Editors' Introduction and Acknowledgments

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Pangaea

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Danny Mayer and Keith Woodward
Editors’ Introduction

We are happy to give you the 13th installment of disClosure.

We would like to begin this issue with a brief science lesson. Seventeen months ago, while brainstorming for a name that would effectively convey disClosure’s approach to the topic of globalization, we decided to title the project Pangaea—Greek for “all lands”—after the supercontinent formed at the end of the Paleozoic era, nearly 225 million years ago. Not simply a supercontinent, Pangaea has in fact pointed the way to a new way of conceptualizing the world. Its postulated existence, for example, was the basis for Alfred Wegener’s opening forays into a theory of continental drift, which overturned the accepted notion of continents as stable, immobile objects. Now known as the theory of plate tectonics, this conceptualization envisions the Earth’s outer surface as comprised of at least 12 tectonic plates of differing sizes that continually move atop hotter and more mobile material. At the boundaries of these plates, where the movement is most discernable, plates may collide (as they do in the Himalayas at the intersections of the Indian and Eurasian plates), subduct (off the west coast of South America at the Nazca and South American plates), pull apart to create trenches (the Marianas Trench, site of the North American and Eurasian plates), or slip (not so easily) past each other, as they do at the San Andreas fault line of the Pacific and North American plates.

In Pangaea—and in the fluid spatial imaginary it invokes—we find something more than a
metaphor for current discourses of globalization, where movements of people, things, and ideas collapse, contract, spread, fracture, suture, unify, subduct, and slip (not so easily) past each other. We find it, in fact, to be a globalization, at the same time that it cautions current ways of thinking about globalization. Such spatial epistemologies often position social, political and cultural flows across the territories of the Earth against the physicality—the terra—of the planet itself (as, for example, in the space-shot of a supposedly unmarked Earth found on the cover of Hardt and Negri's Empire). If globalization describes a historical moment (whether that be the post-fordist turn of the 1970s or history of Western imperialism), then Pangaea stretches that moment both spatially and temporally, merging the history of social life with the unfolding of geologic time, entangling wars on terror with wars on terra. Understood in this socio-spatial context, Pangaea is an unmarked-marked space. Unmarked in that it predates both the natural striations of continental formation and the historical striations of networks of capital, state formations and diasporic flows; marked in that even the moment of Pangaea is a fleeting blockage of the movement of terra across the globe. As the author John McPhee writes, "The poles of the earth have wandered. The equator has apparently moved," and it now "seems an act of almost pure hubris to assert that some landmark of our world is fixed at 73 degrees 57 minutes and 53 seconds west longitude and 40 degrees 51 minutes and 14 seconds north latitude—a temporary description, at any rate, as if for a boat on the sea."

Yet we do not want to push this too far, to suggest that plate movements are the globalization. For while Pangaea and its theories of drift remind us that terra, in addition to territory, is always becoming, always fluid, always resistant to containment, the materiality of plate tectonics cannot fully address, for instance, the very geopolitical flows that likewise position McPhee's landmark—the George Washington Bridge—as "a temporary description." On the one hand, it is an object that places the U.S.—and in particular New York—in relation to the rest of the world: as a democratic nation, as a center of neo-liberal capitalism, as a site of industry, patriotism, and commerce. On the other hand, as it is traversed by tourists, workers, fat cats and hustlers, those codes—and countless others—are continuously inscribed and re-inscribed upon it. It is precisely at this intersection between the material and the textual, the geologic and the human, that we locate the critical impulse of Pangaea.

This issue of disclosure incorporates a multiplicity of approaches to the questions opened up through the rethinking of globalization. Appearing at several points in the issue are undergraduate responses to our call for personal definitions of globalization in twenty-five words or less. Several of the selections queried the oft-conceived neat split between globalization and (post)colonialism. On the cover, Praba Pilar's "Todos Somos Ilegales" troubles the very notion of the territoriality of identity and citizenship, a theme that GTimothy Gordon and Durlabh Singh take up in their respective poems "At Long Last the Rain" and "Sonnet Two." Nicole Margaretten's "Colonialism Game" traces a visual genealogy of movement and exploitation that appears to necessarily implicate the viewer/player in the continued processes of (post)colonialist violence. And in "Globalization, or the Vanishing Present of Postcolonialism? (and the Figuration of the Comprador-Intellectual)," Saikat Majumdar toys with the subsumption of discourses of postcolonialism into discourses of globalization, drawing together the "time knots" of the former and the "space knots" of the latter to re-envision a globalization that does not leave behind the critical insights of postcolonialism.

Majumdar's piece has critical implications not only for the supposed distinctions between these categories, but also for the ways that the academy goes about policing their discursive boundaries, a line of inquiry taken up by Neil Smith, David Ruccio and Marlene de Beer. In "The Beastly Feast," a poem by de Beer, academic disciplines become complicit with the military in the "denial of humanity." Two of our interviews, with geographer Smith and economist Ruccio, implicate the academy as a site in which discursive and material practices lend themselves to both the perpetuation of and the resistance to strategies of globalization. Ruccio troubles any clean separations between an abstract world of ideas (the intellectual) and a world of material, political practice (the activist). Likewise, Smith, noting pressures within the Association of American Geographers to support the current war in Iraq, cautions against the infiltration of hegemonic and violent ideologies into the University.

One of the most recent developments in the strategic deployment of techniques of globalization has undoubtedly been the bloody series of contests over Middle Eastern oil spearheaded by the Bush Administration. Doreen Maloney's "A View from My Porch" is a combination of images taken from her porch in Lexington, KY, on the first day of the
second war in Iraq and her written attempts to come to terms with that event. The self-described rant of Werner Bonefeld, “Against War and the Preconditions of War,” written on the eve of Gulf II, calls for the eradication of global uneven development as a precondition for the eradication of war. In what we believe is a first for disClosure, we interview an author of literary nonfiction, Anthony Swofford, who served as a sniper during the first Gulf War and whose memoir, Jarhead, recounts the social positions and conditions of the soldier in contemporary global warfare and social life. Finally, Serena Anderlini-D’Onofrio reconceptualizes the violence wrought upon the Earth itself during such conflicts over oil and other resources. According to her essay, “The Gaia Hypothesis and Ecofeminism: Culture, Reason, and Symbiosis,” thinking of the Earth as a “being with a life of its own” will create a social world in which “there are no mere resources, and every node in the web of life has its meaning and purpose.”

We hope you enjoy this latest issue of disClosure,

Danny Mayer and Keith Woodward
Lexington, KY  Tucson, AZ
(Goodnight Ollie. Goodnight Stan.)

Acknowledgments

And, of course, needless to say that this journal is a result of the collaborative efforts of a large group of people. We would first like to thank Dana Nelson, Jedi-Master and faculty advisor, for providing not only an unwavering support and interest in the collective (and the committee on social theory more generally), but more importantly for being the kind of model scholar – both critical of and genuinely excited about all forms of new scholarship – that we need more of in our universities. For providing a forum in which faculty and graduate students from a range of disciplines can meet and be able to discuss such important topics as globalization, and for providing an outlet for us to publish on these topics, we thank the Committee on Social Theory. For providing a desert type of sensibility, we thank John Paul Jones, III, whose presence at UK will be sorely missed. For her assistance in copy-editing, we thank Rebecca Carey, for administrative assistance, we thank Chris Walcott, and for their support and expertise, we thank those "veteran" editors, particularly Jessica Hollis (for sending reminders two, sometimes three times, for us), Paul Kingsbury and Christine Metzo. We would also like to thank the numerous undergraduate students from around the globe who contributed their thoughts on what globalization meant to them. Funding for the journal has been provided by a number of sources, all of whom we’d like to thank: the UK Student Government Association, the Committee on Social Theory and all of you who are paid subscribers. And finally, for their (too) many hours spent reading submissions, tracking down subscribers, preparing and conducting interviews, reviewing books, copy-editing articles and formatting the journal, the disClosure 13 collective: Ben Smith, Maggie Smith, Natalia Ruiz-Junco, Jeff “copy-edit” West, Frankie “format-queen” Finley, Tina Mangieri, Jamie Gillen, Tonya Griffith, Brett Smith, and Chris Kays.

This issue could not – and would not – have been completed were it not for your active interest, support and dedication. We thank you.
Globalization in 25 Words or Less

What is globalization? And, in asking that, how do we begin to frame the frames that frame that question? As many have argued, by proceeding with the question as such, we frequently import several of the explanations that the query has supposedly yet to uncover: discourses, totalizations, smooth spaces, micropolitics, exploitations, Empires, imperialisms old and new, flows of capital, transnationalisms, wars on terror, displacements, &c. Likewise, many others have observed the impossibility of maneuvering ourselves outside of those circulating constructions that we find ourselves reproducing in our global imaginaries. This problematic framing of the question of globalization, as we understand it, is not remedied simply by attempts to get outside of these frameworks, but also by compounding the number and scope of definitions so that threads of accord and discord may emerge.

Definitions of globalization—submitted by undergraduate students from around the world—appear throughout disClosure 13: Pangaea. These come as responses to requests we made to faculty members in geography programs in- and outside the U.S. to challenge their students to define globalization. We asked that students provide their own definition (in 25 words or less) based upon whatever logical, empirical, or affective groundings they felt best suited the topic. Our hope was not to find entirely fresh perspectives, but rather to gather together a collection of responses that reveal the in-roads and out-roads of globalization discourses. While some responses queried the very concept of “definition” by, for example, responding with a poem rather than a rigid description, we were surprised to discover how closely several definitions resonated with each other, in spite of the great distances separating their authors. However, our task is not to re-codify these responses as a new zone or margin of representation, but rather to offer them as they were submitted: a collection of documents on globalization in the year 2004. Take them as you will.

Rather than gathering these definitions up into a single, centered bloc, we have dispersed these texts throughout this issue of disClosure.

—Keith Woodward and Danny Mayer

Marlene de Beer
The Beastly Feast?

your face
a double face
a Devil’s face!

one face
turned towards your own society
deplores any injustice.

Like a flood light
it beams out
from the North to the South

scrutinising
one-way
like a torch
never back
never -
the other way!

backed by science
backed by the military
backed by anthropology
backed by sociology
denial of humanity
no morning
only righteousness

a sickening feeling in the pit of people’s stomachs!

(Dear) Complicated Beast,
can we beam it the other way