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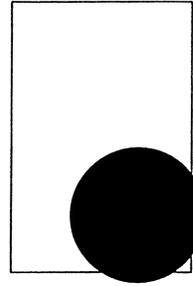
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# From roots to routes

Tropes for trippers

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## Abstract

This article suggests that the current discourses of globalization in anthropology, cultural studies and post-colonial studies are expressions and elaborations on a specific socially positioned perspective that has become a contender for a new ideological representation of the world. It is important to recognize that this representation is not so much the result of research but an immediate expression of a particular experience, one that began, in fact, outside of academia. This discourse, which is strongly evolutionist, is contrasted to a global systemic perspective in which globalization is a specific historical phase of such systems, a phenomenon that has occurred previously, most recently at the end of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century when it produced analogous discourses on the global.

## Key Words

cosmopolitan • culture • essentialism • hybrid • indigenous • roots • routes • transnational

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past several years a new discourse has emerged. It announces the final confrontation with everything bounded in both anthropology and, strange as it may seem, among the people that anthropologists study. There is a plethora of works in which this confrontation has thrust itself upon the anthropological stage. Names such as Appadurai (1988, 1993), Bhabha (1994), Gupta and Ferguson (1997), Malkki (1992), Kelly (1995, 1999) and, more recently, Geschiere (1995, 1999) and others. Many of these are associated with a post-colonial turn in both anthropology and cultural studies in the United States. Many have been associated in one way or another with an explicit transnationalism, not so much as an analytical approach but as a moral principal. In the following discussion of some well-known texts, I hope to illuminate the core tropes of this discourse and the rendition of reality that it proposes. This exercise is part of an attempt to delineate the important differences between what I understand to be an anthropology–cultural studies version of globalization and an anthropology that has developed a macro-historical and systemic framework (see Friedman, 1994; Friedman and Ekholm Friedman, 2000).

## THE AMBIVALENCE OF THE GLOBAL

The most recent book by Clifford, *Routes* (1997), perhaps the most brilliant but also the most ambivalent of these works, is, in its very title, a game of homonyms. Roots and routes, fixed and entrenched in one sense and on the move in another. *Routes* here can be understood partly as roots on the move, a transmutation of roots into rhizomes perhaps. There is plenty of room for the imagination here, but there is, interestingly enough, a related meaning of the word that is not dealt with: the verb, to rout, which is, of course, one of the principal ways in which roots have become routes, in which peoples have been displaced. But Clifford is less concerned with the real social issue of displacement than with the *metaphor* of fixity or dwelling vs movement.

Dwelling was understood to be the local ground of collective life, travel a supplement; roots always precede routes. But what would happen, I began to ask, if travel were untethered, seen as a complex of pervasive spectrum of human experiences? Practices of displacement might emerge as *constitutive* of cultural meaning rather than as their simple transfer or extension. Cultural centers, discrete regions and territories, do not exist prior to contacts, but are sustained through them, appropriating and disciplining the restless movements of people and things. (Clifford, 1997: 3)

This is among the most challenging uses of the opposition, but the argument is no different from the received transnationalist position. Dwelling, according to the transnationalists, was the premiss of classical anthropology in which the object was conveniently localized for the ethnographer, bounded territorially, a world unto itself: culture and society was packaged by territory. Opposed to this is the view that displacement itself is the locus of production of meaning, not least of locality itself. While it is not clear how this might actually occur, the way in which the opposition is set up by Clifford expresses an ambivalence not found in other exemplars of transnationalist cultural studies. For one, he states his position in more universal or structural than evolutionary terms as is current among transnationalists. That is, discrete regions and territories have *always* been sustained within the larger systems of contact of which they were a part. Compare this to the more popular view that the world once consisted of discrete cultures and has only recently evolved into a single place connected by intensive flows of people, things, information and capital. On the other hand, Clifford's stress on movement itself as the source of cultural production implies that it is people and things on the move that in themselves are agents of cultural creation as against the received view that culture is constituted in localized populations or communities. He refers to Gosh's Egyptian village which is described as a 'transit hall', and he introduces his particular notion of hybrid historical trajectory: 'Stasis and purity are asserted – creatively and violently *against* historical forces of movement and contamination' (Clifford, 1997: 7).<sup>1</sup>

Even here he admits to the creativity, even if violent, of the forces of 'stasis and purity'. He claims, however, that the transit hall metaphor harbors a critique of an anthropology, stuck in its practice of bounding, and locked in crisis as opposed to an 'emerging transnational cultural studies' (Clifford, 1997: 8) that is apparently liberated. This is a position that one finds echoing in the corridors of cultural studies and post-colonial academia in which the postnational is touted as the glorious future.

But Clifford, cannier than his theoretical cronies, does not celebrate the new age. He

is ambivalent. Transborder activities are not necessarily liberating, nor is the national always reactionary. Throughout this collection Clifford expresses an ambivalence not found in the works of most of his colleagues.

In 'Travelling Cultures' he sets out the problem of fieldwork as a kind of 'dwelling' that is hopelessly confined to place. The *pré-terrain* is erased and only the locality, the place of arrival itself, is present. He follows Appadurai's argument of 'metonymic freezing', where part of a place is taken to represent the whole (i.e. India is hierarchy) and where he can comfortably assert that natives as 'confined to and by the places to which they belong, groups unsullied by contact with a larger world, have probably never existed' (Clifford, 1997: 24). He alludes to a Hawaiian music group that has been out of Hawaii on the road for 56 years. And he adds the proverbial, and now to be expected, funny that the Hawaiian guitar was invented by 'a Czech immigrant living in California' (1997: 26).

This pervasive picture has appeared in numerous writings by contemporary globalizers and has become something of a cliché – ideas of locality, of place, of community are miserably innocent of the realities of movement, of the transnational and transcultural. But is there a real contradiction here? Is the assumption of locality in error merely because there has always been contact? The problem lies, I shall suggest, in a conflation of cultural objects and people's lives, one that has led to substantial confusion.

The theme of hybrid objects is illustrated in the central section of the book which deals with the question of the display of objects, more specifically in museums understood as zones of contact in which the true hybridity of the objects can be described, but always without reference to those immediately engaged with such objects and zones. His analysis of the well known exhibition 'Paradise', created by M. O'Hanlon, is a case in point. The exhibition, which deals with modern Papua New Guinea, combines both modern Western and local objects as they appear in village life. A primary object of his discussion is a shield, traditional in form but decorated with an advertisement for a popular beer. O'Hanlon asked the shield maker why he used the advertisement and it was explained that beer represents many of the things associated with war, such as 'life force', and that it is also associated with danger and prowess. In other words, the beer ad was appropriated in a way meaningful within the life sphere of the people concerned. It was integrated or even assimilated to a particular set of life strategies. It was not, then, a foreign design for those concerned, and the fact of its different origins was quite irrelevant. There are, of course, innumerable examples of societies in which the incorporation of foreign goods is instrumental to the internal functioning of prestige relations, but there is nothing to indicate that such objects constitute anything resembling cultural hybridity. The latter is our problem, not theirs. For Clifford, viewing the object from his own cultural perspective, its hybridity is evident, combining as it does forms from different worlds. But, hybrid for whom, one might ask? Without a deeper ethnographic investigation into how people actually engage such apparently hybrid objects, how the latter figure in their lives, there is a tendency to conflate our own emics with those of the people we are attempting to understand. The objectifying as opposed to the ethnographic mode is paramount in this endeavor as is the necessity of creating essences in order to miscegenate them in hybrid products. And these essences or worlds that are to be blended are object worlds defined by properties that can be described by direct observation, since it is we who supply the interpretive frame. Thus the mask or statue of the

X appears in a new contemporary context which modifies its meaning, at least its meaning for us, i.e. its object-meaning or meaning as product. This hybridity is simply *our* identification of 'matter out of place', *hybrids-for-us*.

It should be noted that Clifford's ambivalence, as I perceive it, is one that oscillates between a transnational globalizing position and a truly global systemic position, between a stress on the movement of people and things across borders and a perspective in which the very formation of borders and their contraction and expansion might be the ultimate condition for the emergence of transnationalist historical moments. Thus, in spite of the fascination with hybridity, the true strength of these chapters lies elsewhere, in the way that they problematize the museum, no longer perhaps a center of collection of the things of empire, but a zone of negotiation between the rising Other and the declining center. In general, Clifford's understanding of the large-scale changes in the world enables him to escape the linear accounts that are so often encountered in what have become politically correct versions of critical discourse on the West.<sup>2</sup>

Two major chapters end the book, 'Diasporas', previously published in *Cultural Anthropology*, and 'Fort Ross Meditation'. They illustrate in the most striking way the strained ambivalence that characterizes the book. On the one hand, there is a fascination as well as a desire for the hybrid, not just as an interesting meeting between cultures but as a kind of solution to what is perceived as one (if not the major) problem of humankind, *essentialism*, in the sense of collective identification based on similarity, imagined or real, on the shared values and symbols that are so common in all forms of 'cultural absolutism'. At the same time there is an awareness, sometimes quite acute, of the power of history and of the forces not only of expanding and contracting empires but of the way all people actually essentialize. The first strain of thought is expressed clearly in 'Diasporas' and the second in 'Fort Ross Meditation.' This ambivalence is quite distinct from the position of certain anthropologists who take a *morally* absolutist position on essentialism, and who, as Appadurai, predict the welcome demise of the nation state in face of the expanding diasporic world, assumed for some unstated reason to be anti-essentialist.<sup>3</sup> Clifford is infinitely more subtle and complex here. Diasporas work best in empires of the old regime variety. The Jewish diasporas of the past were part and parcel of imperial worlds constructed in multiethnic terms, essentialist in certain respects, focused on place but also more generally on identities deterritorialized and brought together in plural worlds of interaction. This might be understood as the bazaar model of culture, but it is also a bizarre model of culture. It is an exotic romanticism that accentuates only certain aspects of a world that was also saturated with exploitation and oppression, a world of slavery, castration centers, and death, and, of course, the fact that multiethnicity was in fact ethnic stratification. And was this world so culturally enriching for its inhabitants, or is this merely a contemporary culturalist fantasy?

On the other hand, as so clearly illustrated in 'Fort Ross Meditation', there are large scale movements of territorial pulsation at work in world history, those that generate as well as eliminate diasporas, and the focus on Fort Ross which has been successively absorbed by Russian, Spanish and American empires demonstrates what living on the edge of moving empires produces in terms of history and even historical consciousness. This is not a matter of travel but of historical geo-political dynamics and their consequences for the process of cultural and social configuration.

Fort Ross. The West Coast of the United States, not long ago the eastern edge of Russia, is being bought up by investors from Japan and Hong Kong. Is the US American empire in decline? Or perhaps in metamorphosis? It's unclear . . . 'Transnational capitalism' is the inheritor of Euro-American imperial dynamics, 'Americanization' a common shorthand for the spread of techno-capitalist, market and media systems throughout the globe. And simultaneously, Anglo California is being displaced by the Pacific and Latin America. People, capital commodities, driven by global political-economic forces, do not stop at national borders. Will 'English Only' movements, immigration restrictions, xenophobic terror attacks, and back-to-basics initiatives be able to stem the tide? Can a rusting 'American!' assimilation/exclusion machine be repaired? (Clifford, 1997: 330)

The rusting assimilation/exclusion machine may not be repairable, but there are plenty of new and better oiled machines around to take its place, not least in East Asia that has (until its recent economic crisis) been buying up this old imperial border. All the fuss about hybridity versus essentialism, especially of objects, and not lives, might be a discourse imprisoned in the symptoms of the larger processes referred to in Clifford's last chapter, a process that has produced the kind of vision of the world as a collection of ethnically pure or hybrid 'things' that Clifford so deftly illustrates.

#### THE TRANSNATIONAL VULGATE

Clifford's acute ambivalence, at least from my own perspective, is based on his simultaneous utilization of two very different understandings of the world. Such is not the case in the far less sophisticated vulgate of globalization that has, for a number of years, penetrated anthropological discourse. I have discussed aspects of this development elsewhere (Friedman, 1994, 1997, 1999). It consists of an assault on the family of terms that convey closure, boundedness, essence; all expressions of the same basic problem related to the assumed Western nature of such categories. The root of all these metaphors is the category of the nation state itself. The latter is represented as a closed unit, whose population is homogeneous and whose mode of functioning is dominated by boundedness itself, by territoriality, and thus, by exclusion. The notions of national purity, ethnic absolutism, and all forms of essentialism are deducible from the root metaphor. But in order for this metaphor to work, the nation state has first to be reduced to a cultural totality. Now Gellner's notion of the homogeneity of the nation state was not about cloning, but about the formation of shared values and orientations, primarily related to the public sphere. When this notion is culturalized it suddenly implies total cultural homogenization, i.e. the formation of identical subjects. It is via the essentialization as well as individualization of the culture concept that the latter is transformed into a substance that is born or at least possessed by people – the subject is, in this sense, *filled* with culture. And this substance can either be pure or mixed, monocultural or multicultural. Multiculture here is a mixture of substances within the same human receptacle that fuse into a single creole or hybrid substance. The reduction of culture to substance is curiously like earlier metaphors of race defined as kinds of blood, and the moral-political solution to purity is simply mixture. This is not a critique of essentialism but, on the contrary, an extreme form of the latter. And in the individualist mode, culture is shared to the degree that individuals are filled with the same or different

cultural substance, i.e. the collective is a product of the similarity of its individuals. This is clearly a replication of 19th-century racialism (Young, 1995). It explains why bi-racial and mixed raced movements in the West, which are clearly based on racist categories, have been understood as progressive by constructivist post-colonial intellectuals.

The new critique, which seeks to undo the old categories, consists largely of inserting the prefix 'trans-' into all such formerly closed terms. Thus: trans-local, trans-cultural, trans-national all stress the focus on that which is beyond borders, all borders. The core of all of this vocabulary may well be located in a certain identity crisis among a specific group of intellectuals, as it is expressed in its purest form in the work of Judith Butler (1993) and her discourse of post-gender. This hyper-constructivist discourse is premised on the notion that the only personal reality consists of acts, such as sexual acts, and that gender categories are externally imposed political categories. It is power that creates gender identity and our politics must therefore be directed against this power so that we may be truly liberated. As a mode of orientation this position expresses a desire to transgress the boundaries of embodied identity which is conceived as a political imposition. If the gendered body is so victimized, then what of all other identities?

Trans-X discourse consists largely in deconstructing supposedly pure or homogeneous categories in order to reveal their constructed nature. In this practice there is a logical relation between the trans and the hybrid or even the creole. The latter terms are used to describe social realities that are culturally mixed or plural, a plurality that results from the movement of culture throughout the world. The misrepresentation of the nation state as a homogeneous entity thus hides its true heterogeneity. There are two models of this 'true situation.' One, that is partially suggested by Homi Bhabha (1994) is that hybridity was the condition of the world before the Western colonial imposition of principles of national uniformity. The period of modernity, also the era of colonialism, was an era of homogeneity imposed from above.<sup>4</sup> With the decline of colonialism the true hybridity of the world is again appearing in the post-colonial era. The other model, most prominent in anthropology is that the world was indeed once a mosaic of separate cultural units, but that with globalization these units have been opened up and culture is today flowing all over the world creating a process of mixing referred to as hybridity or creolity, what I have referred to as a leaky mosaic (Friedman, 1994). In this latter approach, the terms trans-X+hybridity+globalization form a conceptual totality.

There is a certain convergence in this conceptual clustering of post-colonial and globalization discourses in anthropology. It is said that globalization has changed the world profoundly. It is dismantling our old categories of place, locality, culture, even society. The contemporary world is one of hybridity, translocality, movement and rhizomes. Is this an intellectual development or discovery that the world has really changed, i.e. before we were local but now we are global, or is it the expression of the experience of those who themselves move from conference to conference at increasing velocities and are otherwise totally taken with the facility of internet communication across the world to their colleagues? I have argued that this latter situation may be the true explanation of this new development, the experience of academic elites, travelling intellectuals, an experience that is presaged by the representations of CNN and other internationalized media as well as in the spontaneous representations of international networks of media managers, politicians, diplomats and 'high-end' non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In some recent research still largely unpublished there is ample

evidence that the academic discourse of globalization-as-transcendence is already established in the managerial world of transnational enterprises. Interviews with consultants in a French multinational reveal the following discourse:

J'avais 30 ans et j'aspirais à m'ouvrir sur le monde. Je suis pour l'évolution: le décloisonnement est très enrichissant. On s'apporte mutuellement beaucoup. (Chemin, 2001: 22)

I was thirty and I desired and hoped to open myself to the world. I am for evolution: opening up is very enriching. We have so much to give to one another.

or

Nous sommes dans l'ère de la connectivité. Il faut travailler plus vite, plus loin, être plus centré sur le client. La seule question, c'est comment la gérer. Vous aussi vous êtes connecté. En amont, en aval. C'est l'ère du knowledge et de la vitesse . . . et qu'est-ce que le knowledge et la vitesse sinon l'intelligence. Nous ne sommes plus dans l'avantage compétitif mais dans le coopératif, dans une logique de ligne d'offres mais dans les réseaux. Les paradigmes changent! (Chemin, 2001: 22)

We are in the era of connectedness. One must work faster, further, be more client centered. The only question is how to manage all of this. You are connected as well, both from above and below. This is the era of speed if not intelligence. We are no longer in an age of competitive advantage but of cooperation, in the logic of supply and demand, to be sure, but within larger networks. Paradigms are changing.

Here we have the same terms, connectedness, networks, speed, openness and its enrichment for the self and society. And in the work of a professional consultant the quasi-religious aspect of the new globalism is revealed in its managerial mode:

Awareness of global interconnectedness is the key. Most globally aware individuals can tell you about the gradual process they experienced or the 'ah-ha' moment when they suddenly realized 'it's all one world'. From Earth Day to the Amazonian rainforest, it may have been their interest in ecology and the environment; for others it may have been actual travels, or exposure to international organizations like the United Nations or humanitarian relief agencies, even the Peace Corps. Space exploration has also contributed to the 'one world' realization. Whatever the source, being able to think and feel interconnected on a global level is what's causing the paradigm shift here. The world is borderless when seen from a high enough perspective, and this has all kinds of implications: socially, politically, economically and even spiritually . . . Regardless of how the awareness began, it generally culminates in a sense of global citizenship. The best approach is to develop a sense that 'I belong anywhere I am, no matter who I am'. (Barnum, 1992: 142)

This discourse is, then, positioned. It is the discourse of global elites whose relation to the earth is one of consumerist distance and objectification. It is a bird's-eye view of the world that looks down upon the multiethnic bazaar or ethnic neighborhood and marvels

at the fabulous jumble of cultural differences present in that space. Hybridity is thus the sensual, primarily visual, appropriation of a space of cultural difference. It is the space below that thus becomes hybridized, even if, for the people who occupy that space, reality is quite different. And it is the space-for-the-observer, or rather for the consumer/appropriator of that space. This is the perspective that generates the identification of a New Guinea war shield painted with a beer advertisement as a hybrid object. It may be hybrid-for-us but in the street or the village, things are very different.

To ascertain that there is a clear political or ideological content to this discourse we have only to look at some of the texts produced by people so identifying. First there is the apocryphal statement by Appadurai, 'we need to think ourselves beyond the nation' (1993: 411), which is elaborated upon in the context of an article in *Public Culture* in which both native Fijians and Hawaiians are taken to task by the anthropologist John Kelly:

Across the globe a romance is building for the defense of indigenes, first peoples, natives trammled by civilization, producing a sentimental politics as closely mixed with motifs of nature and ecology as with historical narratives . . . In Hawaii, the high-water mark of this romance is a new indigenous nationalist movement, still mainly sound and fury, but gaining momentum in the 1990s . . . This essay is not about these kinds of blood politics. My primary focus here is not the sentimental island breezes of a Pacific romance, however much or little they shake up the local politics of blood, also crucial to rights for diaspora people, and to conditions of political possibility for global transnationalism. (Kelly, 1995: 476)

More recently he has gone somewhat further in the affirmation of transnationalism. Citing an Indian Fijian member of parliament as saying 'Pioneering has always been a major element in the development of resources for the good of mankind' (Kelly, 1999: 250), the latter chimes in with: 'People who move inherit the earth. All they have to do is keep up the good work', in their search for better opportunity (1999: 250).

This extraordinary decontextualization of the conditions of 'movement' hides the structures of global power involved, in this case the colonial economy of pluralism, of cheap labor import, here celebrated as the search for better opportunity in order to accentuate the positive aspects of migration.

Liisa Malkki, another adherent of this ideology, has gone to some lengths in her monograph on Burundian refugees in Tanzania to argue for a dichotomy between those who stay in the camp and cultivate their Hutu nationalism and others, who make it to town (for what reason we might ask) and identify out of the group.

In contrast [to the nationalists in the camps], the town refugees had not constructed such a categorically distinct, collective identity. Rather than defining themselves collectively as 'the Hutu refugees', they tended to seek ways of assimilating and of manipulating multiple identities – identities derived or 'borrowed' from the social context of the township. The town refugees were not *essentially* 'Hutu' or 'refugees' or 'Tanzanians' or 'Burundians' but rather just 'broad persons' (Hebdige, 1987: 159). Theirs were creolized, rhizomatic identities – changing and situational rather than essential and moral (Hannerz, 1987; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 6, 21). In the process of managing these 'rootless' identities in township life, they were creating not

a heroized national identity but a lively cosmopolitanism. (Malkki, 1992, quoted in Gupta and Ferguson, 1997: 67–8)

Despite the fact that she cites no ethnographic evidence for her dichotomization, the thrust of the article is clear. Camp refugees are dangerous nationalists whose rooted identity can only lead to violence, while those who have adapted and given up that identity to become 'broad people' point the way for the rest of us, toward a cosmopolitan hybridity. This is an extraordinary piece of doctored ethnography made to fit a simple ideological scheme: good guys versus bad guys, essentialist, nationalist, refugees longing for their imagined homeland, versus hybrid cosmopolitans adeptly adapting to their current circumstances. Malkki's message to the refugee camps is to forget their identities and get on with the process of adapting to the current situation. Deleuze and Guattari are borrowed here to argue that arboreal metaphors, typically Western, have only caused suffering. It is time to switch to rhizomes. In this metaphoric space the evil is easy to spot. If national identity is dangerous, indigeneity is positively deadly. She, more cautious than Kelly, does not venture a critique of indigenous politics but instead displaces her critique to Western supporters of such movements who would wed them to green politics.

That people would gather in a small town in North America to hold a vigil by candlelight for other people known only by the name of 'Indigenous' suggests that being indigenous, native autochthonous, or otherwise rooted in place is, indeed, powerfully heroized.

Are people 'rooted' in their native soil somehow more natural, their rights somehow more sacred, than those of other exploited and oppressed people? And, one wonders, if an 'Indigenous Person' wanted to move away to a city, would her or his candle be extinguished? (Malkki, 1992: 59)

This distinction is explicitly designed to criticize the ideological association between ecology and native peoples as romantic and basically reactionary, as becomes clear in her own celebration of cosmopolitanism. It is part of the error of conflating 'culture and people', 'nation and nature'. 'Natives are thought to be ideally adapted to their environments' (Malkki, 1992). These are understandings that entail that natives 'are somehow *incarcerated*, or confined, in those places' (Appadurai, 1988: 37). But is this really the case? Who has argued for such a model of reality? Is it perhaps that people do adapt to their environments and develop social and cultural worlds around specific places that is the problem? When indigenous peoples 'romanticize' their territories is this not because they maintain some practical and spiritual relation to them? Does this contradict the equally obvious fact that people also move, that the history of global systems has been one of massive displacement as well as the emergence of dominant global elites? I fail to see the need to take sides here, to champion migrants as opposed to indigenes or simply the great majority who don't move. But there is, clearly, a real conflict for these new globalizers. If, as argued by Gordon (1992), Wilmsen (1987) and others, the Bushmen of the Kalahari have a long history of integration and marginalization within the Western world system, does this eliminate their identification with their territories? Even more striking in Malkki's version is its reduction of the entire issue to one of individual preferences. What if some individuals move to town, she asks, as if this were relevant to the

situation of indigenously identified populations. Perhaps, as she seems to imply, they should all move to town and rid themselves of their reactionary rootedness. One senses a disenchantment with what was perhaps an assumed anthropological authenticity, just as among many inventionists who in their disappointment have taken to criticizing 'natives' for having invented unauthentic traditions for political reasons.<sup>5</sup>

### ANTHROPOLOGICAL VERSIONS OF JIHAD AND McWORLD

The most recent publications in this vein have extended the metaphor to one of global flows versus local identity. Flows of culture are the normal current state of affairs in a globalized world of people, things, culture and money. This is difficult to accept for anthropologists with their model of bounded units and so they may tend to deny the truth. Meyer and Geschiere in their edited volume (1999) argue that closure is a reaction to flows, to the experienced, if not real, loss of control over conditions of existence. This is not a new idea of course. It is clearly stated as the Jihad versus McWorld thesis (Barber, 1995). The difference between this more recent approach and some of the earlier writings is that there is less optimism about the new globalized world. On the other hand it is accepted as a fact of nature or, at least, not subject to analysis. The Comaroffs (1999) suggest that South Africa today has developed a modern or post-colonial 'occult economy' in which magic and witchcraft accusations are rampantly intertwined with real violence, all a result of the integration of the area into the new globalized economy where there is so much to buy and so little income with which to buy it. Now this isn't the first time that such an argument has been suggested. It is arguably a translation of former structural functionalist explanations into the new post-colonial discourse. The earlier situation was one in which colonial markets offered opportunities for accumulation that contradicted the control exercised by elders over the distribution of wealth. The recent one, which is several decades old, is one in which wealth accumulation is increasingly impossible in relation to demand for consumption, in which the market is flooded with goods which are inaccessible to most people. But that this should generate witchcraft accusation can never be explained by the circumstances alone. Globalization is understood by these authors as a thing in itself, an evolutionary reality, constituted by intensifying flows. A global systemic perspective would allow for such flows as well, but would see them as generated by specific conditions of capital accumulation, as articulations between local conditions and global relations of which globalization is only one. Thus while disaster and social disintegration characterize much of Africa (and this is not the first time), East Asia has become increasingly integrated in conditions of rapid growth.

It is, paradoxically, the limited character of the transnational approach, its obsession with the closure of the local, that leads its practitioners to criticize those who talk of bounding and territorialization since such terms are thought to be old fashioned, even reactionary. Unfortunately *social reality seems to be mistaken as well!*

. . . anthropologists' obsession with boundedness is paralleled by the ways in which the people they study try to deal with seemingly open-ended global flows. (Meyer and Geschiere, 1999: 3)

But if people are doing this thing called bounding and closure and essentialism, should this not be recognized as a real social phenomenon rather than shunned as a terrible mistake? Everything from the New Right to African witchcraft must now be

accounted for in terms of the production of locality, an apparent reaction to globalization itself. And, of course, it must be asked, who is it that produces locality? Are there any agents, any subjects in this process of conversion of flow into place? Could it be that people have been local all the time and did not simply land from the global jet stream to construct locality? Could it be that the local is indeed a structure of the global, but not by means of the application of an idea, *locality*, diffused around the globe (Robertson, 1992)? Couldn't it be that the local is a relation of interlocality, thus not a cultural representation but a social and cultural practice within a larger arena, that boundedness is a fundamental structure of all global arenas?

It appears to me that the transnationalist trend or perhaps *urge* in anthropology and neighboring disciplines is more than just intellectually flawed. It is an agenda that seeks to morally reform the discipline. It is difficult, otherwise, to understand the obsessive attack on just boundedness. It is true that there have been tendencies to treat societies as closed units, especially in the heyday of structural functionalism. In fact the very starting point of our own global systemic anthropology was a critique of the tendency to treat societies as isolates. But this was not an issue of culture. Nor was it argued that the local was superceded because societies were now *finally* joined together in a single globalized world. On the contrary, we argued that regional systems were as old as humanity and that if there were cases of more or less isolated societies that they most often were societies that became isolated in the global historical process and as the expression of a global relation. Similarly this approach entails that the production of culture is interwoven with such systems of relations, but not necessarily as a product of the circulation of ideas or cultural elements. The fact that people occupying a particular place and living and constructing a particular world are in their entirety integrated into a larger system of relationships does not contradict the fact that they make their world where they are and with the people that are part of their local lives. But not so for transnational/globalization approaches to the subject. For the latter globalization is behavioral, as structure was for Radcliffe-Brown. It is about people, things and ideas in transit, as if such movement implied something systemic in itself. For the globalizers, it would seem that if the Kwakiutl potlatched with sewing machines as well as blankets, they were doing something entirely different than what they did before the introduction of these new objects. If witchcraft representations include whites that come from far off places, if under-age children are now targeted instead of maternal uncles, then we are in a new ball game called 'modernity'. If such is the argument then Latour's (1993) suggestion that 'We have never been modern' makes all the more sense.

Marshall Sahlins has made some important points about this so-called 'afterology' (Brightman, 1995). Where are the classical anthropologists that maintained a view of culture as bounded and homogeneous, as essentialized? Sahlins argues to the contrary: 'They could even speak of "the fallacy of separation": the mistaken idea that because cultures are distinctive they are closed' (Sahlins, 1999: 404).

He describes at several points how the cultural relativists stressed that cultures were constantly undergoing change, and he cites Herskovits himself on the issue of homogeneity: 'To think in terms of a single pattern for a single culture is to distort reality . . . for no culture is [so] simple [as not] to have various patterns' (Sahlins, 1999: 405). Of course there are deeper overarching patterns that anthropologists attempt to discover, but this is not a question of homogeneity, it is a question of coherence, which is not the same thing.

## THE CORE OF THE PROBLEM

Sahlins suggests that the essentialism targeted by post-colonial anthropologists is their own contemporary construction. If this is the case, then where does the straw man of essentialized homogeneity come from? Let me suggest a possible account.

- First is the notion of culture as meaningful substance or substantialized meaning. This is what enables it to flow across the continents.
- Second is the strong tendency to individualization of the concept, so that culture is about individual meanings and the degree to which they are shared.
- Third, as these meanings are 'objective', in the sense of objects, texts are transformed into substance that can be read by ethnographers without the mediation of the people they study.

The first two points above imply that individuals contain a certain meaning-as-substance called culture and that essentialism presupposes that all individuals are clones containing the same substance. As the collective is the sum of its individual members, the question of sharedness is merely a question of quantity.

The schema emerging from the combination of individualized, substantivized and objectified culture produces a model of individual bodies filled with cultural substance. And the argument that follows is that classical modern anthropology assumed that there are particular bounded populations in which every individual is filled with the same substance. Now we have progressed beyond this by admitting that bodies are filled with many different cultural substances. In the weaker version it is assumed that as populations are made up of a combination of separate cultural identities, the latter are still bodies filled with one kind of substance but this substance is not shared equally in the larger population and the latter can be designated as a hybridized population. In the maximal version every individual is filled with a mix of substances and is thus individually hybridized. This is, ultimately, the only consistent model for the transnationalist. It implies that every individual is a *particular* individual precisely because he or she represents a particular cultural mix, translated into a particular cultural genealogy. The problem with this formulation is that it makes any conceptualization of the collective logically problematic. There is nothing that is shared among hybrid individuals other than the fact that they are mixtures, all equally unlike one another, except for partial overlaps among certain individuals. This maximal version would dismiss any multiculturalism that is not reducible to the multicultural constitution of the individual. It is a cultural replication of the neo-Darwinian argument for individual specificity, the complex diversity of genetic inheritance. The body is redesignated as a locus for a multitude of rhizomes of different origin, a meeting place in a vast world of diffusing meanings. Now such absurdities are the logical endpoints of the premises stated earlier and they might be denied by transnationalists. But they are, nevertheless, the logical implications of a certain understanding of culture,<sup>6</sup> one that involves a denial, even, of Boas, who insisted that while the elements of culture may indeed be imported, what is distinctive is the way in which they are integrated into coherent structures.

I have suggested earlier in this article that these transnational discourses constitute an ideological agenda rather than a scientific discovery. And as I have suggested, this agenda is not produced by just anyone. It is clearly a top down elitist program, one based, as I

suggested, on the experience of flying. 'Before we were local but now we are global.' This is why the discourse assumes without any research to support it that the whole world is on the move, or at least that never have so many people, things and so on been moving across international borders. But this is nonsense! Less than 2 per cent of the world's population is on the move, internationally. What about these sedentary masses, most of whom have no access to the internet? The focus on movement seems to have overlooked some pretty serious facts about the world. In economic terms the world is, in some important ways, hardly more globalized than it was in the period between 1890 and 1920. In those days there were many of the same discourses about the new world of speed-up, the telegraph, telephone, radio, and automobile. One could invest in the Sidney stock exchange directly from London in a matter of minutes. International migration was at least equal to today's in percentage terms, and the globalization of capital reached proportions that have only been surpassed in the past few years. Even more important is that after 1920 a very long economic *deglobalization* began that was not reversed until the 1950s. Globalization may not, then, be a product of evolution but a cyclical phase in the world systemic dynamic of capitalism.

For anyone interested in the effects of globalization on culture, one has only to read the diaries of Mrs Putnam, partner by marriage in the Hotel Putnam of the Ituri Forest where wealthy tourists came to watch the 'pygmies' as early as the 1930s and where some very famous 'anthropological' ceremonies were elaborated on their behalf (Putnam and Keller, 1954). But should this lead one to abandon basic concepts of boundedness simply because our own experience appears so unbounded to ourselves?

Of course things are not simply repeating themselves, but there are certain structures of the *longue durée* that we ought not to overlook in our imaginary millenaristic leap into a wished for future. It may be true that things have never moved faster, that we have crossed a new threshold of time-space compression (Harvey, 1989), but we need to be careful about conflating our own immediate experiences of it with the assumed experiences of others or with some general truth about the world. It is true that the IMF, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization have led a consolidation of a new set of rules of international control that may never have existed in global terms, but it is not at all clear that we have entered an entirely different world. These new organizations, after all, are responses to processes and trends that were already present before their creation. The inundation of global commodities in all zones including the 'tribal' zones has risen to levels never previously attained, and the ease and density of world communication has also reached entirely new dimensions, but it is not clear what this implies for real people on the ground as opposed to the fascinated observers who are so ready to claim the 'brave new world' of cut 'n' mix culture in which all difference is of the same order, like the difference between Coke and Pepsi. The very lack of empirical research into other peoples' worlds of experience is itself the product of fallacious objectivism referred to earlier, one that permits us to *read* other people and ultimately to conflate our own experience with theirs. How many, we might ask, actually assume, with the globalizers, that everyone in this world of global mass consumption is alike and appropriates the world in identical ways? How many are so shocked by anthropological assertions that people still can experience reality in very different culturally constituted ways that they conclude that this is a kind of racism? Is the translation of real difference into different texts, all of the same substance but in different shapes, a way of escaping from

a certain painful truth that cannot be grasped by simply reading? As Geertz has said, in his true cosmopolitan fear-of-the-other, the purpose of anthropology today may be to help us avoid one another in a world in which we have all been forced into the same rapidly shrinking space (Geertz, 1986). For the reality of cosmopolitan existence may not be a wonderful bazaar of mixed-up differences for the great majority of people. It may be closer to the story of Ridley Scott's *Bladerunner*, a world that is divided into 'ethnically' differentiated classes (however mixed), one in which skyscraper dwelling elites can enjoy the variety of the world by consuming its differences in the form of objects, recipes and menus that can now be recombined by cross-cooking, but where the world becomes increasingly divided in conflictual terms as one descends into the depths of competitive poverty where potentially deadly boundaries are everywhere. This may explain why multicultural and hybrid discourses fare best in the realm of aesthetics, musicology and museology.

### Notes

- 1 The use of the word 'contamination' is, of course, meant ironically, designating those anthropologists of the local who still believe, so old fashionedly, in the coherence of such structures of culture (see Sahlins, 1999).
- 2 Clifford certainly makes use of the by now common analysis of museums as products of capitalist civilization, including their characteristic objectification and commodification (Harris, 1990). But he is quick to see through this kind of oversimplification to the more general nature of collecting/displaying.
- 3 There seems to be a conflation of territorial and social boundaries here. Transnationality does not exclude, of course, the social and culture closure of diasporic groups, even their nationalism. Such populations can and have been known to be just as essentialist as any nation state.
- 4 The notion of a pre-colonial hybridity appears in works as diverse as Bhabha (1994), Mamdani (1997) and even Amselle (1999), who uses the term 'logiques métisses' to refer to the openness and flexibility of pre-colonial socio-political categories rather than what is usually understood as hybridity. In his new introduction to *Logiques métisses* he is quite critical of these new intellectual tendencies which reinforce the kind of racialism that they may have hoped to leave behind (Amselle, 1999: I–XIII).
- 5 For an elegant historical critique of transnationalism in anthropology and its celebration of creolization see Mintz (1998). I was not aware of this article when writing the original and somewhat shorter version of my own article that appeared in *L'Homme* (2000), and I am pleased to see a certain convergence here with my own critique and that of others such as Sahlins' referred to here.
- 6 To argue 'against culture' (Abu-Lughod, 1991) in this sense is simply to argue against the notion of population as a collection of identical individuals. The argument only makes sense if we accept the premiss of culture as substantive, objective and individual. This is very different from former usages of the term. No matter what the vagaries of the culture concept, the idea that people live in meaningful structured worlds has been common to both European and American anthropologies. The fact that such structures are embedded in relations of social power does not change anything. That interpretations are contested does not change anything either. If there are no such collective structures, then anthropology can be replaced by psychology or at best social psychology and we

are back to Tarde versus Durkheim, but this time to reverse the course of intellectual history. All of this is the result of reducing culture to individually held substance.

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