

Antipode

A Radical Journal of Geography

Book Review Symposium

Matthew Sparke, *Introducing Globalization: Ties, Tensions, and Uneven Integration*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-631-23128-8 (cloth); ISBN: 978-0-631-23129-5 (paper); ISBN: 978-1-118-24106-6 (ebook)

University and college teaching is always a deeply collective effort. Our students can only learn insofar as they have already learned from others, including their parents, school-teachers, and communities, as well as other academics. And precisely because of what they have already learned, our students also often teach us a great deal themselves. Meanwhile, as teachers we adapt our pedagogy from all those who have taught us throughout our own educational journeys. We also repeatedly revise and develop our teaching based on reviewing the work of those who teach alongside us—both locally and globally. And, as academic listservs, blogs and websites now document daily, scholar-teachers are constantly sharing tips, tools and texts that inspire, while also offering ideas for improvement to others who share commitments to critical pedagogy. Read in the spirit of this ongoing collective effort, the four reviews of my book offered here do me the great honor of making my own teaching text on globalization the focus of evaluative and adaptive reflection. I am extremely thankful to the reviewers and *Antipode* for the time and space this has taken, and hope that it in turn offers an opportunity for a wider audience to reflect on how texts on globalization relate to some of the wider contexts in and about which we teach.

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The contexts that concerned me most when I created the course on globalization that became the basis of my book were the pro-market policies, hegemonic ideologies and personal responsibilities associated with global neoliberalization. These were famously contested on the streets of Seattle in the anti-WTO protests of 1999, and even then it was becoming clear that neoliberal norms were simultaneously corporatizing the university and subjecting students and academics to the discipline, incentives and ‘excellence’ metrics of market forces (cf. Castree and Sparke 2000; Sparke 2011). A big course on globalization was a natural fit in this context, even if it sought to denaturalize neoliberalism and recount the accountability of market responsabilization in globally critical ways that were only parochially understood by institutional apostles of excellence. The resulting contradictions in turn became experiential for me insofar as the local pressures associated with teaching about globalization in this and other related courses made writing up my classroom critiques of neoliberalism for an international audience that much more fitful and slow. But eventually the ten chapters and glossary were done, and, as the reviewers make clear, one of the central goals of the finished book remains to introduce contemporary globalization in a way that allows readers to explore how it has been entangled both materially and discursively with the processes, practices and personal performances of neoliberalization.

Stephen Young asks about how my thinking on neoliberalism shifted over the long writing period and how such shifts might now usefully take into account evolving forms of ‘vernacular neoliberalism’. Rather than cite a lengthy list of shift-inducing intellectual inspirations here, let me note first of all that I have elsewhere inventoried many of the significant scholarly change-agents in a trilogy of literature reviews on the political geographies of dominance, governance and resistance in which globalization and

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neoliberalization are variously tied and untied (see Sparke 2004; 2006; 2008). As well as surveying many theories of marketized governance, the second of these reviews aimed at emphasizing the importance of empirical work by geographically-sensitive researchers on the context-contingent concatenations of top down neoliberal government with more capillary experiments in neoliberal governmentality. Based on all this literature, the need to trace the uneven historical geography of neoliberalization in my book became paramount, and it was something that I also therefore attempted by explaining how the global expansion and entrenchment of normative neoliberalism—what I describe in Chapter 1 as the ‘ten commandments’ of neoliberalism—has been shaped from the start by a series of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic power relations playing out across a distinctly uneven global landscape. Over time, though, I have shifted from a largely negative critique of the neoliberal TINA-touts’ flat world fantasies (and their smooth-world counterparts in more idealistic anti-neoliberal, anti-Empire social theory) towards more affirmative, insurgent accounts inspired by scholars such as Paul Farmer, Ruthie Gilmore, Laura Pulido, and Paul Routledge working on and in struggles to overcome the brutal asymmetries and inequalities that shape the interdependencies of global market rule (Farmer *et al.* 2013; Gilmore 2007; Pulido 2006; Routledge 2003).

For related reasons too, I am now also very interested in research such as Young’s into vernacular neoliberalism and the complex kinds of market-mediated care and social reproduction with which it seems to be so often tied. His own illuminating insights into masculinity and microfinance market-making in India, along with other excellent ethnographies of emergent market identities by, amongst others, Mona Atia, Sharad Chari, Rowan Ellis, and Vinay Gidwani have underlined for me the profound ways in which the cultural politics of gender, caste, race and religion often combine to complicate

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what once seemed like the simple class politics of neoliberal dispossession, occasionally even offering opportunities for repossession by historically subalternized groups (Atia 2013; Chari 2004; Ellis 2012; Gidwani 2008; Young 2010a; 2010b). At the same time, and following my critique of the New Washington Consensus in Chapter 9, I remain critical of the philanthropic neoliberals and pious post-Marxists who argue along the distinct but intersecting lines of cost-effectiveness and identitarianism that any radical cares about class and structural violence can now be comfortably cast-off in the name of care about particular people with particular problems in particular places.

One way of addressing vernacular neoliberalism and cultural politics more adequately would have been to add a whole chapter on Culture. Based on the generous suggestions offered here by David Beer, this seems important to consider for any future edition of the book. Amongst other issues, such a chapter would have to address neoliberal cultures of learning, including the hybrid social-media-market contexts out of which students themselves come to engage (or not) with textbooks and their teachers in undergraduate classes. Building on Beer's suggestive metaphorization of the textbook as safety-net, it would be useful to explore further than I do in Chapter 10 the sorts of pedagogic challenges of teaching in and against post-Fordist, post-safety-net contexts of precarity. Reciprocally, such an approach might also enable readers to reflect more critically on the illusions of security and choice-maximizing risk management offered by advanced liberal student practices—outsourced essay-writing, online ratings, and the reduction of professorial performance to the heteronormativity of hot chilli peppers, all included. Thanks to Ali Rogers introducing Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy in Oxford geography lectures in the late 1980s, the cultural studies of the Birmingham School made for some of the most emancipatory moments in my own labor of learning as an

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undergraduate—not least of all because Paul Willis’s (1977) brilliant ethnography of a Birmingham school, *Learning to Labor*, taught me that I was something of an “ear ’ole” escapee of class-culture constraints. So if a textbook on globalization can make this sort of thinking possible for a new generation of students, I would like to think there are also emancipatory possibilities in further re-working cultural studies insights to explore the cultural constraints of ‘new times’ neoliberalization (see also Dolby *et al.* 2004). And meanwhile a chapter on the wider cultural formations of globalization could usefully engage with the topics of everyday communication and story-telling that Farhang Rouhani rightly notes are largely missing, including all the creative and experimental forms of networked worldliness that (as some of the book’s supplementary online resources indicate) students themselves find in music, movies, online news and digital media more generally.

Jamey Essex makes another big addition recommendation here that is as generative as it is generously made. Global climate change, and all sorts of emergent global natures—including global food systems, global waste streams, and global ecologies of water and energy—could be addressed much more comprehensively in an additional chapter on Nature. Essex argues that such analysis is not only important in its own respect, but would also provide a way of questioning how capital G Globalisation myth-making falls off the edge of its flat world geoeconomics when confronted by the implications of climate change and ecological globalization – an indication of the limits of geoeconomic scripting that he also illustrates in his own inspiring arguments about global food ecologies and aid (Essex, 2013). The broader need to address non-human nature is undoubtedly crucial, I think, and it really should be highlighted with care in any comprehensive introduction to globalization – however much Thomas Friedman himself

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wants to serve up an account of climate change with flat world apple pie (Friedman, 2008). In the current Chapter 9 I do attempt to put the idea of the Anthropocene into tension with the book's overarching concern with global asymmetries by addressing the extreme inequalities in both climate change vulnerability and climate adaptation options around the world. Extending this further in a chapter dedicated to global natures it would also be possible to pursue a parallel point that I make about global health in Chapter 9: namely, that risk management strategies for some lead to risk exacerbation for others. This certainly seems to pertain to global ecologies as well as health. Whether it is subsistence forest communities being displaced in efforts to create dedicated carbon sinks for global carbon markets, or the still wider risks for the world's peasant farming and fishing communities associated with geo-engineering the atmosphere and oceans, the same sorts of stark inequality amidst interdependency clearly call out for close attention. Still, Essex's argument goes further than this to suggest that the implications of the Anthropocene do not need the naturalizing force of anthro-centric Globalization discourse to have their own global impact. Drawing inspiration from a recent interview with Frédéric Neyrat by Elizabeth Johnson, maybe these more-than-human implications could be expanded and explained in an effort to demystify the political unconscious (or uncanny?) of the Anthropocene for undergraduate audiences (Neyrat and Johnson 2014).

The work of demystifying while honoring the complex arguments of social theorists is a background project running throughout this textbook. Responding to Rouhani, I would contend that post-colonial, feminist, and Foucauldian theories are just as much part of the theoretical repertoire in this regard as Marxian political-economy. And yet maybe Rouhani's points about the textbook being "textbook-y" also help explain why it's the economic narrative about capitalist globalization that ends up sticking out

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(like the tusks of an elephant, perhaps) after all the effort at anti-essentializing interdisciplinary integration. As I have argued following Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in the essays cited by Essex, we *cannot not* be essentialists when we make attempts at worldly explanation, and this is probably even more true of textbooks and teaching than other sorts of intellectual work. As everyone who has tried to teach critical social theory in the classroom knows, it is very hard to preserve the complexity of theoretical argument in a setting where so many of our students arrive expecting uncritical, and what they unthinkingly call ‘unbiased’, information. Add to this often economy-inspired student instrumentality the economic-turned-administrative pressures associated with running large courses—coordinating teaching assistants, developing computer-graded exams, preparing study-guides and so on—and the push into simplified sound-bites starts to seem as inevitable as the TINA-tout vision of unstoppable Globalization. But this economic inevitability, of course, is precisely what my book’s counter-narrative of uneven development is designed to disrupt with its take-back-the-evidence approach to evidenced-based explanation. And at least in some respects the reviewers seem to be saying that this promises to open up debates over globalization for critical classroom conversations. I certainly hope so.

In some cases the disruption and all the associated disaggregation of the normal neoliberal news narrative may well create too much distraction to be useful. The critical feedback here about the density of details in the Money chapter suggests that this is definitely a specter haunting my overview of global finance. And yet here, I would argue that the response I recommend to the problem of essentialization more generally, also offers a working solution. In short, we need to keep reminding ourselves about how our scholarship and our teaching are always already collaborative endeavors. Despite the

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demands of comprehensiveness and key-point texting that textbook writing clearly brings, the text can only ever be read in a broader context, and while much of that context may appear to be colonized by the pedagogies of neoliberalization and associated forms of economic instrumentalism, there are other critical interventions continually being made that can help us expand critical pedagogic possibilities. In relation to global finance, for instance, a number of publications that came out after I finished writing the book offer much more clarity on the overarching contradictions of globalized-cum-personalized finance (for example, Christophers 2013; Gindin and Panitch 2012; Harvey 2014; Joseph 2013). For my own teaching, therefore, I will now use them to help students using my book see the larger forest of financialization instead of just the trees—tuned-pink-pulp of everyday financial news—many of my Money chapter’s figurative trees having been hewed from the deforested pages of the *Financial Times*!

For some readers my inclinations towards word play may be pointing here to a kind of financial press envy. But while I still believe that critical scholars can compete well in contesting the conceits of the Globalization press corps, the point I want to stress here in closing is that this is best done collaboratively, not competitively. Global precarity can thereby better become the basis of solidarity. Teaching efforts to break out of the financial shackles of disciplinary neoliberalism with pedagogic poetry might also thereby learn an important lesson from the long collaborative struggle to overcome plantation pasts, overturning the debt discourses of the financiers with restorative returns of the debts owed globally to everyone who has been dispossessed (McKittrick 2013; Scott 2014). Of course, working within the wider contexts of neoliberalization, such restorative reworkings of the dominant discourse of Neoliberalism are an easier future to evoke and imagine than implement. Faculty meetings often show us that within today’s

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academy all sorts of market imperatives daily impose themselves on instructors, turning us away from cooperation towards competition. But as the reviewers writing here clearly document, the conversations of cooperative critique in and about pedagogy remain a restorative opportunity for meaning-making and renewal. And for this genuine and open-minded collaboration I am deeply grateful.

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