

GLOBALIZATION AND --- THE HUMANITIES

Edited by David Leiwei Li



香港大學出版社

HONG KONG UNIVERSITY PRESS

Hong Kong University Press

14/F Hing Wai Centre

7 Tin Wan Praya Road

Aberdeen

Hong Kong

© Hong Kong University Press 2004

ISBN 962 209 653 0 (hardback)

ISBN 962 209 654 9 (paperback)

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Secure On-line Ordering

<http://www.hkupress.org>

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Printed and bound by Liang Yu Printing Factory Ltd., in Hong Kong, China



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"At first glance, Square Word Calligraphy appears to be nothing more unusual than Chinese characters, but in fact it is a new way of rendering English words in the format of a square so they resemble Chinese characters. Chinese viewers expect to be able to read Square Word Calligraphy but cannot. Western viewers, however are surprised to find they can read it. Delight erupts when meaning is unexpectedly revealed."

— Britta Erickson, *The Art of Xu Bing*

Contents

Acknowledgements	vii
Introduction: Globalization and the Humanities <i>David Leiwei Li</i>	1
Part I: Field Imaginaries	
1. Turn to the Planet: Literature, Diversity, and Totality <i>Masao Miyoshi</i>	19
2. Is Globalization Good for Women? <i>Alison M. Jaggar</i>	37
3. Globalization, Desire, and the Politics of Representation <i>Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan</i>	59
4. Globalization and the Postcolonial Condition <i>Paul Jay</i>	79
5. Latin, Latino, American: Split States and Global Imaginaries <i>Román de la Campa</i>	101
6. Doing Cultural Studies Inside APEC: Literature, Cultural Identity, and Global/Local Dynamics in the American Pacific <i>Rob Wilson</i>	119

7. (The) Nation-State Matters: Comparing Multiculturalism(s) in an Age of Globalization 135
Brook Thomas

Part II: Virtual Worlds and Emergent Sensibilities

8. The Growth of Internet Communities in Taiwan and the Marginalization of the Public Sphere 161
Allen Chun and Jia-lu Cheng
9. The Internet in China: Emergent Cultural Formations and Contradictions 187
Liu Kang
10. Home Pages: Immigrant Subjectivity in Cyberspace 213
Sangita Gopal
11. Very Busy Just Now: Globalization and Harriedness in Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled* 233
Bruce Robbins
12. Concentricity, Teleology, and Reflexive Modernity in Edward Yang's *Yi Yi* 249
David Leiwei Li
- Afterword: Can We Judge the Humanities by Their Future as a Course of Study? 273
Paul A. Bové
- Notes 285
- Works Cited 307
- Contributors 331
- Index 335

Introduction: Globalization and the Humanities

David Leiwei Li

I

The phenomenon that comes to be known as “globalization” is both complex and contradictory. Some trace it to the dawn of human civilization while others locate its origin in recent history. Some talk about it as a practical reality while others consider it yet a figment of imagination. Regardless of its contentious meaning and amorphous contour, globalization has registered as much in popular consciousness as it does in academic discourse. We shall approach the concept in its many contemporary manifestations, especially its ramification in the humanities. In economic terms, globalization signifies a worldwide domination of free-market capitalism with its local accommodations and resistances. In political terms, it speaks to the changing nature of the nation-state, the emergence of non-governmental organizations and electronic public spheres as these new entities negotiate with border-transcending capital for the governance of peoples and the sustenance of their interests. In cultural terms, globalization signals an individual’s inevitable mediation with the regime of commodification and consumption that both universalizes desires and particularizes traditions. Overall, globalization seems to exemplify the proliferation of compressing and distancing mechanisms that transform our experience of time and space as well as of one another. Thus, David Harvey regards globalization as “time-space compression”; that is, an extraordinary speed-up of social life on a global scale together with the shrinkage of physical space through technology and the reduction of time to the perpetual and schizophrenic present (240). Accordingly,

globalization is viewed as an instance of "time-space distancing," in which both local and distant social institutions and incidents have become mutually dependent and equally formative. In the words of Anthony Giddens, it is "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring miles away and vice versa" (64). Nowhere could one find a more telling example of such intensified processes of planetary interaction, of "the *stretching* of social, political and economic activities across frontiers" and "on a continuum with the local, national and regional" than September 11 (Held et al. 15, original emphasis).

Manhattan is not an island, and the Manichaen claims of transcendent good and evil, of freedom versus fundamentalism, be they from the center or the periphery of world power, seem misleading representations of our global condition. Here, I find Michael Hardt's and Antonio Negri's comments especially relevant:

It is more accurate and more useful to understand the various fundamentalism[s] not as the re-creation of a premodern world, but rather as a powerful refusal of the contemporary historical passage in course. One could argue that postmodern discourses appeal primarily to the winners of globalization and fundamentalist discourses to the losers. In other words, the current global tendencies toward increased mobility, indeterminacy, and hybridity are experienced by some as a kind of liberation but by others as an exacerbation of their suffering. (146, 150)

Fundamentalisms are not geopolitically or culturally exclusive; they cannot be circumscribed within national boundaries or coded solely in civilizational terms. The medieval guises in which fundamentalisms appear are modern articulations of authoritarianism — whether they are of Christian, Muslim, Hindu, or Confucian origin. Even in an Islamic world that seems to radically encapsulate the problematic of globalization now, we behold the coexistence of secular Muslims and sacrosanct Muslims, of people who can readily access the market, mass education, and mass media, and of people who cannot afford to eat at McDonald's, whose only option of education is the madrasa, and only dream of salvation, mecca. There is far much history to be lived before global capitalism can hope to fulfil Francis Fukuyama's prediction of "the end of history" wherein all prior forms of historical contradiction will purportedly be resolved. Indeed, there is so much of what Samuel Huntington calls "the clash of civilizations", occurring both within and without civilizations, that our humanity seems under siege.

If the humanities comes into being at a point when Europe dominates the world system, how does it reconstitute the world of knowledge after the political decolonization of Asia and Africa and the apparent neocolonization of the globe by late capital? If the humanities has evolved as historical reactions to theist orders, how does it approach that part of our humanity still steeped in a submission to religious precepts, hierarchical conceptions of social order, and resistance to secularism? If the humanities are social technologies that engineer autonomous individuals in modernity and sovereign subjects of the nation-state, what is its *raison d'être* in today's world where finance capital and televisual media crisscross national borders in the inculcation of global consumers? If the humanities recapitulates Enlightenment ideals — culturally non-specific yearnings for universal peace, prosperity, equality and justice — how does it address the persistence of poverty that global capital has simultaneously alleviated and exacerbated? How does it deal with violence that originates from the experience of extreme powerlessness and exclusion, in order to encourage discussion of variant conceptions of the common good and the shared practice of human rights?

Though not explicitly framed in this manner, the restructuring of the canon with which the humanities in the US has been preoccupied for the past three decades appears to reflect these concerns. Contemporary globalization, as Fredrick Buell has it, is a kind of "deep sea change that is reshaping not only quotidian lives, familiar institutions, and local cultures but also ongoing attempts to present them in fields ranging from sociology, history, economics, art, and literature to science itself" (6). The many heated theoretical and methodological debates in humanistic study should therefore be properly understood in light of the enhanced awareness of the world and the attempt to negotiate new global relationships. If geopolitical globalization yields "a decentered set of subnational and supranational interactions — from capital transfers and population movements to the transmission of information," its cultural manifestation is evident in ways the world has been representationally reorganized in the academic specialities, into new areas, new subjects, and new disciplines. As such decentering "challenges the existing nation states to reformulate their cultural identities for a more complexly interconnected era," it enables the shifting of disciplinary boundaries in the humanities and the production of "hybrid interdisciplinarity" (ibid. 7, 11).

Buell's affirmation of this disciplinary decentering is for Bill Readings a source of anxiety. It is not that Readings harbors any nostalgia for the

supposed sovereignty of national identity. But the decoupling of the nation-state and the modern notion of culture has meant for him a critical absence of political agency through which the traditional subject of the humanities is produced. "Since the nation-state is no longer the primary instance of the reproduction of global capitals," Readings contends, "'culture' — as the symbolic and political counterpart to the project of integration pursued by the nation-state — has lost its purchase" (12). In the apparent collapse of this nation and culture integrity, the transnational capitalist system now offers people a "non-ideological belonging: a corporate identity in which they participate only at the price of becoming operatives" (48). While Buell is hopeful that the register and recognition of cultural difference in the intertwined strains of world history provides meaningful channels to think about a shared planetary destiny, Readings is afraid that "the international and interdisciplinary flexibility" — which arises in the decline of the nation-state and the wake of its cultural hegemony — may not be a better alternative, especially if it is envisaged merely to meet the demands of the global market (49). Neither the progressive appeal to multiculturalism nor the conservative defense of the masterpieces is adequate for Readings, whose distaste for the Enlightenment narrative of truth and autonomy seems extended to the work on cultural capital.

One may agree with Readings that Pierre Bourdieu's analyses indeed proceed by presuming "the single, closed game is the game of national culture" (107). But to dismiss on this ground alone Bourdieu's insight on the very process the Enlightenment ideal of widening social access for the common people has been betrayed in the actual unequal distribution of cultural capital seems myopic. It is especially so in view of Readings's own ethical commitment: his, not unlike Bourdieu's, is a commitment against imperial sovereignty and a commitment to justice. Such justice is envisioned through a notion of the subject that is by necessity incomplete. "The singularity of the 'I' or the 'you' is," in Readings words, "caught up in the network of obligations that the individual cannot master" (185). This incomplete individual whose existence is forever indebted to the endless web of local and global relationships thus entails that "the political as an instance of community" "does not establish an autonomous collective subject who is authorized to say 'we' and to terrorize those who do not, or cannot, speak in that 'we'" (188). By positing social bond as a necessity of sharing and proposing a world community whose obligation to its members are infinite, Readings wishes to transcend "the capitalist logic of general substitutability

(the cash-nexus)" which is for him "the logic of the restricted or closed economy" underlying the nation-state as a geocultural formation (*ibid.*).

Philosophically persuasive, Readings's vision of an inherently open global community of non-finite obligations suffers from a lack of material specification, just as Bourdieu's democratic impulse is paled by restricting the universal to the national. Evocative of such familiar topics on globalization and the humanities as the tension between nationalism and cosmopolitanism, the local and the global (Wilson and Dissanayake, Nussbaum and Cohen, Jameson and Miyoshi, and Cheah and Robbins), Readings's utopian community is however liable to become an alibi through which the fervent call for obligations could evaporate in thin air. Though weakened, the nation-state remains a vital institution where the exercise of obligations of the kind that Readings theorize can find its feasible fulfillment. One thinks of children of illegal immigrant laborers and maids in California and wonders why the state or the States are not obligated to educate them. One also thinks of electronic engineers trained in India and working in the Silicon Valley and wonders why the jobs and wealth they create here should not be shared in their original homeland. These are just examples in which the "ethic probity" of a mutually dependent global community Readings envisions may wed well Bourdieu's insistence on the more equitable distribution of capital, cultural or otherwise, which is no longer confined to national communities (192).

Instead of accepting his conclusion to abandon "that legitimating metanarrative" of the Enlightenment, we should not let the imperfect realization of its promises blind us from fully appreciating the significance of the nation-state both as an historical institution and an inspiring trope of democratic covenant (*ibid.*). Not only does it remain a site where the metaclaims of equality present tangible checks on the march of neoliberal capital and its gospel of deregulation and privatization, the nation-state continues to signify a sense of the communal whose democratic principle and potential, more importantly, are capable of being "transvaluated" and rearticulated in other forms (*ibid.*, 179). Readings's critique of the autonomous subject and advocacy of interdependency should help us recognize the radical disparity of the haves and the have-nots in our world, and reckon with the obscene concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few nations, corporations, and individuals. His suggestion on the inexhaustible social bond should help us imagine democratic covenants and systems of distribution that are infinitely more equitable, capacious, and just. It should

encourage us to accomplish what the cultural and ideological apparatus of the nation-state has so far failed — rescuing the humanities, to resonate with Readings, from the ruins.

II

This volume is a collective academic enterprise that frames recent debates and developments in the humanities in a salient globalization paradigm. The divergent contributions here share the premise that the drastic transformation in world economy and international politics since the end of the Cold War is accompanied by concurrent efforts in the humanities to question the validity of a nation-bound conception of culture. The questionings evidence at once a desire to comprehend the ever-changing conflicts and consolidations of an emergent planetary culture and the will to affect the course of its evolution through representation. Against “the tyranny of the market” (Bourdieu), which naturalizes in barely disguised neo-Darwinian terms both the aggregation of power for the increasingly few and the disintegration of social bond, we are committed to an egalitarian model of global distributive justice and determined to cultivate a cosmopolitan communal consciousness.¹ The humanities seems an appropriate arena wherein an alternative form of globalization based on universal human rights can be imagined to counter the hegemony of neoliberal privatization and deregulation. It is also an arena where the exercise of intellectual agency can effect possible change in the enhancement of public education and the reproduction of cultural capital, especially for the world’s deprived.

This book is divided into two parts. Part I, “Field Imaginaries,” investigates the changing nature of the nation-state with a particular emphasis on the transformation of the disciplines and areas of humanistic inquiry. Part II, “Virtual Worlds and Emergent Sensibilities,” calls attention to the radical impact by the technologies of capital on everyday life, on the way one positions oneself and relates to another in a changing social universe. The geopolitical and disciplinary dimensions thus converse with the communicative and individual aspects of globalization both to provide new perspectives on the perennial concern of the communal in the humanities and to rehearse more democratic orders of representation.

The geopolitical form has its inseparable aesthetic alter ego; otherwise,

one cannot really comprehend the methodological challenges and reconstitution of legitimate subject matter that dominate the humanities in recent decades. Speaking from the vantage points of disciplines and areas, postcolonial, ethnic, regional and transnational studies, with their overlapping domains and shifting boundaries, the contributors in Part I, "Field Imaginaries," accomplish two significant tasks. On the one hand, they historicize the process in which the centrality of the nation-state in the humanities has been transformed. On the other hand, they offer a refreshing take of such altered state without being unduly enthusiastic about the bliss of uprooted and unbounded knowledge production. Just as nationalism and globalism coexist and compete in the province of international politics, academic subjects continue to reside in the uneven negotiation of residual institutional structures and emergent intellectual inquiries.

For Masao Miyoshi, Alison Jaggar, and R. Radhakrishnan, the gaping gaps in global wealth and power prompt an imperative centering of inequality as the most essential category of ethical inquiry. The weakening of the nation-state is considered a general weakening of its political commitment to the common people. In contrast to the critique of the universal that fuels much insightful revisions in the past, and the rhetoric of celebratory difference, still prevalent in certain corners of the academic left, we witness here a concerted progressive voice at once attuned to discrepant social realities and appealing to a dialogical conception of global justice. Their analyses contradict the presumption of nation-states' demise, as their prognosis demands the articulation of a symbiotic humanity.

To inaugurate this imaginative "Turn to the Planet," Miyoshi calls our attention to the end of the cold war, when the ascendancy of neoliberalism in the macro sphere of global political economy parallels the spread of desocialized individualism in the micro sphere of the self. The gospel of privatization has the pernicious effect not only of polarizing the rich and the poor of the world, but also infiltrating the psychic makeup of the individual who is now likely to regard predatory "self-interest" and "optimal waste" as the rational norm of daily life. Under this condition, Miyoshi questions the reigning logic of difference and warns against the hair-splitting breakup of group identity. Instead of advocating a recuperation of the nation-state, he endeavors to "restore the sense of totality to the academic and intellectual world," both professionally and politically. Such a task entails the rejection of neoliberal globalization's exclusionism and the discovery of an all-inclusive totality that will nurture our common bonds to the planet,

our custodial responsibility to it, and our duty to work out a sustainable economy that will "reduce consumption without cutting employment." The creative domain of literature and literary studies, Miyoshi believes, is where the "ideal of planetarianism" acquires its most persuasive power, making possible its translation into political viability.

Such planetarianism must be located in an axis of common goods — among them, "peace, prosperity, and democracy" — and worked through the figure of "women," according to Alison Jaggar. Confronting globalization in unambiguous ethical terms, "Is Globalization Good for Women?" seems to have linked Miyoshi's vision of an egalitarian totality with *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* (Okin et al.), which productively teases out the odds of simultaneously affirming group-specific identity and a universal ideal of equality. If globalization in its dominant neoliberal form signifies the accelerating integration of a single global market and the destruction of welfare, it is, Jaggar argues, bad for the majority of the world's women. In its feminist re-vision, however, globalization could be liberating for humanity. Jaggar reinserts the concepts of justice and rights to dissect neoliberalism's promise of "peace, prosperity, and democracy." The end of the Cold War has not delivered the peace dividends once imagined. Instead, increasing militarism exhausts resources for health, education, and social services, exacerbates the subjugation of civilian populations, pollutes the environment and degrades women. Economic inequality is increasing not only between the North and South but also within them, with women of color and women in the South bearing disproportionately the brunt of low wages, uncertain employment, poor working conditions, and sexual exploitation. In an argument reminiscent of Amartya Sen's *Development as Freedom*, Jaggar addresses issues of economic and political redistribution and self-determination, and proposes an alternative "globalization from below." She envisions a feminist transnational alliance that would be able to expand the abstract yet implicitly male norms of "civil and political rights" to include "entitlements to education, to work and to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of self and family." Because women are vastly over-represented in the world's poor, "a concern for guaranteeing women's human rights" represents an alternative to neoliberal globalization and could go far in promoting a world of true social good for everyone.

If Jaggar opts for feminist NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) to fight against the concentration of power in the few First-World societies, R. Radhakrishnan emphasizes the ubiquity of agency and sovereignty for

Third-World nation-states. "Globalization, Desire, and the Politics of Representation" exposes neoliberal globalization as a regime of uneven development through which dominant nationalisms dismantle their subaltern counterparts. Because of their historical achievement of full sovereignty, the developed nations now claim an ethico-political authority insisting both on the deconstruction of Third-World nationalisms and the realization of a new world order on behalf of the rest. Although this clearly constitutes a problem of political representation on the planetary stage, a model of "technoglobality" has been introduced to dematerialize the agency of sovereignty and citizenship in weaker nation-states while promote a pseudo-form of network inclusiveness that disguises the naked power of the dominant nation-states.

Working through such figures as Said, Spivak, Charterjee, Ashis Nandy and Amitav Ghosh, Radhakrishnan imagines a world that hinges on "the value of human relationality" and the universality of "suffering," the latter of which, not incidentally, also informs Paul Gilroy's recent argument for cosmopolitan political coalitions beyond the color line. Here, Radhakrishnan intriguingly correlates the need to balance political power between nation-states with the need for a redistribution of desire. If the dominant desire pivots on "the objectification of the other," "real desire" of the type he proposes "derives from a radical 'lack' that impoverishes every ego that would seek to sign for plenitude in its own name." This model of reciprocal transcendence, not dissimilar to Readings' concept of the inexhaustible social, should give guidance to a new global imaginary. It would encourage an understanding of cultural and civilizational incompleteness and the need for relational bonding among existing nation-states and peoples. Until we submit it to this dialogical mix of "self-centered perceptions and other-centered perceptions," he contends, globalization is but domination in another name.

Like Miyoshi, Paul Jay premises his argument on the state of disciplinary disintegration. He views "fragmentation" as inherent to literary history and refuses to grant coherence to the humanistic disciplines once dominated by Eurocentrism. However, he is conscious of a disciplinary struggle between postcolonial studies and the more recent globalization studies. Jay concedes that postcolonial studies are primarily the work of Third-World intellectuals rooted in the experience of political decolonization and nation-building, while globalization studies seem largely the product of Western intellectuals grounded in complex theories of postnational structures and cultures. However, to see the latter as a threat to the former is for him to register a

historical break that assigns "postcolonialism" to "the rise of modernity and the epoch of nationalism" and "globalization" to a "postmodern and postnational" phenomenon. A more helpful conception, Jay contends, lies in the continuum of colonization and decolonization, understanding both as integral historical processes that culminate in globalization.

Having emphasized on this continuity, Jay nevertheless resonates with R. Radhakrishnan in noting that neoliberal globalization threatens the economic and cultural autonomy of nation-states, especially the emergent ones. The question he poses then is this: "How can globalization studies contribute to the project of postcolonial studies when globalization itself is now a central threat to the postcolonial nation-state?" Elaborating on Ania Loomba's position in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Jay works against both the commodification of hybridity and the fetishization of purity by emphasizing the traveling nature of culture and the historical co-production of the indigenous and the foreign. With this critical caution, he performs a reading of Arundhati Roy, Zadie Smith, Mohsin Hamid, and Salman Rushdie and shows the potential of approaching texts in a transnational framework that simultaneously attends to the catastrophic and the congenial effects of contemporary globalization.

If Jay's transnational imaginary entails a traveling trajectory, Roman de la Campa's "Latin, Latino, and American" situates this trajectory in the convergence and collision between a hemispheric construction of the Americas and the animate republican fictions of the United States. Such deeply established academic disciplines as American and Latin American Studies, in his view, owe their constitution to civilization/barbarism, Anglo/Latin, North/South divisions. To start, de la Campa zeroes in on the Latino population in the US, linking its migratory shifts and permanent diaspora with the motions of global capital and the concept of "split states." A split state captures for him a severed entity, the condition of remittance economy and the process of re-territorialization that not only applies to states whose paths to modernity come under stress but also suggests a postnational symptom full of cultural, economic, and political possibilities. With its internal plurality — Cubans and Puerto Ricans on the East Coast and Mexicans on the West — Latino America blurs civilizational models and unsettles the North and South divide. With its hemispherical scope, the Latino-Latina category also demands comparative examinations of Latino and Latin American studies. To the extent that their racial profile includes African, Amerindian, and Asian ancestries historically excluded from the melting pot

equation, to the extent that a prevalent bilingualism and biculturalism characterizes their cultural identity, and to the extent that their music crosses over both English and Spanish markets, Latino Americans appear to figure new ways of imagining the Americas as well as multicultural redefinitions of the state. At the same time, however, de la Campa cautions against the media construction of consumer citizenship and calls upon academic intellectuals to respond critically to this undercurrent of neoliberal globalization.

A similar counter-hegemonic impulse underlies Rob Wilson's critique of the "Asia/Pacific" construct. "Doing Cultural Studies Inside APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation)" reveals how global/local dynamics expresses itself in regionalization. The yoking of Asia to the Pacific evidences the power of transnational economies not only in remaking the material world but reorganizing it discursively. The tactics of APEC are for Wilson exemplary of the interests of global capital. Imagined into a consensus-like shape, APEC would "fuse disparate units, from city-states, superpowers, and Third-World entities" into a "teleological optimism" and mandatory "free market capitalism." This cheery vision of Asian Pacific economic cooperation, while disrupting older Orientalist binaries of formal colonialism, conceals the depth of North/South imbalances and suppresses historical complexities. Discontent with but not dismissive of this articulation, Wilson sees an opportunity for a contestatory mode of "critical regionalism" to emerge. If the transnational commitments of APEC indicate the geopolitical ungluing of nation-states and the imagining of an Asia/Pacific community, cultural studies will have to transcend its residual attachment to "traditional disciplines (e.g. English) or large area studies formations (e.g. Asian Studies)." A critical Asian Pacific regionalism must be localized to bring out its full contradictory social meaning, and to do so demands "border-crossing, conceptual outreach, nomadic linkages, and interdisciplinary originality." Citing Bamboo Ridge's creative endeavors and the critical work done at the English department of the University of Hawaii, Manoa, Wilson substantiates his theoretical proposal with exemplary practices of a "counter-national localism."

Sympathetic with arguments against the container models of national culture, Brook Thomas, however, alerts us to the benefits of cross-examining the globalized notion of multiculturalism in the specific geopolitical institutions of its promulgation. A comparative analysis of multiculturalism in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, "(The) Nation-State Matters," demonstrates how the history of settlement and the particularity of state formations shape the relative distinction of the four

modes of multicultural practice. The careful construction of such a dialogical genealogy and the critical attention to the variations in the federal systems help bring out not only the categorical dangers of reifying racial groups, for example, Asians or Caucasians, but also contestations among visible and invisible minorities, immigrants and indigenes. More significantly, it challenges the prevalent theories that inform much of our thinking about multiculturalism and globalization. For the former, Thomas notes how appropriations of continental theory in the US often lapse into a conflation of French and American state systems, resulting in a "distorted analysis of [historical] conditions." For the latter, he deplors the premature claim of late capital's global reign and endeavors to retain "nation-states" as "one possible site of resistance to the unrestrained flow of capital." Together, Thomas convinces us how the nation-state is able to halt neoliberal globalization and why it continues to matter.

III

If Part I, "Field Imaginaries," exemplifies a complex charting of the changing humanities in response to the dense traffic between the global and the national, Part II consists of case studies that concentrate more on the prospects and problems engendered by new technologies in communication, transportation, and international business that affect the way we imagine the communal and sustain the individual. The decline of the literary and the national is first approached with an eye towards the cyberspace, which not only typifies the velocity and density of global transactions today but also makes available unprecedented modes of sociality and textuality. If print capitalism has cultivated, as Benedict Anderson's famous thesis goes, the "imagined community" of the nation, does the advent of the internet deliver an "electronic commonwealth" on a transnational scale (Abramson et al.)? In what way does the electronic media strengthen or threaten existing territorial powers and in what way does it secure or loosen the formation of community and subjectivity as we know them? How the emergence of cyberspace, which for many heralds an era of digital capitalism, redefines social groups, reorganizes political energies, and reshapes individual identities thus constitute the analytical core of the three essays on "Virtual Worlds."

Against a considerable body of theoretical literature enthusiastic about the decentralized architecture of the web and its possibilities for borderless planetary politics, Allen Chun and Jia-lu Cheng's study of "the growth of

internet communities in Taiwan" stresses the importance of "local institutional forces" in determining the net's global reach. Chun and Cheng cite the crucial role of the Taiwanese government in the development of the net and treat such development as part of a state policy that deliberately democratizes politics and liberalizes economy to "localize the nation" for the changing global realities. Instead of transcending the traditional real, the contour of cyber communities resembles a disorderly overlap of an "extended private and public." Such communities are not to be equated with the conventional conception of the "public sphere." They constitute for Chun and Cheng the "liminal social," a space that encourages participation of groups whose minor status in society has meant an overall foreclosure to the dominant media and forum. Aside from democratic access through democratic dissemination of information, this liminal social, however, runs the risk of being submerged in its discursive subaltern state and failing to have its "countertalk" translated and transformed into political opposition in the traditional public sphere. Chun and Cheng worry that the medium of cyberspace, rather than "presenting itself as an expanded political public as envisaged by critical theory," may instead "open a back door to the public sphere."

Chun and Cheng's sober assessment that the cyber space, instead of being a liberating alternative, may indeed become a space of retreat from the traditional public sphere is paralleled by Liu Kang's concern that the power of global capitalism may seriously undermine the promise of the internet for egalitarian social consciousness. There appears a cross-strait critical consensus on the separate yet inseparable evolution of cyber communities in the divided transnational Chinese states. In "Internet in China," Liu anchors his analysis first on the arrival of the new press that trespasses state-owned and commercially-oriented local presses, second on the mushrooming of public forum (chat rooms) on politics and culture, and third on the revival of the literary via e-publication. Though generally sanguine about its pluralizing and decentralizing role in undermining censorship, Liu underscores the fact that the new media also "poses formidable problems": whether the internet political forum will lead to a "democratic sphere" in China or a "nursery of social antagonism" remains uncertain.

What is certain and distinctive about internet in China is its proliferation of e-fiction sites that in turn drives the boom in conventional publishing and cultural production. Here Liu takes note of the contradictory ideologies at work. On the one hand, Chinese urban youth culture converges with America's young entrepreneurial technocrat — *Xin xin ren lei*, or the "New, New Humanity" (a Taiwanese coinage soon popularized on the mainland)

meeting *the Yettie* (Sam Sifton), as it were, in their shared pursuit of self-pleasing lifestyles. On the other hand, one hears the insurgent voice of the Chinese New Left in such an experimental play as *Che Guevara*, summoning the spirit of Argentine guerrilla leader against China's turn to capitalism and materialism. The Internet in China finally exemplifies for Liu a "deterritorialized" arena in which "new forms of domination and exclusion" continue to contend with "forces for democracy and justice."

Struggles for democracy present particular challenges when subjects of such struggle are dispersed between nation-states. In a situation where the institutions of the home country are unavailable and that of the host country seem unfamiliar, does the internet become a convenient channel for deterritorialized politics or does it represent the displacement of politics all together? Sangita Gopal's "Home Pages" provides a complex reworking of this question. She first points out the often-neglected equivalence between migration within and immigration across national boundaries that contemporary globalization has brought about. Internal motions of people and instantaneity of cyber communication, she argues, have come to destabilize the conventional conception of immigrant subjectivity, at once blurring the categories of "immigrant" and "native" and reconfiguring the "digital diaspora" through new forms of consumption. While recognizing the role of websites and portals in suturing new immigrant subjectivity, easing alienation, and collapsing the distance between "neighbors" and "foreigners," Gopal also realizes that ontologies enabled by cyber commerce eliminate the political potential associated with the construction of "netizen" (Poster 101). In this light, the Indian immigrant's resort to cyber communication is symptomatic of the questionable status of his/her body in accessing the American body politic. On the other hand, if the new Indian immigrant cyber subject is "a blueprint for the global subject," such a subject will have "nothing at stake except its own nodality, its identity becom[ing] the sum of its passwords and interfaces" in the commercial universe. Here one hears in Gopal the unmistakable echo of Chun and Cheng, Liu Kang, Miyoshi and Radhakrishnan, as well as Bill Readings, in their concerted caution against the disembodiment and dissolution of political agency. Finally, these localized takes on global interconnectivity not only challenge the inherent openness and democracy frequently associated with the cyber media but also crystallize the ideological ramifications of cyber mediation for politics, commerce, and personal commitments.

Cybernetic virtual worlds are only a node of "the electronically

networked economy," the latest "capitalistic mode of production [that] shapes social relationships over the entire planet" (Castells 504, 502). Besides being a global mode of economic production, network capitalism is becoming a hegemonic form of culture. As such, it comes to transform what Raymond Williams terms "the structures of feeling" once lodged within the relative stability of the nation-state, the school system, and the family with their institutional distinctiveness and autonomy. Under the duress of transnational financial flows that infiltrate at once national borders and personal psyches, however, "Emergent Sensibilities" arise. The delineation of such sensibilities is the task of the last couple of essays, both readings of texts intended to tease out the human consequences of globalization as well as the possibilities of individual and institutional choice. Granted that globalization represents, in Fredric Jameson's enigmatic phrase, "the becoming cultural of the economic, and the becoming economic of the cultural" (Jameson and Miyoshi 60), does this integration of culture and capital leave room of resistance against the type of "network society" that Manuel Castells seems to have presented as a *fait accompli*?² At the heart of the readings is an attempt to articulate available cultural resources both to counter the neoliberal logic of flexible capital and profit motif and cultivate cosmopolitan feelings and subject formations based on the values of equality and democracy.

The pace of planetary capitalism is punctured by what Bruce Robbins felicitously terms "everyday harriedness," a global "time deficit" that collapses the conventional boundaries of work and home, national allegiance and international commitments. A reading of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Unconsoled*, "Very Busy Just Now" illustrates the ambivalence of everyday harriedness. It pursues the serious implications of this global time crunch for the psychological and social reorganization of space and the project of "refashioning ethics to suit our transnational condition." Both professionalism and cosmopolitanism, as the domain of work and the domain of the international, respectively, seem pitted against the domain of the family, a postmodern remnant of a pre-industrial formation that is asked to stand in for all the values of bonding and belonging. Though against the "eroticizing of expertise" and the kind of "professional affectivity" that "substitutes recruitment for reproduction," Robbins declines to valorize ideological privatism and insists on generating sympathies and solidarities beyond the traditional family. Drawing from the creative vitality of *Unconsoled*, he proposes that the novel's premise of "time/space compression" also "includes a utopian foretaste of unearthly temporal abundance." When properly harnessed, it should energize our effort to

reinvent the public at the level of the personal, undercut the gendered divide between work and family, and finally lead us towards a "broader and more inclusive civility."

Like Robbins's, my own contribution is preoccupied with the question of ethical living when local frames of reference are being incontrovertibly intertwined with global circuits of commodity and desire production. "Concentricity, Teleology, and Reflexive Modernity in Edward Yang's *Yi Yi*" interprets the director's most recent film to date against an oeuvre that tracks clairvoyantly the effects and affects of the Taiwanese economic miracle. The film's deployment of narrative and arrangement of imagery, beyond the representation of a society's meteoric rise on the global stage, I argue, form a productive conversation with the various theories of the modern, whether pre-, post, "multiple," "singular," "alternative" or "reflexive" (Eisenstadt et al., Jameson 2002, Gaonkar et al., and Beck et al.). Unique to this modern of East Asian variety is its radical temporal and spatial disruption. On the one hand, this modern is characterized by an extreme condensation of historical experience — the transition and transformation from the agrarian, to the industrial, to the postindustrial — within a single generation what takes European societies centuries to complete. On the other hand, it is marked by the precipitous removal of boundaries and the incredible feeling of openness. How the protagonists of *Yi Yi* or the players of the "silicon island" negotiate their radically condensed and abruptly decentered existence is the focus of Yang's movie, which at once captures the free and fragmenting flows of global capital and cultivates a cosmopolitan agency that deliberately locates the individual within the concentric communal and the perpetuity of humanity.

Yang's privileging of an ethic of relationality is resonant of Jaggar's conception of the "good," Miyoshi's "ideal of planetarianism," Robbins's notion of "inclusive civility," and Radhakrishnan's model of "reciprocal transcendence," just to name a few voices in this critical chorus on globalization and the humanities. Against the tyranny of the market and the violence of unilateral militarism, ours are among the voices of resistance that endeavor to open up dialogues on how we want to live together as a global community. It is my hope that this anthology will help us puzzle out, however minuscule, the predicament of our interdependent planetary culture. It shall help us garner the imaginative energy of writers, critics, artists and scholars to engender ways of thinking and means of creating conditions that will warrant the equal, just, and environmentally sound flourishing of our humanity.³

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Index

- Abbas, Ackbar, 123, 292
Abramson, Jeffrey, 12
Africa, 3, 29, 38, 57, 282; sub-Saharan(n), 29–30, 45
Afzal-Khan, Fauzia, 287
Agamben, Giorgio, 287
Aguilera, Christina, 112
AIDS, 175
Akaka, Daniel, 121
Alexander the Great, 93, 96
Algarín, Miguel, 107, 290
Allen, Chadwick, 138
Althusser, Louis, 149, 253, 293
America, 101–2, 104, 109, 112, 146, 277, 292, 305
American Pacific, 131
Americanization, 3, 77, 189; of immigrants to US, 135; of Latinos, 112
Americas, the, 10–1, 38, 101–3, 105, 109, 113–4, 117, 290
Anderson, Benedict, 12, 86, 299
Anderson, Jon, 296
Ang, Ien, 292
Appadurai, Arjun, 24, 90, 100, 147, 168, 213, 222, 229, 257, 288, 292
Appiah, K. Anthony, 33
Arato, Andrew, 193
Argentina, 101, 290, 302
Aristotle, 289
Arnold, Benedict, 299
Arnold, Matthew, 80
Aronowitz, Stanley, 303
Ashcroft, John, 277
Asia, 3, 38, 44, 47–8, 57, 119–22, 134, 139, 151, 152, 280, 299; East Asia, 121, 256, 292; South Asia, 89; Southeast Asia, 29, 47, 123
Asia(n)/Pacific, 11, 119–20, 126, 280, 291, 293
Asia(n) Pacific, 11, 119–25, 127–8, 130–1, 134, 190, 279–80, 292
Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), 119–20, 121–5, 134, 280, 291, 304
Auerbach, Erich, 139
Auerback, Nina, 33
Australasia, 38, 152
Australia, 11, 32, 120–1, 129, 137, 139, 142, 145, 149–52, 155–7, 286; “White Australia,” 150, 152
Avelar, Idelber, 290

- Baker, David, 131
 Bakhtin, Mikhail, 69
 Balakrishnan, Ajit, 297
 Balakrishnan, Gopal, 226, 277, 279, 281–2, 305
 Balibar, Etienne, 60, 144
 Balzac, Honoré de, 269
 Bangalore, 216, 227, 296
 Bangladesh, 89
 Barthes, Roland, 22
 Baudrillard, Jean, 218, 223, 294
 Baucom, Ian, 295
 Baucus, Joseph, 133
 Bauman, Zygmunt, 137, 267, 270
 Beatty, Warren, 237
 Beck, Ulrich, 16, 250–1, 262, 301
 Beckett, Samuel, 210
 Beijing, 56, 190, 194, 195, 198, 209
 Belgrade, 191, 197, 199, 274, 277, 303–4
 Benedikt, Michael, 294
 Benítez-Rojo, Antonio, 288
 Bentham, Jeremy, 55
 Berger, Peter, 250, 301
 Berlin, Isaiah, 148
 Berlin Wall, 194
 Beverley, John, 287
 Bhabha, Homi, 24, 138, 219, 225
 Bharucha, Rustom, 287
 Bhatia, Sabeer, 215
 Bidwai, Praul, 62
 Birmingham, 127, 292
 Bismark, 23
 Black Atlantic, 292
 Black, Earl, 276
 Bloom, Harold, 114–7, 291
 Bo, Xiong, 195
 Bogard, William, 177
 Bolivar, Simón, 102
 Bollywood, 230
 Bolshevik Revolution, 238
 Bombay, 230
 Bonazzi, Tiziano, 293
 borders, 3, 30, 39, 62, 71–3 *passim*, 89, 139, 146, 189, 240, 244–5 *passim*; border artists, 107; border crossing, 110, 120, 123, 125, 127, 235, 296, 304, 306; borderless(ness), 120, 123, 219; cultural, 119; disciplinary, 124, 125, 134; and global democracy, 54; literary and national, 84; US/Mexican, 112–3
 Borges, Jorge Luis, 103
 Bourdieu, Pierre, 4–5, 6, 285, 302
 Bové, Paul, 277, 285, 304, 305
 Boym, Svetlana, 220–1
 Brand, Dionne, 142
 Brazil, 106, 285
 Britain, 38, 139, 145, 152–3, 285, 292, 298
 British Commonwealth, 138, 140, 145, 152
 Brecht, Bertolt, 210
 Bretton Woods, 38
 Broadway, 107
 Brooks, Peter, 269
 Brunei, 121
 Bryce, James, 149
 Buell, Fredrick, 3–4, 288
 Bunch, Charlotte, 286
 Burrows, Roger, 162
 Bush, George W., 105, 197, 304
 Butler, Judith, 69, 287
 Buttigieg, Joseph, 283
 Cai, Zhiheng, see Bum Cai
 California, 5, 96, 149, 155, 216; Southern, 89
 Cambodia, 302
 Canada, 11, 116, 121, 134, 137–9, 141–2, 145–52, 154, 156–7, 195
 Canclini, Néstor García, 67, 290

- capitalism, 1, 5, 29, 38, 60, 61, 82, 85, 88, 114, 116, 142, 122, 123, 128, 173, 189, 219, 222, 223, 224, 250, 266, 274, 277–80 *passim*, 283, 286, 296, 298, 300; disorganized, 168, 251, 302; industrial, 164, 301; global, 3, 10–6 *passim*, 136, 147, 164, 168, 187–9 *passim*, 199, 211, 236, 246, 249, 253, 254, 257–9, 261, 291, 292; late, 120, 127, 134, 250, 251, 263, 266, 267, 301, 302; virtual, 162
- Caribbean, 48, 89, 102, 106, 288
- Carty, Linda, 142
- Casa de la Américas, 107
- Castells, Manuel, 15, 30, 164–5, 179, 266
- Castro, Fidel, 108
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh, 287
- Chan, Eliza, 190
- Chan, Stephen, 292
- Chandra, Vikram, 96–100
- Chapman, John William, 293
- Chartier, Roger, 22
- Chatterjee, Partha, 9, 64, 66–7
- Cheah, Pheng, 5
- Chechnya, 245,
- Chen, Xiankui, 200
- Cheng, Jia-lu, 12–3, 14, 282
- Cheng, Pheng, 135
- Chicago, 107, 109, 112, 264, 290
- Chile, 49, 121, 291
- China, 13–4, 23, 121–2, 130, 134, 144, 196–206, 208–12, 251, 281–2, 295.
See also internet
- Chinese Communist Party (CCP), 190, 191
- Ching, Leo, 291
- Chock, Eric, 129–30
- Chomsky, Noam, 60, 66
- Chow, Rey, 134, 293
- cinema, 107, 249–52 *passim*, 256, 258, 263, 264, 269, 301, 302
- citizenship, 9, 11, 52, 61, 66, 138, 142, 148, 149, 151, 153, 189, 209, 211, 236, 253, 296; and aesthetics, 113–4; and global democracy, 54
- civil society, 51, 102, 148, 149, 176, 177, 193, 275, 305
- Clarke, George Elliott, 147
- class, 32–3, 41, 43, 44, 55, 57, 60, 80, 108, 112, 113, 121, 124, 125, 128, 132, 142, 143, 149, 170, 180, 205, 215, 226, 234, 235, 238, 251, 252, 275, 285, 291, 295, 297, 306
- Clifford, James, 293
- Clinton, Bill, 197
- Cohen, Jean, 5, 193
- Cohen, Joshua, 5
- Cohen, Robin, 288
- Colá, Santiago, 290
- Cold War, 27, 28, 42, 81, 103, 108, 121, 122, 137, 165, 176, 210, 198, 273, 277, 274, 293; consequence of its end, 29–30
- Colombia, 113
- colonialism, 23, 24, 29, 48, 52, 55, 70, 73, 85, 90, 92–4, 99–102 *passim*, 106, 121, 122, 129, 133, 132, 138, 145, 151, 153, 162, 216, 217, 289; informational, 201; and the modern world, 38
- commodity/commodification, 1, 10, 16, 53, 79, 84, 88, 91, 94, 99, 217, 221, 222, 223, 226, 228, 236, 250, 282, 291, 297
- communism, 38, 49, 50, 71, 90, 91, 120, 137, 140, 182, 188, 190–4, 198, 200, 201, 282, 295
- concentricity, 16, 249, 253–4, 257, 269, 271
- Confucianism, 249, 250–1, 253, 271, 301

- Connery, Chris, 133
 Connolly, William, 287
 consumerism, 31, 39, 173, 178, 188, 194, 204–6 *passim*, 210, 211, 223, 226, 259, 266; and Chinese youth, 209; consumer citizenship, 114; consumer subjectivity, 114; and Latinos, 105
 Cooper, Robert, 303
 Coronil, Fernando, 295
 cosmopolitanism, 5, 15, 127, 138, 150, 170, 233–6, 236, 238, 241, 243, 248, 253, 269, 271, 292, 299, 301, 302, 304, 305
 Court, Franklin, 288
 Critchley, Simon, 287
 Cuba, 106, 107–8, 112
 Cuban revolution, 210
 Cui, Jian, 210
 cultural capital, 4–6 *passim*, 130, 270
 Cultural Revolution, 196
 cultural studies, 11, 35, 79, 104, 114, 119, 123, 125, 127, 129, 273, 276, 278–83, 289, 291, 292, 304, 306; Asia Pacific, 120, 123, 124, 127, 130, 132, 134, 280, 281
 cyberspace (*see also* internet), 13, 161, 169, 177, 188, 190, 201, 203, 204, 206, 207, 213, 214, 216, 218, 219, 222, 226, 228, 287, 294, 296; communication, 163–4, 168; community, 163–4, 171; origin and concept of, 162; and public sphere, 179; subjectivity in, 224–5, 229, 231; and virtual reality, 162, 168
 Dai, Qing, 202
 Das, Veena, 69, 217
 Davidson, Alistair, 150
 Dávila, Arlene, 289
 Davis, Angela, 69
 Davis, Mike, 290
 Davos, 31
 Day, A. Grove, 133
 de Barry, Wm Theodore, 301
 de Man, Paul, 283
 de Waal, Alex, 234, 239
 Decan peninsula, 216
 decolonization, 3, 9–10, 84–7 *passim*, 89–91 *passim*, 129, 292
 Deleuze, Gilles, 224
 democracy, 8, 14–5, 26 33, 52–4 *passim*, 57, 105, 121, 130, 143, 152, 167, 171, 173–5 *passim*, 176–81 *passim*, 187–9 *passim*, 193, 194, 198, 199, 201, 203, 210–21 *passim*, 214, 276, 279, 280, 291, 295, 300, 305, 306; and authoritarianism, 41; definition of, 53–4; liberal social, 38; neoliberal, 48; postmodern, 116; and women, 49–52
 Denby, David, 215
 Deng, Xiaoping, 189, 201, 203
 D'Entrèves, Alexander, 293
 Denver, 109
 Derrida, Jacques, 22, 66, 72, 104, 291
 Detroit, 107
 development, 8–9, 23, 43, 45–7 *passim*, 51, 52, 60, 61, 63, 68, 80–3 *passim*, 86, 96, 99, 161, 163, 189, 202, 203, 210, 250, 253, 259, 296, 304; of internet, 165–70, 184, 187, 188, 190, 216, 217, 224, 294
 Dham, Vinod, 215
 diaspora, 10, 26, 78, 89, 90, 96, 106, 114, 125, 126, 128, 137, 139, 213, 221, 222, 224–7, 288, 292, 293, 296, 297, 204; digital, 14; Indian, 213, 214–8; Latino, 104, 113
 Dickens, Charles 237
 difference, 4, 7, 21, 22, 23, 26, 30, 54, 82, 90, 93, 98, 101, 106, 117, 139–

- 42 *passim*, 145, 148, 149, 170, 171, 176, 180, 266, 275, 279, 290, 292, 293; between actual and ideal worlds, 74; between the Americas, 101; between ethical and techno-capital utopianism, 71; between immigrant and cyber subjectivity, 224; internal difficulties posed by, 32; problem with logic of, 33; racial and cultural, 137, 143, 146, 204, 225, 275; between subjects and subject positions, 229; between Third World and Euro-American paradigms of modernity, 67
- Ding, Xueliang, 193
- Disneyworld, 109
- Dissanayake, Wimal, 5
- diversity, 19, 33, 54, 57, 82, 88, 96, 103, 135, 141, 144, 146, 156, 167, 173, 187, 190, 193, 194, 199, 229
- Dixon, Miriam, 150
- Dominican Republic, 113
- Douglas, Mary, 227
- Drury, Shadia, 276
- Duff, Alan, 133
- Dunne, Michael, 293
- Duras, Marguerite, 122
- e-commerce, 175, 222, 225, 227–9, 296, 297
- Eakin, Emily, 303
- East Germany, 140
- East-West Center, 120–1, 134
- ecology 31, 126
- economism, 38–40 *passim*, 42, 49–52 *passim*, 53, 56, 57, 104, 105, 106, 108, 109, 113, 117, 119–24 *passim*, 126, 127, 129, 137, 151, 152, 153, 155, 187–9 *passim*, 192, 193, 199, 200, 202–7, 204, 210, 211, 215, 227, 230, 231, 249, 253, 254, 257, 259, 261, 266, 269, 273, 274, 280, 281, 291, 295, 298, 302, 304
- Ecuador, 113
- Egypt, 29
- Ehrenberg, John, 193
- Ehrenreich, Barbara, 234
- Ehrenreich, John, 234
- Eisenstadt, S.N., 16, 249
- Ellison, Ralph, 66
- England, 80, 236
- Enlightenment, 256, 258
- Enloe, Cynthia, 248
- environment, 8, 16, 28, 31, 42–4 *passim*, 51, 52, 138, 166, 173, 174, 179, 224, 229, 258, 259, 284, 290; deterioration of, 34–5; and globalization, 41; protection of, 40
- Escobar, Arturo, 163
- ethics, 50, 61, 73, 74, 75, 77, 88, 102, 202, 204, 234, 235, 244, 251, 254, 263–4, 269, 270, 271, 284, 287, 300, 302; and economics, 70–1; and epistemology of suffering, 68–70; of permanent revolution, 69; temporal dimensions of, 263–4
- ethnicity, 7, 26, 32, 33, 35, 41, 54, 57, 77, 81, 82, 90, 95, 98, 111, 112, 116, 124, 128, 130–2 *passim*, 140, 143, 146, 149, 150, 152, 155, 169, 170, 173, 176, 177, 204, 226, 229, 253, 290, 292, 293, 296; Latino, 105, 110; and polyethnic nation-state, 141–2; and race, 109–10
- Eurocentrism, 100, 144
- Europe, 3, 48, 57, 116, 121, 123, 144–5, 221, 244, 277, 292, 298, 305; Central, 145 Eastern, 42, 46, 49, 143, 145; Southern, 143; Western, 38, 187, 203
- European Union (EU), 50, 304
- exile, 43, 108, 202, 290

- family, 8, 15, 16, 48, 55, 56, 72, 91–4
passim, 99, 133, 217, 235, 236–8,
 240–3 *passim*, 246, 248, 250–8
passim, 264, 267, 269, 299, 300,
 303; as ISA, 149; US national family,
 109
- Far East, 29
- Faux, Jeff, 285
- Featherstone, Mike, 162
- feminism, 8, 40, 41, 54, 55, 57, 82, 83,
 103, 178, 276, 277, 288, 298, 300
- Ferguson, Niall, 298
- Fielder, Leslie, 299
- Fish, Stanley, 305
- Fisher, Richard, 122
- Fleras, Augie, 140, 156
- flexible production, 15, 162, 164, 236,
 251, 254, 270
- FlorCruz, Jaime A., 190
- Florida: 89, 108; Central and Southern,
 109; South, 109
- Fordism, 164, 236–7
- Foucault, Michel, 21, 71, 224, 283
- Frampton, Kenneth, 128
- France, 38, 140, 145, 148–9, 302
- Fraser, Nancy, 287
- French Revolution, 148
- Friedman, Susan Stanford, 288
- Friedman, Thomas, 79, 193, 277, 296
- Friedman, Milton, 292
- Fujikane, Candace, 133
- Fukuyama, Francis, 2
- fundamentalism, 2, 276
- G-7, 50, 63
- Gairdner, William, 142, 148, 293
- Galloway, Bruce, 134
- Gaonkar, Dilip Parameshwar, 16, 249
- Gates, Bill, 224
- gender, 16, 26, 32–3, 41, 47, 48, 53,
 57, 82, 124, 125, 132, 149, 202,
 236, 248, 253, 269, 280, 300, 306
- Germany, 281, 285, 298
- Ghosh, Amitav, 9, 68, 72, 74, 76–8
- Gibson, William, 162
- Gibson-Graham, J.K., 298
- Giddens, Anthony, 2, 251, 262–3, 270,
 301, 302
- Gilroy, Paul, 9, 288
- Gleick, James, 247, 299
- globalization, 12, 14, 15, 27, 33–5, 74,
 93, 96, 103, 113, 115, 135, 168,
 169, 188, 233, 235, 239, 245, 246,
 249, 252, 268, 271, 273, 274, 281,
 282, 285, 287, 288, 289, 291, 292,
 296, 298, 301, 302, 304;
 alternatives to, 52; and the American
 Pacific, 119–34, 280, 281;
 definitions of, 37–40; as economic
 and cultural phenomenon, 15, 84;
 as Eurocentrism, 82; and hurriedness,
 233, 236–8, 243, 245; as historical
 process, 85, 89; and the humanities,
 16, 20, 25, 26, 79–81, 110, 115,
 202, 258, 273–5, 277, 278, 284;
 and the internet, 83, 114, 161, 162,
 163, 182–4 *passim*, 187, 189, 198–
 200 *passim*, 204, 205, 209, 211,
 213, 214, 215, 217, 218, 226, 229,
 282; and localization, 26, 28, 37,
 40, 48, 50–7 *passim*, 63, 69–70, 87,
 89, 90, 95, 112, 119, 125, 128, 134,
 138, 139, 149, 150, 162, 163, 165,
 166, 168, 170, 172–4 *passim*, 176,
 188, 199, 204, 211, 214–6, 218,
 227, 229–30, 234–5, 238, 242, 243,
 246, 248, 252–3, 257, 268, 270,
 276, 280, 283, 286, 291; and
 modernity, 22, 22, 38, 39, 61, 85–
 6, 101–4 *passim*, 113, 115, 117,
 120, 122, 126, 128, 131, 133, 148,
 163, 164, 168, 175, 178, 193, 194,
 199, 202, 217, 219, 220, 222, 228,
 234, 237, 239, 247, 248, 249–51

- passim*, 252–4, 256–9 *passim*, 261, 262, 264, 266–71 *passim*, 278, 279, 282, 283; and multiculturalism, 12, 26, 81, 82, 87, 95, 96, 100, 114, 116, 123, 124, 135–7, 139, 140, 149, 157; and nationalism, 60–2, 64, 83, 295, 306; neoliberal, 10, 12, 30–2 *passim*, 38–9, 40–2 *passim*, 46, 48, 49, 51, 59, 113, 154, 203, 274, 282, 285; philosophical views of, 59–60; and the postcolonial condition, 24, 26, 61, 62, 64, 67, 73, 77, 79, 81–6 *passim*, 87–9, 90, 91, 94–5, 98, 99–100, 104, 111, 119, 125, 126, 129, 130–3 *passim*, 138, 188, 215, 217, 219, 229, 249, 280, 282, 291; in practice, 42–52; and representation, 33, 49, 59, 61–2, 65, 68, 70, 71, 74, 78, 105, 107, 112, 129, 132, 154, 170, 173, 176, 188, 221, 249, 274, 276–8, 280; and split states, 101, 104, 106, 114; as time-space compression, 1; as time-space distancing, 2; as utopianism, 70–1; and women, 32, 37–57, 82, 98, 99, 116, 152, 142, 189, 198, 207, 215, 229, 237, 239, 264, 270, 276, 281
- Goody, Jack, 22
 Gordon, Avery, 293
 Gore, Al, 105
 Gouldner, Alvin, 234
 Gourgey, Hannah, 294
 Grace, Patricia, 124, 126, 133
 Graff, Gerald, 288
 Gramsci, Antonio, 66, 283
 Gray, John, 286
 Greece, 151
 Greider, William, 286
 Grossberg, Lawrence, 291
 Guangdong, 123
 Guatemala, 101
 Guattari, Felix, 224
 Guevara, Che, 210
 Gugelberger, Georg, 290
 Guha, Ranajit, 66
 Guinier, Lani, 68
 Gulf War, 42, 277
 Gunew, Sneja, 140
 Gunkel, Anne, 162
 Gunkel, David, 162
 Gupta, Akhil, 61
 Habermas, Jurgen, 295, 303
 Haiti, 101
 Hajime, Tanabe, 23
 Haldane, John, 302
 Hall, Dana Naone, 130
 Hall, Stuart, 24, 127, 130, 218, 276, 291, 293
 Hamasaki, Richard (“Red Flea”), 126, 133
 Hamid, Mohsin, 10, 90
 Hannerz, Ulf, 288, 297
 Hara, Mari, 129
 Hardt, Michael, 2, 104, 164, 222, 261, 273, 276–8, 291, 304, 305
 Harlem, 107
 Harootunian, Harry, 134
 Harvey, David, 1, 162, 251, 267
 Hau’ofa, Epeli, 124, 126, 133
 Hawai’i, 120, 126, 128–33, 137, 144, 293
 Hayles, N. Katherine, 258
 Heidegger, Martin, 23
 Hegel, Georg, 148, 305
 hegemony, 4, 6, 23, 26, 27, 119, 120, 125, 126, 128, 129, 168, 173, 175, 178, 194, 211, 253, 271, 279, 283
 Held, David, 2, 286
 Hereniko, Vilsoni, 124, 133, 292
 Herman, Edward, 189

- Herr, Richard A., 292
- Hill, Mike, 144
- Hispanic America, 89
- Hobsbawm, Eric, 285
- Hochschild, Arlie, 237
- Hollywood, 26, 212, 230
- Holt, Douglas B., 286
- Holt, John Dominis, 124
- Hong Kong, 121–3, 134, 138, 153, 196–7, 292
- Honolulu, 119–20, 130, 134, 293
- hooks, bell, 74
- Horton, John, 302
- Hou, Hsiao-hsien, 249, 255
- Hsiao, Hsin-huang Michael, 250, 301
- Hsu, Ruth, 131
- Huan, Jisu, 210
- Huang, I-chiao, 178, 301
- Hughes, Robert, 151
- Hulme, Keri, 126
- humanism, 35, 57, 80, 202, 273–7 *passim*
- humanitarianism, 234–5, 239, 244, 298
- humanities, 1–7 *passim*, 12, 16, 20, 25, 26, 79–81, 110, 115, 116, 202, 258, 273–5, 277, 278, 284, 290, 303
- human rights, 3, 6, 8, 28, 43, 55, 155, 196, 197, 199, 234, 298, 301, 304; masculine bias of, 55; women's rights as, 55–7
- Huntington, Samuel, 2, 137
- Husserl, Edmund, 23
- Huyssens, Andrea, 296
- hybridity, 2, 10, 24, 83, 87–9, 96–8, 100, 119, 129, 131, 162, 209, 274, 292; and identity, 143; as mode of resistance, 138
- Hyderabad, 216
- identity, 4, 7, 8, 11, 32, 73, 77, 79, 81, 83, 84, 86, 87, 90, 93, 96, 97, 99, 100, 101, 112, 114, 150, 165, 168, 171, 175, 177, 180, 187, 204, 216, 218, 226, 234, 251, 253, 266, 268, 283, 288, 290; American, 102, 296; Asia Pacific, 119, 120, 123, 132, 180; Australian, 152; Canadian, 146, 147; color-based, 147; Cuban-American, 108; cultural, 110, 119, 129, 131, 135, 137, 204, 292; and cyberspace, 14, 224–5; diasporic, 224; exile, 108; Hawaiian, 129; hybrid, 143; Latino, 102, 105, 107, 108, 110, 113, 289; local, 134; mestizo, 110; national, 102, 103, 107, 109–11, 113, 116, 125, 134–6, 140, 221; Polish, 140; regional, 102, 204, 216
- identity politics, 32, 81, 82, 124
- Ignatiev, Noel, 144
- Illich, Ivan, 234
- immigration, 5, 12, 14, 39, 139, 141, 149, 196, 218, 237, 249, 296, 297; to Australia, 137, 150–2 *passim*, 155–6; to Canada, 138, 142, 146; immigrant subjectivity, 213, 214, 218, 219–31; to New Zealand, 152–3, 155–6; to the US, 105, 135, 143–4, 214–5
- imperialism, 4, 23, 26, 55, 85, 119, 121, 129, 133, 164, 188, 206, 261, 274–7 *passim*, 279, 281, 287, 291, 303, 305
- India, 5, 38, 57, 65, 76, 89–90, 92, 95–6, 144, 199, 216–7, 221, 226, 228–30, 288
- Indonesia, 63, 121
- Indus Valley, 96
- intellectuals, 6, 7, 10, 11, 20, 21, 23, 73, 81, 84, 86, 102, 107, 114, 117, 172, 178, 183, 188, 202, 203, 208, 209, 263, 274–81 *passim*, 303, 306

- International Monetary Fund (IMF), 51, 62–3, 281, 304
- internet, 12, 14, 83, 114, 161, 162, 182–4 *passim*, 214, 215, 217, 218, 226, 229, 282, 293, 294, 296, 297, 34, 306; in China, 187–212; genesis of, 161; internet communities, 163, 165–70, 176–81; multivocality of, 170; in Taiwan, 165–70, 184–5; as technological revolution, 165
- Iraq, 274, 303
- Ireland, 151
- Ishiguro, Kazuo, 15, 233–5, 238–41, 243–8, 282, 297, 298, 304–5
- Israel, 21, 29
- Italy, 150
- Iyer, Pico, 242–3
- Jamaica, 49
- James, Henry, 269
- Jameson, Fredric, 5, 15, 16, 59–60, 127, 222, 249, 250, 259, 263, 288, 303
- Japan, 23–4, 27, 121, 123, 130, 134, 144, 199, 264, 266, 281, 286, 291, 302
- Jaspers, Karl, 23
- Jay, Gregory, 139
- Jia, Pingwa, 206
- Jiang, Zemin, 197, 199
- Jin, Yong, 208–9
- Jones, Steven, 294
- Jusdanis, Gregory, 136
- Kai, 119
- Kallen, Horace, 143–4
- Kant, Immanuel, 287
- Kaplan, Caren, 288
- Kawaharada, Dennis, 133
- Kawaharu, I.H., 153
- Keaton, Dianne, 238
- Keneally, Thomas, 151
- Kerala, 90–1
- Kessler, Glenn, 274
- Keynes, John Maynard, 241, 298
- Khosla, Vinod, 215
- Kierkegaard, Søren, 264
- Kimball, Roger, 305
- King, Anthony D., 288
- King, Stephen, 122
- Kingston, Maxine Hong, 124–5
- Kirtley, Basil, 133
- Kiyoshi, Miki, 23
- Kling, Rob, 171
- Kollock, Peter, 294
- Koppel, Bruce, 134
- Koramangala, 216
- Kosovo, 42, 244–5, 304
- Kozol, Jonathan, 245
- Krishnan, Lata, 215
- Kroker, Arthur, 162
- Kymlicka, Will, 140–1
- Kyoto, 293
- Lacan, Jacques, 224, 287
- Laclau, Ernesto, 287
- Lagos, 76
- Landes, Davie, 285
- Landler, Mark, 296
- Lao-Montes, Agustín, 289
- Lash, Scott, 168, 262, 301
- Latin America, 44, 57, 103–7, 110–3, 117, 289, 290
- Latino America, 10
- Latino USA, 112
- Law, Clara, 255
- Leal, Luis, 107
- Lee, Ang, 124, 249, 255
- Leiner, Barry, 294
- Leonard, Karen, 297
- Levi-Strauss, Claude, 22
- Lewis, Michael, 215
- Li, Victor, 296

- Li, Xiguang, 204
 Li, Yonggang, 202
 Lind, Michael, 276
 Liu, Xinwu, 206
 Lloyd, David, 293
 Loader, Brian, 295
 local/localization, 11, 13, 14, 16, 26, 28, 37, 40, 48, 50–7 *passim*, 63, 69–70, 87, 89, 90, 95, 112, 119, 125, 128, 134, 138, 139, 149, 150, 162, 163, 165, 166, 168, 170, 172–4 *passim*, 176, 188, 199, 204, 211, 214–6, 218, 227, 229–30, 234–5, 238, 242, 243, 246, 248, 252–3, 257, 268, 270, 276, 280, 283, 286, 288, 291, 292, 296, 297, 299; Asian Pacific localism, 119, 123–5, 127, 128, 130–3; and Hawai'i, 129–30, 293
 Locke, John, 54
 London, 76, 121
 London, Jack, 129
 Loomba, Ania, 10, 86–8, 100, 288
 Lopez, Ian F. Hanny, 144
 Lopez, Jennifer, 112
 Los Angeles, 107, 109, 112–3, 132
 Lowe, Lisa, 148–9, 293
 Lowell, A. Lawrence, 148
 Luke, Timothy, 218, 296
 Lum, Darrell, 129–30
 Lyons, Laura, 131
 Lyons, Paul, 131, 133
 Lyotard, François, 223

 MacIntyre, Alisdair, 256–7, 264, 302
 Madan, T.N., 68
 Malaysia, 121, 153, 282
 Manhattan, 2
 Manila, 124
 Manoa, Hawai'i, 11, 131
 Marcos, Ferdinand, 29
 market, 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 11, 27, 28, 29, 34, 37–40 *passim*, 44, 47, 49, 52, 60–1, 112, 113, 115–7, 120–2 *passim*, 153, 165, 174, 176, 178, 182, 187, 189, 190, 193, 195, 199, 203, 205, 206, 208, 215, 226, 227, 236, 237, 269, 273, 274, 278, 279, 281, 282, 284, 289, 292, 297
 Marsh, Robert, 256
 Martí, José, 102
 Martin, Ricky, 112
 Marx, Karl, 121
 Marxism, 136
 Maryland, 195
 Maui, 133
 Mauss, Marcel, 227
 McDonald's, 2
 McChesney, Robert, 189
 McHugh, Paul, 153
 McNealey, Scott, 303
 McNeil, Donald, 285
 media, 2, 3, 11–4 *passim*, 20, 35, 44, 48, 71, 80, 86, 87, 90, 96, 113, 114, 116, 125, 132, 161–4, 167, 168, 170, 171, 173, 175–9, 187–94, 196–8, 200–3 *passim*, 200, 211, 213–5, 222–4 *passim*, 226, 229, 245, 252, 257–8, 273, 288, 293, 295, 303
 Melanesian islands, 125
 Melbourne, 292
 "Melting Pot," 109, 135
 Melville, Herman, 124
 Menand, Louis, 243
 Mendus, Susan, 302
 Mexico, 56, 63, 106, 108, 111, 121, 278
 Miami, 108–9, 112–3
 Michaels, Walter Benn, 143
 Michaelsen, Scott, 155
 Michener, James, 129

- Micronesia, 125
- Middle East, 19, 29
- Milich, Klaus, 293
- minority, 25, 26, 32, 33, 82, 109, 116, 129, 132, 141, 142, 146, 155, 169, 173, 175, 189, 225
- Mishel, Larry, 285
- Mitchell, William, 171
- Miyoshi, Masao, 5, 7–9, 14–6, 123, 134, 278, 288
- modernity, 3, 10, 16, 22, 38, 39, 61, 85–6, 101–4 *passim*, 113, 115, 117, 120, 122, 126, 128, 131, 133, 148, 163, 164, 168, 175, 178, 193, 194, 199, 202, 217, 219, 220, 222, 228, 234, 237, 239, 247, 248, 249–51 *passim*, 252–4, 256–9 *passim*, 261, 262, 264, 266–71 *passim*, 278, 279, 282, 283, 288, 290, 29, 296, 302; Third World and Euro-American paradigms of, 67
- Moeller, Susan, 245, 298
- money 32, 47, 49, 50, 93, 207, 215, 222
- Morales, Rodney, 129–30, 133
- Morley, David, 288
- Mouffe, Chantal, 287
- multiculturalism, 4, 8, 11–2, 26, 81, 82, 87, 95, 96, 100, 114, 116, 123, 124, 135, 136, 139, 157; attacked from right and left, 142; in Australia, 142, 149–52; versus biculturalism, 142, 153–5; in Canada, 142, 145–8; versus cultural pluralism, 143; different senses of, 156; versus Eurocentrism, 144; and nation-states, 135–7, 139, 141, 142, 287, 293; in New Zealand, 142, 152–6; problems with, 32–3, 142–5; in US, 139–40, 143–4
- multinationals, 28, 29, 42, 43, 47, 50, 60, 62, 120, 136, 140, 141, 214
- Mumbai, 226
- Munck, Ronaldo, 305
- Murayama, Milton, 133
- Muthalaya, John, 289
- Nagarajan, Meena, 217
- Nandy, Ashis, 9, 68–70, 76
- nation-state, 1, 3–12 *passim*, 14, 15, 24, 26, 29, 30, 32, 34, 59, 62, 64, 65, 79–80, 90, 91, 95, 101, 103, 104, 106, 108, 113, 116, 117, 123, 125, 127, 130, 135, 178, 214, 219, 237, 274, 292, 295, 301, 302, 305, 306; definition of, 140; essentialism of, 136–8; and globalization, 60–2, 83–7, 147; and multiculturalism, 135–7, 139, 141, 142; polyethnic, 141–2
- national culture, 4, 11, 80, 87, 116, 129, 137, 142; national identity, 102, 103, 107, 109, 110, 113, 116, 125, 134–6, 140, 221, 288, 296
- nationalism, 5, 7, 9, 10, 23, 27, 65, 67, 73, 80, 84–6 *passim*, 113, 116, 122, 123, 127, 128, 132, 145, 153, 163, 170, 177, 198–9, 203, 215, 216, 217, 219–21 *passim*, 292, 293, 297, 299; and globalization, 60–2; good and bad, 62–3
- Negri, Antonio, 2, 104, 164, 222, 261, 273–4, 276–8, 291, 304, 305
- Nehru, Jawaharlal, 65
- Nelson, Cary, 291
- neocolonialism, 126
- neoliberalism, 5–12 *passim*, 15, 30–2 *passim*, 38–9, 40–2 *passim*, 46, 48, 49, 51, 59, 113, 154, 203, 274, 282, 285, 302, 304
- New Hampshire, 38
- New Historicism, 82, 283

- New Jersey, 124
 New Orleans, 89
 New York, 107–9, 112–3, 132, 149, 216
 New Zealand, 11, 121–2, 129, 139, 142, 144–5, 152–7, 286
 Newfield, Christopher, 293
 NGOs (non-governmental organizations), 8, 35, 51, 52, 235
 “9/11” (“September 11”), 2, 274, 275
 Non-Resident Indian (NRI), 226, 296
 North America, 38, 48, 121, 196, 203, 214, 297
 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), 62, 274, 282
 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 191, 197–9
 nostalgia, 220–3, 225–8, 231, 296
 Nussbaum, Martha, 5, 253, 269, 301
 Nye, Joseph, 201

 Oahu, 129, 130
 Oboler, Suzanne, 290
 Oceania, 38, 126
 Oe, Kenzaburo, 124, 125
 Offe Claus, 168
 O’Gorman, Edmundo, 289
 Ohmae, Kenichi, 123
 Omi, Michael, 149
 Ong, Aihwa, 250, 253–4, 302
 Ong, Walter, 22
 Orange, Claudia, 153
 Orientalism, 11, 19–20, 20–1, 24, 27, 73, 119, 121–2, 132

 Pacific, 119–26, 133, 139, 280–1, 291, 292
 Pacific Islands, 123, 292
 Pacific Rim, 46, 120, 133, 292
 Padilla, Felix, 290
 Pak, Gary, 129
 Pakistan, 89–90

 Palestine, 24
 Papua New Guinea, 121
 Paris, 76
 Paz, Octavio, 103, 107
 Pearl Harbor, 133
 Pearson, David, 140
 Pearson, Lester, 145
 Pease, Donald, 148
 Peck, Jeffrey, 293
 Pérez-Firmat, Gustavo, 290
 Philadelphia, 230
 Philippines, 63, 121, 130, 144, 278
 Pieterse, Jan Nederveen, 296
 Pinochet, Augusto, 29
 Plains of Abraham, 145
 Pocock, J.G.A., 150–1
 Poland, 140
 Polynesian islands, 125, 144
 postcolonialism, 7, 9, 10, 24, 26, 61, 62, 64, 67, 73, 77, 79, 81–6 *passim*, 87–9, 90, 91, 94–5, 98, 99–100, 104, 111, 119, 125, 126, 129, 130–3 *passim*, 138, 188, 215, 217, 219, 229, 249, 280, 282, 290, 291, 287; and literature, 89–91, 95
 Poster, Mark, 14
 postmodernism, 3, 5, 15, 62, 104, 114–6 *passim*, 119, 128, 208, 250, 251, 263, 287, 288, 290, 291, 292, 293, 300, 301, 305; as anti-representational, 61; celebratory side of, 114; and nostalgia, 222–3
 postmodernity, 60, 61, 86, 102–4, 116, 117, 169, 177, 271
 Prague, 31
 Prasad, Rajan, 154
 Prashad, Vijay, 297
 Premji, Azim, 217
 professionalism, 236, 241, 243, 282, 299
 public sphere, 1, 13, 56, 161, 164, 169,

- 170, 175; on the internet, 176–81, 187, 188, 194–203, 211, 218
- Puerto Rico, 107–8, 113
- Quebec, 145–6, 153
- Rabasa, José, 289
- race/racism, 26, 32–3, 41, 53, 54, 67, 72, 102, 109–11, 117, 132, 139, 143–6, 149, 150, 152, 154, 155, 217, 293, 306; distinguished from culture, 143–4; and ethnicity, 109–10
- Rafael, Vincente, 133, 292, 293
- Rambouillet, 304
- Readings, Bill, 3–6, 9, 14, 79–81, 288
- Reagan, Ronald, 27
- reflexivity, 69, 71, 249, 251–4 *passim*, 257–9 *passim*, 261–3, 267–70, 301
- region/regionalism, 2, 7, 11, 26, 33, 35, 40, 44, 49, 53, 56, 57, 88, 89, 113, 125, 130, 134, 226, 291, 292; Asia Pacific, 119–28, 190, 280; regional identity, 102, 204, 216
- Reich, Robert, 234
- Reid, Elizabeth, 170
- representation, 2, 3, 6, 9, 16, 33, 49, 59, 61–2, 65, 68, 70, 71, 74, 78, 105, 107, 112, 129, 132, 154, 170, 173, 176, 188, 221, 249, 274, 276–8, 280, 288, 291, 305
- responsibility, 8, 32, 40, 47, 48, 53, 61, 75, 185, 251, 298, 301, 302, 304, 306
- Rheingold, Howard, 170, 172, 174
- Riemens, Patrice, 162
- Riesman, David, 259, 261
- Robbins, Bruce, 135, 288, 304–5
- Robertson, Roland, 268–9, 287, 296
- Robins, Kevin, 288
- Rodin, Auguste, 267
- Rodó, José Enrique, 102
- Rodriguez, Richard, 111–2
- Roediger, David, 144
- Rorty, Richard, 115–7, 291
- Ross, Kristin, 128
- Rousseau, Jean Jacques, 148–9, 293
- Rowe, John Carlos, 305, 306
- Roy, Arundhati, 10, 90–6, 98–100, 289
- Rushdie, Salman, 10, 90, 236
- Russia, 24, 286, 291
- Said, Edward, 9, 19–21, 24, 26, 67, 70, 81–2, 84–5, 87, 95, 100, 283, 305
- Saipan, 124
- Salecl, Renata, 241, 297, 300
- San Francisco, 258
- Santa Cruz, 119
- Santayana, George, 273
- Sassen, Saskia, 214, 216
- Sasser, James, 198
- Schor, Juliet, 239, 286
- Schultz, Susan, 131
- Seattle, 31, 62, 138
- Seco, Mobutu Sese, 29
- Sen, Amartya, 8
- Seoul, 19–21, 24, 26, 119
- Sepoy Mutiny, 96
- Serbia, 304
- Seshadri-Crooks, Kalpana, 287
- Shakespeare, 104, 132
- Sharp, Andrew, 154
- Shetty, Sunil, 230
- Shields, Rob, 162
- Shuzo, Kuki, 23
- Sifton, Sam, 14
- Silicon Valley, 5, 214–7
- Silvester, Christopher, 121
- Simmel, Georg, 177
- Simon, Paul, 107
- Sinavaiana, Caroline, 133
- Singapore, 121, 122, 123, 134

- Slouka, Mark, 171
 Smith, Craig, 295
 Smith, Edward, 294
 Smith, Mark, 294
 Smith, Zadie, 10, 90
 Soaba, Russell, 126
 socialism, 46, 52, 71, 103, 104, 108, 114, 116, 117, 124, 142, 148, 187, 189, 194, 200, 203, 217
 South Africa, 30
 South America, 29, 47
 South Korea, 121, 124, 130, 144, 291
 Soviet republics, 42
 Soviet Union, 29, 49
 space (see also cyberspace), 1, 13, 15, 22, 29, 32, 35, 42, 59, 61, 64, 70, 73, 77, 114, 120, 122, 126, 127, 128, 164, 169, 179, 202, 203, 213–6, 218–22 *passim*, 224–6 *passim*, 228, 242, 246–7, 248, 252, 257, 258, 261, 266, 282, 274, 276, 285, 288, 296, 298, 299, 301; commercial, 180, 181; cultural, 163; disorganized, 170; institutional, 165, 180, 181; public, 168; social, 162; 177, 277; time-space compression, 1, 162, 163, 168, 170, 176, 218, 247, 251, 263, 264, 268, 270; time-space distancing, 2; transcendence of, 161; virtual, 162, 177
 Spain, 106
 Spanish-American War, 102, 106
 Spivak, Gayatri, 67, 287
 Stacey, Judith, 300
 Staeheli, Lynn A., 296
 Stanton, Katherine, 244
 Starobinski, Jean, 296
 Stewart, Susan, 221
 Steyn, Peter, 190
 Stille, Alexander, 303
 Stoll, Clifford, 171
 Stone, Allucquere Rosanne, 171
 Stratton, Jon, 292
 Strauss, Levi, 72
 Street, Brian, 22
 Stringer, Howard, 303
 Strong Power Forum, 192, 197–201, 203
 Suharto, Mohamed, 29
 Sumida, Stephen, 292
 Syal, Meera, 90
 Taipei, 119, 134, 250, 252, 255, 257–8, 264, 267, 302
 Taiwan, 13, 121–2, 128–9, 134, 165–7, 173, 176, 180, 197, 199, 205, 207–8, 249, 251, 253, 256, 259, 264, 269, 294, 301, 302
 Takaki, Ronald, 297
 Taoism, 125
 Taylor, Charles, 287
 teleology, 16, 67, 69, 117, 119, 222, 220, 249, 254, 256, 261, 264, 266–8 *passim*, 270, 271, 280
 television, 22, 94, 95, 99, 112–4 *passim*, 188, 190, 191, 301
 Thailand, 121, 285, 291
 Thatcher, Margaret, 27
 Theophanous, Andrew, 150
 Third World, 9, 11, 29, 35, 46, 47, 49, 50, 55, 60–3 *passim*, 65, 67, 70, 73, 117, 122, 210, 286, 295, 296, 298, 301; perspective on utopia, 68–9; and representation, 64
 Thomas, Paul, 293
 Thompson, E.P., 300–1
 Tiananmen Square, 194–5, 197–8
 Tobin, Beth
 Tocqueville, Alexis de, 305
 Tokyo, 121, 134, 258, 264

- totality, 7–8, 19, 26, 263; inclusive, 32–5
 Trask, Haunani-Kay, 124, 126, 129
 Treichler, Paula, 291
 Trudeau, Pierre, 145–8, 293
 Tsai, Ming-liang, 249, 259, 302
 Tu, Weiming, 250, 253, 254, 269, 301
 Tunis, 21
 Turkle, Sherry, 171, 224
 Tuwhare, Hone, 134

 United Kingdom (UK), 27, 128, 130, 133, 151, 215, 230, 281, 292
 United Nations, 48, 277
 United States: 3, 10–2, 24, 26–9, 32, 38, 42, 46, 48, 57, 62–3, 80–1, 84, 89, 101–4, 116, 120–3, 130–3, 135, 137, 139–40, 142–50, 155–7, 187, 194–8, 200–1, 203, 214–6, 218, 230, 274, 277–8, 281, 285, 286, 288, 289, 290, 292, 295, 296, 297, 303, 304, 305; East Coast, 106; South, 108; Southwest, 89; West Coast, 106–7, 111
 universality/universalism, 1, 3, 5–9 *passim*, 21, 23, 40, 41, 54, 57, 69–70, 72, 73, 75, 101, 103, 116, 132, 136, 140, 148, 149, 198–9, 219, 229, 250, 274, 287; distrust of, 26; as distinct from globality, 138–9
 Urbana, 127
 Urry, John, 168
 USA Patriot Act, 277
 utopia, 68, 70–1, 117, 119, 247–8, 277

 Vancouver, 138, 291
 Vietnam, 291
 Vietnam War, 276
 Vinaik, Achin, 62
 Virilio, Paul, 162
 Vogel, Ezra, 27

 Volokh, Eugene, 171

 Wallerstein, Immanuel, 60, 83–4, 306
 Wang, Anyi, 206
 Wang, Meng, 206
 Wang, Shuo, 206, 208–9
 Washington, DC, 31
 Waters, Malcolm, 287, 288
 Watt, Ian, 22
 Watts, Carol, 301
 Weber, Max, 140
 Wei, Hui, 207
 Weiner, Norbert, 162
 Weinstein, Michael, 162
 Wendt, Albert, 125–6, 130, 133, 292
 West Bank, 21
 Wetzler, Brad, 216
 White, Geoffrey, 134
 Whitehead, Colson, 299
 Wigen, Karen, 291
 Wilber, Alex, 289
 Williams, Raymond, 15, 128, 236
 Willis, Paul, 180
 Wilson, Rob, 292, 293, 304
 Winant, Howard, 149
 Winston, Brian, 171
 Wolfe, Alan, 303
 women, 8, 32, 37–57, 82, 98, 99, 116, 152, 142, 189, 198, 207, 215, 229, 237, 239, 264, 270, 276, 281, 286, 289, 300, 301
 Wong, Kar-wai, 302
 Wood, Michael, 243
 Woolf, Virginia, 131
 World Bank, 51, 63, 281
 World Trade Organization (WTO), 37, 50–1, 62, 197, 274, 281
 World War II, 130, 241
 World Wide Web (WWW), 163, 165, 167, 178, 213, 218, 223

 Yamanaka, Lois-Ann, 124, 129

- Yang, Edward, 16, 249–59, 261–4, 266–7, 269–70, 284, 301, 302
- Ye, Niu, 205
- Yegenoglu, Meyda, 73
- Young, Hugo, 303
- Young, Iris Marion, 148
- Yu, Hua, 206
- Yu, Shicun, 202
- Yue, Audre, 292
- Yugoslavia, 42, 44, 274, 304
- Zakon, Robert, 294
- Zambia, 49
- Zhang, Guantian, 209–10
- Zhou, Xincheng, 200
- Zimbabwe, 49
- Zizek, Slavoj, 69, 136, 224–5, 287
- Zupancic, Alenka, 287