of human suffering generally.[1] Yet despite such developments (and sometimes, paradoxically, even because of them), the gap between rich and poor in the world is being widened still further by the forces of economic as well as political and cultural globalization, and these forces need to be thoroughly and rapidly reorganized, as the United Nations has stated repeatedly, if this gap is not to reach catastrophic proportions. Global governance will have to be restructured to ensure massive and efficient debt relief for insolvent nations, to redirect aid to the poorest countries, to reform the allocation of the world's limited resources, to curtail corruption in those countries where mismanagement discourages foreign investment, to redress the continual violation of human rights, to ensure that all counties in the world submit to the rule of international law, to restrict the spread of international terrorism, and to reduce the spread and number, as well as improve the security, of weapons of mass destruction. But the restructuring of global governance will also have to include reforms far more subtle, such as an alteration of the lenses by which cultures perceive and assess one another and an enhancement of opportunities for more and more of the world's people, as well as of sovereign states, to shape their own destinies.

However, before we venture too many generalizations about a worldwide process that in its latest phases is changing at a pace rapidly approaching what feels like warp speed, it is important to dispel a few myths about the words "globalization" and the "global" themselves. We can begin by conceding that the term "globalization" is commonly used to refer to the widening and deepening and speeding up of the interconnectedness of the world in many of its aspects, from the economic to the ecological, the cultural to the criminal, the social to the spiritual, but there are still vigorous disputes with very large consequences about just when globalization began, how it is best conceptualized, what its causal dynamics and structural features are, and whether it has, or has not, been good for the world and its peoples. About the only thing on which most students of the term "globalization" are agreed is that it refers to a set of processes by which the world is being threaded ever more tightly together, a process by which the world is becoming, if not a single place with systematic properties, then an interdependent system of localities whose fate is even more complexly, if also unpredictably, intertwined.[2]

But this in turn suggests that the corollary term "global" should not be assumed to represent some seamless whole or unified totality. The term "global" functions merely to suggest the reach and resonance of those processes by which the world is continuously being reconceived and remade as an almost infinitely intricate, but at the same time ever more interactive, organism that continues to remain something more than the simple sum of its parts. The term "global" did not achieve its meteoric rise until the mid-1980s, when it began to displace cognate terms like "international" and "international relations." Those earlier terms had come into usage toward the end of the eighteenth century and signaled the emergence of what in retrospect appears to have been a new world order, where territorial states now began to assume responsibility for organizing socio-political and cultural processes and the path was laid for the development of what, in the nineteenth century, became known as the era of European imperialism. But now at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, the ascendancy of the terms "global" and "globalization" seem to be auguries of the face that we are moving into still another world order, and this time one marked by a reduction rather than expansion of the power of "nation-states" as individuals and communities

gain access to sources of information and power that are globally disseminated and thus bypass many of the traditional controls of the political state.

Yet this implies that the process of world-making, or re-making, known as globalization is a comparatively contemporary phenomenon which has accelerate to its present velocity only, perhaps, because of the collapse of the Soviet Union and hence the termination of the Cold War.[3] But a number of students of the subject push the date of this most recent and vigorous surge of globalization back a good many decades to the beginning of the modern era at the end of the nineteenth century, when industrial capitalism fueled the original expansion of European nation-states and those nation-states then undertook to acquire and consolidate colonial empires.[4] Other thinkers and scholars move the origins of the contemporary form of globalization back still further, to the inauguration of the Age of the Renaissance or, as it is often referred to, the Early Modern period, when Europe commenced its initial exploration of the rest of the globe and embarked simultaneously on the development of early world trade.[5]

Those who associate the origins of globalization with this first European Age of Exploration and Discovery are also likely to assume that when the "modern world system," as Immanuel Wallerstein has termed it, first took shape in the early 1600s, it was essentially an economic rather than political system and was built around a series of core states characterized by aggressive commercial growth, strong governmental structures, and a powerful sense of national identity, all of which permitted them to control, for their own benefit, the evolution of those weaker states and regions of the world that developed on their peripheries. Yet even then, in the seventeenth century, it was soon to become apparent that an emergent modern world system based on an extensive system of commodity exchanges was also becoming linked as well by systems of exchanges that were cultural and symbolic. Just as ideas and ideologies were being traded along with goods, so the new wealth thus accumulated was being defined not only by the size of capital reserves and sailing fleets but also by the production of commodities like buildings, monuments, and paintings reflective of new styles both of affluence and of taste. Commerce, in other words, was going cultural.

Earliest evidence on a global scale of these cultural and symbolic as well as commercial exchanges can, as a matter of fact, be detected more than two thousand years before the creation of the modern world system itself when, as historians like William H. McNeill and Marshall Hodgson have demonstrated, an Afro-Eurasian zone of civilization first came into existence over a period of something like a thousand years.[6] Stretching from the shores of the Atlantic to the waters of the Pacific, this zone of expanding interactions and transactions was organized by trade routes that served as a conduit not only for the passage of merchandise, services, and human beings but also for the slow but profound transmission—and transformation—of ideas, institutions, customs, diets, rituals, religions, and, perhaps above all, languages. Indeed, if this expanding zone of civilization, which still serves in certain respects as the prototype for the way globalization continues to operate today, reveals anything at all, it shows how cultural interactions have, throughout its long history, often proved as fateful, if not more fateful, than economic or political ones—if only because cultural transactions (and this can't be overemphasized) have so frequently determined the way economic and political transactions could be interpreted, evaluated, and even actualized.

As it happens, this history by which the world has, for several thousand years, been continuously woven and rewoven into an increasingly interlinked and interdependent

assemblage of life-systems is not one to which, until very recently, the social sciences or in the humanities have paid very much attention. For all of our relatively recent interest, say, in the histories of slavery and racism, or of imperialism, colonialism, ethnicity, or even sexism, or of our earlier disciplinary involvements in such fields as comparative literature, world history, and the history of religions, or, for that matter, our pedagogical commitment to language programs (the latter of which deserve credit for keeping the possibility of globalism alive even if they could not provide a model for its full conceptualization), we still too often continue to view globalization merely as a temporary geopolitical and economic development or even as a passing academic fad and consequently fail respond to anything other than what we take to be its liabilities and banalities.

Thus while questions about globalization's evolution and subsequent historicization, or about its form and function in different locales, or about its association with other historical phenomena (such as the development of capitalism, or the democratic and, much later, socialist revolutions, or the rise of the nation-state, or the industrial revolution, or mass migration, or global war, or the transformations in communications and finance, or multiculturalism, or the World Wide Web) remain hotly debated issues both within universities and outside, globalization itself is clearly here to stay no matter how much its contemporary forms are certain to change. The challenge for higher education internationally, then, is not so much to decide whether globalization and the global deserve to be taken seriously but how best to engage them critically—how, in other words, to assess their implications and consequences without simply legitimating their most problematic features.

Needless to say, globalization has attracted its proponents and defenders as well as its skeptics and opponents. Among those who greet its features with some degree of enthusiasm, regarding globalization as essentially a positive development in a changing world that will lead to greater prosperity, peace, and freedom, one can distinguish between what David Held and his collaborators have described as "hyperglobalists" and "transformationalists."[7] "Hyperglobalists" are represented by those like the economist Kenichi Ohmae who believe that we have now entered a new era in the world's history in which most processes of human interaction and intervention are determined by the global marketplace.[8] In this new world, where economies have become denationalized, even as they have become more hegemonic, and the borders between nation-states have been rendered more fluid and porous, transnational class allegiances among elites and knowledge workers are displacing more traditional and territorialized ways of living and thinking and a new global civilization is evolving with its own mechanisms of world governance, such as the International Monetary Fund and the International World Court. "Transformationalists," on the other hand, like the sociologist Anthony Giddens, maintain that the unprecedented character of recent global change has produced a still more massive shakeout of institutions and societies that is by no means confined to economics alone and whose outcome still remains uncertain. New patterns of global stratification, together with an increased deterritorialization of economic enterprise, have seriously diminished the power once exercised by nation-states and, as a consequence, nation-states now find themselves increasingly subject to the jurisdiction, and sometimes the coercion, of international authorities and institutions.[9] Thus even if states retain a measure of authority and control over their own boundaries, those boundaries have become fragmented, viscous, and formless and what they enclose and keep out still more questionable and problematic.

Not surprisingly, these more enthusiastic proponents of globalization are countered by a large and growing body of skeptics, critics, and opponents of globalization. On one side are scholars

like the historian Samuel P. Huntington who question the picture of a world dominated by a single global marketplace and challenge the idea that internationalization has now eroded the power of national governments to regulate their own affairs. Even more significant, Huntington disputes the claim made by its proponents that globalization has destroyed most traditional ways of thinking.[10] To the contrary, Huntington argues that the patterns of inequality, hierarchy, and hegemony that have always structured the world economy have in fact in fact strengthened rather than weakened the attraction of various national and religious orthodoxies, and he further maintains that these traditional orthodoxies and even fundamentalisms are now fracturing the world along ethnic and cultural lines that conform to civilizational differentiations and blocs. Such blocs or assemblages of tradition, Huntington maintains, are deeply resistant, often violently, to any notions of cultural homogenization and are almost inevitably bound to produce clashes, possibly cataclysmic, with other civilizational blocs. In the face of such possibilities and eventualities, Huntington counsels the need to recognize that the new world order that is emerging globally is civilization-based and that the only way to avoid a total war among civilizations like the West or Islam or China, all of which possess universalist pretentions, depends on convincing world leaders to accept the multicivilizational character of global politics and cooperate to maintain it.

At the other pole among skeptics and critics one finds a series of thinkers and actors (many of the latter having taken to the streets to protest the policies of the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank) who believe that globalization simply represents another form of domination by "First World" countries of "Third World" countries, a form of domination in which individual distinctions of culture and society are being erased and local economies are becoming more firmly coopted by or subsumed within a global system of capital expansion. This group of thinkers and activists is likely to associate globalization with everything from the destruction of local culture to the depletion and degradation of the biosphere, from the practice of an expansionist, multinational capitalism bent on controlling the world's oil reserves and even, as has been attempted, the world's water supply, to the creation of a new era of Western, but primarily American, imperialism where the United States will permit no other political entity to compete with it in power.

Such differences of opinion and perspective only point up the fact that the field of global studies is a site of contestation as well as consensus. As a field of inquiry as well as of agency, its object is not necessarily to resolve such disputes so much as to deepen understanding of them by placing them in a more complex historical and intra- as well as interdisciplinary perspective. The central questions to be asked, therefore, take a variety of different forms: What are the forces that have brought the world itself into being as an interactive, ever-changing structure of processes and practices? What forms has that densely concatenated, diversely elaborated structure taken over time? What fresh light do such forms, and the factors that bring them into being, throw on such issues as personal and cultural identity—formation, mass migration, international terrorism, practices of child rearing, religious violence, human rights reform, scientific and medical practice, stock market fluctuations, the digitalizatation of information, culinary and dietary habits, and the new ubiquity of the aesthetic? Is there such a thing as a global perspective? In this new, more global era, has humanity taken on new cosmopolitan forms of expression? To help humanize, manage, and regulate this new world order, can we develop something like a global ethics that emerges not, as it were, from above but rather from below?

The answers to such questions will not, and do not, and have not come easily, but the questions themselves become more pressing every day. To gain a critical purchase on them, much less to begin to formulate plausible answers to some of them, will require something more than an admission that the materials we study in the humanities and the social sciences—as well as in the life and physical sciences—are the product of globalizing forces. In addition, it will necessitate an acknowledgement that the methods by which we study our materials, no less than the disciplinary paradigms by which we organize and interpret those materials, will have to change as well. It is not enough to admit new materials into the curriculum. We shall have to develop new optics to bring them into focus.

Evidence of a new disposition in American higher education to begin to engage globalization critically can be seen in a number of places. Chief among them is the materialization over the last several decades of new transdisciplinary configurations such as Caribbean studies, inter-American studies, Atlantic studies, European studies, Iberian and Latin American studies, African, Sub-Saharan, East Asian, South Asian, Middle Eastern, Central Asian, and now Pacific Rim studies. Similar evidence can also be found in some of the exciting cross-cultural and transnational work associated with the assortment of practices known as "cultural studies." Yet despite the notoriety of some of these academic initiatives and the important scholarship associated with others, their achievements are still too frequently known only to a comparatively small circle of specialists and, as a consequence, they have had far less impact than they should have had on the way the rest of the humanities and the social sciences prioritize their questions and organize their research and, most especially, their teaching. Thus to enhance the possibility of engaging globalization critically, it will be necessary for students, particularly in the humanities and the social sciences, to relinquish some of their older intellectual habits and acquire some new ones.

The most debilitating among former intellectual habits that need to be abandoned is the maintenance of that barrier within the academy that currently divides the social sciences from the humanities. This barrier is not only anachronistic but in many ways indefensible, since its transgression, subversion, and reconstruction has been one of the central intellectual achievements on both sides of this disciplinary divide. During the last several decades, we have witnessed not only, as the anthropologist Clifford Geertz once famously termed it, "the humanistic refiguration of social thought" but also what might be described by the proponents of literary, historical, and religious studies as a sociopolitical refiguration of humanistic thought, and yet this important conceptual revisioning has done comparatively little, at least at the level of advanced scholarship, to change the way that knowledge is structured or pursued in most academic institutions.[11] In most institutions of higher learning, we still divide the College of Arts and Sciences, or its equivalent, into artificial compounds that wall off the so-called harder natural and physical sciences from so-called softer human sciences, like the humanities and the social sciences, and then segregate the latter two from each other on the pretext that the humanities deal with values, the social sciences with facts.

Next to go will have to be the practice of thinking primarily in terms of stable entities to be studied, whether they be traditions, periods, institutions, practices, texts, careers, genres, or what-have-you. Globalization, as its closest students have made abundantly clear, is about process, movement, flow, in manifold directions, at varying degrees of speed, with differing consequences, in specific sites and particular moments. Nothing can be studied any longer with any degree of accuracy that does not take account of at least these four variables. But this in turn suggests that our

procedures for mapping such developments and their interconnections, in truth our very methods of intellectual cartography themselves, must change. Where before it was assumed that flows, whether cultural, demographic, financial, or ideological were primarily linear, uniform, and mostly regular, we now realize that their operations are better understood on the model of a fractal whose patterns are irregular, haphazard, and multidirectional.[12] We have also come to appreciate that the arrangement of such processes can be overlapping or, as biologists say, polythetic. And, finally, we have come to realize that many changes historically seem to resemble what chaos theorists call "the butterfly effect," where infinitesimal alterations in complex structures can sometimes yield consequences all out of proportion to their initial causes.

Still a third habit that must be discarded in the social sciences as well as the humanities is our tendency to conceive of cultures, like identities, as homogenous, monolithic, and easily discriminable. Just as globalization has taught us about the capacity of cultures to move across national borders, to adapt to different local conditions, and to recombine, mutate, and recirculate in various ways, so we must learn that cultures, like the subjectivities they help organize and interpret, are not merely unstable but also mixed, hybrid, complex, diverse, and deterritorialized.

A fourth habit we must relinquish is the tendency to periodize by centuries, as though the life of time, if I may coin a phrase, can be measured everywhere and at all times in segments of one hundred years. Change occurs at different rates of speed in different cultures and at different moments; shifts in style as well as thought, like the movements of people and the development or reform of institutions sets—or finds—its own pace, not always according to the calendar but by means of temporal calculuses that are more unruly and diverse. The year 1789 when the French Revolution took place compresses time. The 250-year reign of the Tokugawa Shogunate in Japan that ended with such startling abruptness at the beginning of the Meiji Restoration when modern Japanese history was inaugurated attempted to extend time indefinitely. Various people in the Middle East organize time not in relation to decades or centuries, as we do in the United States but in relation to the collapse of the Caliphate or the end of the Ottoman Empire.

But if time in effect moves at different rates of speed in different places for different peoples in relation to different trajectories of hope, possibility, custom, and coercion, so place is also a more elastic and unwieldly category than we have acknowledged in much of our scholarship. If the city as center has always defined the sense of place in many historical communities throughout the world—this imagery is still used in world systems theory to describe the relations between core and periphery—the state and the nation more recently usurped it as the principal marker of space. This is again as a result of the weakening of state boundaries and the ever-shifting coordinates of spatial definition. Merely think of what was involved when the Soviet Union disintegrated and 27 states, along with hundreds of communities defining themselves as distinct nationalities, were set free of the imperial ligatures that for nearly half a century held them all together. Or, again, consider what is now happening to national identity on the Continent with the expansion of the European Union, the establishment of a common currency, and the development of a plethora of transnational agencies, institutions, and administrations with jurisdictions that can override the laws and procedures of individual states. But even here—and one could multiply examples ad infinitum in East Asia, the Indonesian archipelago, particular regions of the African continent—the topography of space conforms to large geopolitical entities. Yet space has not always been so

conceived for people and cultures that have grown up along river systems or developed their lives in mountain, plain, desert, or forest regions. And then, too, there is the great company of nomadic peoples throughout history, or the equally large group of people in modern times who have been displaced by events beyond their own control and rendered refugees who simply migrate, if they are lucky, from one placeless locale, as it were, to another. While it becomes less and less likely that any people in the world now live utterly remote from, and untouched by, processes that are in some sense or other global, the fact remains that there are hundreds of millions of people in the world who go about their daily tasks with virtually no active conception of the geographies—urban, national, regional, continental, civilizational—by which we normally delineate space and place. Thus our maps, like our clocks, need to be recalibrated if we are to grasp the way time and space actually function in the life of many of the world's peoples.

Last but not least, we must acknowledge that if globalization has rendered cultures and the forms and practices that characterize them more mobile as well as socialized, enabling them to travel across traditional borders and help create and sustain new diasporic communities, it has also freed the faculty of the imagination, always a potent, if still too often undervalued, force in historical life, to become a principal agent in the construction and reconstruction of the global world itself. By this I mean that, we now think and feel in this new informational age as never before in forms whose origination is aesthetic and whose chief material is composed of symbols. Too often associated merely with escape, entertainment, or pure fantasy, the imagination now plays an even larger role in social construction, in productive work, than it has in the past. In addition to possessing the power it has always had in peoples' stories, dramas, dances, paintings, and constructions to help them make sense out of the sense of their lives, it has now come to acquire, with the increasingly instantaneous spread of mass culture, the power to influence, if not determine, the kinds of lives that make most sense to people. Hence we shall neither understand how in the past the global has lived its life through time, nor in the present how time itself has become ever more globalized, until we come to terms with the way the imagination has attempted, and continues to attempt, to turn life into the shape of its own desire.

After several chapters that seek to discuss some of the elemental terms that influence the debate about globalization, from notions of history, culture, and ideology to religion and empire as globalizing forces, the book is organized along a historical timeline of approximately one thousand years. Each chapter isolates some development along that timeline down to the present—the early modern oceanic discovery of the world, the scientific revolutions around the world, the rise of capitalisms and the industrial revolutions, the democratic and later socialist revolutions, colonialism, decolonization, and the postcolonial, global war, the international rights movement, the international women's movement—that essentially changed the coordinates of the global and thus altered the way its meaning could subsequently be recalculated. Such developments are followed down to the immediate present, where the world has again undergone global reconfigurations in relation to everything from the digitalization of culture, the spread of ethnic and religious violence, and the creation of global cities to the global endangerment of the planet itself.

Footnotes

1. Several lines in this paragraph and elsewhere in the Introduction are drawn from my "Globalizing Literary Studies," Special Issue of *PMLA*, coordinated by Giles Gunn, 116/1 (January, 2001), 16–31.
2. For someone who favors the first view, see Barrie Axford, "Globalization," *Understanding Contemporary Society: Theories of the Present*, ed. Gary Browning, Abigail Halcli, Frank Webster (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2000), 238–251; I am more inclined to the second in Giles Gunn, *Beyond Solidarity: Pragmatism and Difference in a Globalized World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).
3. For a defender of the first opinion, see Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux), 1999; for an advocate of the second, see David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry Into The Origins of Cultural Change* (New York: Blackwell, 1989).
4. This position is most often associated with Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (London: Polity Press, 1990).
5. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).
6. William H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West; A History of the Human Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963); Marshall Hodgson, *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
7. David Held and Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt and Jonathan Perraton, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics, and Culture* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 3–10.
8. Kenichi Ohmae, *The Evolving World Economy: Making Sense of the New World Order* (Boston: Harvard Business School, 1995).
9. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity.*
10. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).
11. Clifford Geertz, "Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought," *Local Culture: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 19–35.
12. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.