"The past is a foreign country"? Acculturation theory and the anthropology of globalization[1]

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Contemporary anthropology has developed a consistent interest in the study of modes of circulation of people, objects and ideas associated with current cultural globalization. This interest is usually presented as a new development in anthropological theory and its possible predecessors, such as diffusionism and acculturation theory, dismissed as irrelevant. Focusing on the works of Melville Herskovits and Roger Bastide, this article argues for a less biased imaged of acculturation theory and stresses the ways in which some of its achievements can inspire current approaches to cultural globalization.

KEYWORDS: globalization, acculturation theory, history of anthropology, diffusionism, Melville Herskovits, Roger Bastide.

THE CONTEMPORARY ANTHROPOLOGICAL SCENE IS CHARACTERIZED BY a strong interest in cultural processes linked to globalization. This interest is expressed in the recent development of the anthropology of globalization as an important sub-disciplinary field. But it is also reflected in a renewed interest in processes of creolization, hybridization and syncretism, which are an important part of globalization. In both cases, albeit in different terms, the study of flows of people and cultural forms has become a highly visible feature of contemporary anthropology.

Reflecting the "pendulous" nature of anthropological knowledge (Barrett 1984), these apparently new globalist leanings of anthropology are not without precedent. Some of these precedents are rather recent, as in the case of anthropological explorations of the encounters between the "West and the Rest" developed by authors such as Eric Wolf (1997 [1982]) and Sidney Mintz (1986). Others are more remote. Diffusionism, which was a major anthropological paradigm in Germany, the US and Great Britain from the 1890s to the 1920s, is a case in point. Acculturation theory is another one. Developed in the 1930s and '40s by North American anthropologists influenced by Boas's diffusionism, acculturation theory, although never widely circulated in mainstream anthropology, was nevertheless central in studies of contact among several Native-American groups and in the emergence of African-American studies. Its influence in anthropological studies outside of the US, especially in Brazil, was also of great importance.

Despite their importance, both diffusionism and acculturation theory have often been relegated to the margins of the history of anthropology. Henrika Kuklick (1991), in her book on the history of British social anthropology, for instance, hardly mentions the influence of diffusionism in W.H.R. Rivers's late work. And even the diffusionist affiliation of Boas, as Brad Evans (2006) has convincingly argued, has been downplayed in the history of North American anthropology. Given this disciplinary amnesia, the possible contributions of diffusionism and acculturation theory to the anthropological understanding of global flows of people and culture have been often ignored or, in some cases, dismissed as irrelevant to the globalist agenda.

Some authors have recently proposed a more sensitive approach to these topics. In the case of diffusionism, Ulf Hannerz (1997), Arnd Schneider (2003) and Hans Hahn (2008), for example, have stressed the shared concerns of diffusionists and globalists. Similarly, Melville Herskovits, for a long time a missing figure in the annals of history of anthropology and one of the central protagonists of acculturation theory, has been rediscovered by North American anthropologists and historians of anthropology, such as Walter Jackson (1986), Jerry Gershenhorn (2004) or Kevin Yelvington (2006b). Given Herskovits's decisive influence in the emergence and consolidation of African-American studies (an intellectual field with considerable autonomy within mainstream modernist anthropology), the assessment of his work has been in most cases limited in scope and its possible contributions to the globalist agenda have been overlooked.

In this paper I want to further probe into these "missing links" between past anthropological approaches to diffusion and cultural contact and current anthropological engagements with globalization. I will basically concentrate on two authors who played an important role in the development of acculturation theory: Melville Herskovits and Roger Bastide. Herskovits can be seen as

the most important author in the thematization of acculturation theory, which he viewed as a modernist update of early diffusionism. Bastide's work, as is demonstrated by Fernanda Peixoto (2000), is characterized by a wider range of theoretical influences from Gilberto Freyre's theories of *mestiçagem* (Freyre 1957 [1933]) to French sociology and psychoanalytical theory. Nevertheless his writings on African-American religions and the "Black Americas" were strongly influenced by acculturation theory. As to the globalists, I will refer not only to authors who explicitly address issues of cultural globalization, but also to authors who, notwithstanding the lack of explicit references to global-ization, deal with issues related to cultural history and to the contemporary movement of people and cultures.

The first section of the paper is dedicated to a reassessment of acculturation theory. After a general presentation of its main aspects, I will critically review some widespread criticisms of Herskovits's and Bastide's work and assess the ways in which their theoretical insights can prove useful to our contemporary engagements with globalization. As I will argue in more detail, the fact that acculturation theory may provide some interesting clues for current anthropo-logical challenges does not mean that new analytical tools are not required if a more complex understanding of the current predicaments of globalization is to be achieved. The second part of the paper proposes some examples of what could be some of the concerns of an anthropology dedicated to the study of contemporary flows of people and culture.

AN OUTLINE OF ACCULTURATION THEORY

Acculturation theory can be viewed as a later stage in the process of develop-ment of diffusionism, which played a decisive role in the formation of North American anthropology from the 1890's onwards, when Boas's ideas began to replace the mixture of social evolutionism and "scientific" racial thought until then prevalent in the US. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, however, the dominance of diffusionism in North American anthropology was beginning to be challenged by some of Boas's disciples who were more interested in the synchronic workings of culture than in its historicist contours. Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* (1934) played a decisive role in that move. Rebelling against the view of culture as an arbitrary combination of "shreds and patches" (Lowie 1920) and the diffusionist emphasis on the circulation of isolated cultural ele-ments, Benedict stressed the way in which integration, instead of disparate accretion, was a major force in the workings of culture.

Cultural integration was in principle not incompatible with a historical approach to culture (see Rosenblatt 2004). However, the implicit belief that cultural integration was something pertaining to the *longue durée*, combined with the impact of the Malinowskian move from diachrony to sinchrony

resulted in the gradual subalternization of diffusionism in North American anthropology. This subalternization did not mean that the historical concerns of Boasian anthropology – what Daniel Rosenblatt has termed its "historical particularism" (2004) – suddenly disappeared from North American anthropology. Along with the initial explorations of the new "configurationalist" (Rosenblatt 2004) view of culture, some major works of diffusionism continued to be published in the 1930s and '40s. At the same time, some central aspects of diffusionism were also being actively refashioned, in order to meet some of its perceived fragilities and to address new challenges.

Acculturation theory was the major outcome of these critical revisions. Involving such diverse authors as Robert Redfield, Ralph Linton, Paul Radin and Melville Herskovits, acculturation theory – which also influenced Mead's monograph on *The Changing Culture of an Indian Tribe* (1932) – was responsible for two major changes in the classical diffusionist approach to culture contact. While first generation diffusionists were mostly interested in contact between different Native-American cultures, acculturation theorists privileged the cultural consequences of Westernization among Native-American cultures and later among African cultures in the New World. These contacts could be observed "on the spot" (Herskovits 1948: 525), that is, they were not conjecturally deduced, as in the case of interactions between non-Western cultures. Acculturation theorists were thus able to circumvent one of the chief accusations against classical diffusionism. Their view of diffusion was a processual one, more interested in history in the making than in history as a narrative of things past. Moving from diffusion to acculturation also meant an accrued attention to context, or to put it otherwise, from the externalities of the cultural circulation of isolated traits to the internal processes of reaction to foreign cultural influences. Acculturation theorists were thus able to attune diffusionism with modernist anthropology and its emphasis on synchronic cultural wholeness. Stanley Barrett has proposed the concept of "salvage theory" to describe how a theory under attack is forced to revise its "original orientation" in order to accommodate growing criticism (1984: 84-85). Acculturation theory can be viewed in similar terms – as a modernist update of early diffusionism theory, developed in response to its perceived inadequacies.

Herskovits played a decisive role in the process of theoretical upgrading of classical diffusionism. His empirical research, with its emphasis on the study of a wide range of African-American cultures, was central in the shift from the study of diffusion among "primitive tribes" to the research of contacts between Western and non-Western cultures. Having successively focused on several African-American cultures ranging from Surinam, Trinidad, Haiti, Brazil to the "Negro" culture of the US south, his research also led him to a scientific pilgrimage to Africa aimed at reconstructing the initial "cultural base line" from which African-American cultures had evolved (Herskovits

1998 [1941]: 15). Simultaneously, Herskovits was the most active and per-sistent theorizer of acculturation as a modernist replacement for diffusion. Together with Robert Redfield and Ralph Linton, he was one of the authors of the famous 1936 "Memorandum on acculturation" (Redfield, Herskovits and Linton 1936). Two years later he published his own book on the subject (Herskovits 1938) and, besides numerous papers on the theoretical aspects of acculturative processes written in the 1940s and '50s, he was also the author of *Man and His Works* (1948), a voluminous introduction to cultural anthro-pology, which stands as his most well-argued view of processes of cultural dynamics. Among these processes, acculturation, defined as "diffusion 'on the spot'" (1948: 525) or "cultural transmission in process" (1948: 523), stood as the most important. Moving from his early assimilationist views (Gershenhorn 2004: 65; Yelvington 2006b: 43-50), Herskovits viewed acculturation as a comprehensive theoretical tool for the interpretation of processes of cultural contacts whose diverse outcomes – retention, syncretism, reinterpretation, counter-acculturation – were extensively argued.[2]

Bastide's relationship with acculturation theory developed later and was mostly a result of his interest in Afro-Brazilian religions, which began in the mid-1940s and led to the publication of two major works, *O Candomblé da Bahia* (1958) and *Les Religions Africaines au Brésil* (1960). While his 1958 book on the *candomblé*, centred on the idea of the African authenticity of the ritual, was rather immune to ideas of cultural blending, his 1960 comprehensive book on Afro-Brazilian religions was strongly marked by concerns with accultura-tion. The sources of these concerns were diverse. The importance of Bastide's familiarity with Gilberto Freyre's view of *mestiçagem* as a defining feature of Brazilian culture and with Nina Rodrigues's works on syncretism as one of the main aspects of African religions in Brazil, have been stressed (Peixoto 2000). But *Les Religions Africaines au Brésil* was also influenced by Herskovits's work on African-American cultures. The dialogue between the two anthropologists was rather ambivalent. On the one hand Bastide was eager to stress the differences between him and Herskovits: his version of acculturation theory, influenced by French sociology, introduced sociological aspects that were allegedly missing from Herskovits's analysis. On the other hand and despite his vocal criticisms of Herskovits, some central arguments developed by Bastide – regarding for example the different degrees of acculturation of Afro-Brazilian religions – were clearly influenced by Herskovits. From this point of view, Bastide's work can be regarded as a late, albeit reluctant, off-spring of the Herskovitsian engage-ment with acculturation theory.

2   See Vincent (1990: 197-212) for a general introduction of acculturation theory in the US in the 1930s.

ACCULTURATION THEORY AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Following Hannerz's (1997), Schneider's (2003) Evans's (2006) and Hahn's (2008) recent reassessments of diffusionism, one could start by pointing out the shared concerns of acculturation theory and the anthropology of cultural globalization.

Both are interested in phenomena of movement and flow of people and cultural forms. The specific contexts in which these phenomena have been explored also share some similarities. Acculturation theorists had a particular interest in religion and ritual, as it is evident both in their explorations of Afro-Brazilian *candomblé* and Haitian *voudou*, and in studies of ghost and prophet dances among several Native-American groups. In both cases, the focus was on cultural encounters and fractures, often marked by violence, between "the West and the Rest". Globalists, it may be argued, have widened up the thematic and geographical range of their observations. But religion and ritual continue to play an important role on the globalist agenda, as shown by the increasing number of re-visits of African-American religions or the growing body of literature on neo-Pentecostalism and charismatic Catholicism on the American continent and elsewhere. They have also extended their attention towards a wide range of cultural flows. However, they retain a strong interest in the global flows connected to "the West and the Rest".

Working with similar phenomena in similar, though extended, contexts, acculturation theorists and globalists have also developed resembling concepts. While Herskovits viewed cultural contact in terms of acculturation, globalists have been talking about hybridization, hybrids and hybridity, expressions that one can also find in some texts by acculturation theorists. Nevertheless, according to the still dominant narrative, these similarities coexist with significant differences between both approaches. Indeed, notwithstanding some more sympathetic authors, including those mentioned above, most anthropologists have adopted a more adversarial approach towards acculturation theory, dominated by differentiating criticisms: "we" can possibly study the same phenomena as "they" once did, but "we" study them in a very different way.

Thus, while acculturation theorists have over-emphasized origins and purisms, we are supposed to be more attentive to the actual processes of critical appropriation and creative transformation of culture. An important part of the contemporary analysis of Afro-Brazilian religions, for instance, has developed amidst several (and severe) critiques of Bastide's Africanist paradigm. By stressing, for instance in *O Candomblé da Bahia* (2005 [1958]), the African origins of the ritual, Bastide – it is said – developed a discourse obsessed by Africa which ignored the workings of bricolage within the Afro-Brazilian religious realm. Herskovits has been criticized on the same grounds. The case of *The Myth of the Negro Past* (1998 [1941]) is well known. Its emphasis on Africanisms among

North American "Negroes" is an evidence of Herskovits's indifference towards the importance of the New World context in prompting the dynamic emergence of Black cultures in the US (Apter 2004; Palmié 2006).[3] Herskovits's "scales of intensity of New World Africanisms" in which African-American cultures are classified in a scale ranging from "very African" to "trace of African custom or absent" (1966 [1945]: 53) is a further evidence of his indifference towards context and inventiveness (Apter 2004). As a result, Herskovits (and the same could apply to Bastide) has been accused of "passive notions of acculturation" (Apter 2004: 160). Actually this is not the only charge that Herskovits's acculturation has to face. Rosalind Shaw and Charles Stewart have stressed its assimilationist bias, which allegedly impeded Herskovitz to "foresee the possibility of anti-syncretism" (1994: 6). In a different vein, it is also said, we are now more attentive to instances of agency that mark the critical difference between diffusionists' acculturation and post-modern hybridity (Schneider 2003: 220; Matory 2006: 157-164). We have also re-introduced issues of power that acculturation theory has ignored (Apter 2004).[4]

It is not my objective to deny the actual differences between our contemporary concerns and acculturation theorists. In a certain sense – as I will argue later on – we can and must be more radical towards their limitations. However I think one should begin by emphasizing the way in which our actual interest in flows, limits and hybrids – to quote Ulf Hannerz (1997) – can benefit from more complex modes of dialogue with authors like Herskovits and Bastide.

RE-READING ACCULTURATION THEORY (1)

This dialogue requires, first of all, a more historically grounded approach of acculturation theory than the one produced by its critics, based on a sensitive reading of the texts and able to produce a more nuanced approach of its predicaments.

Thus, the Africanist leanings of Herskovits must be understood in the context of the persistent alliance between anthropology and cultural critique in the US. As demonstrated by several authors (e.g. Jackson 1986; Gershenhorn 2004), Herskovits's Africanist leanings derived from his political commitment towards the cause of "Negro advancement" in the US. Influenced by the Harlem renaissance and W.E.B. Du Bois, Herskovits viewed the recovery of the African past among US African-Americans as a major step towards "Negro"

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3   This argument is also central to the much more sensitive reassessment of Herskovits's contribution to the development of the field of African-American studies proposed by Sidney Mintz and Richard Price (2003 [1992]).
4   **This was a point already addressed, before the globalists, by Eric Wolf, although it must be men**tioned that, as Rodseth (2005) have argued, Eric Wolf had a less biased image of the historical schools of thought that preceded his work than some globalists have now.

political empowerment. For Herskovits, the denial of the African past of the US "Negro" had turned "him [into] the only element in the peopling of the United States that has no operative past except in bondage" (1998 [1941]: 31). Recovering the African past would be an important contribution to Black cultural pride and to the combat against racial discrimination: "a people that denies its past cannot escape being a prey to doubt of its value today and of its potentialities for the future" (1998 [1941]: 32). As he has put it in the concluding chapter of *The Myth of the Negro Past* in a more optimistic tone:

> "The recognition by the majority of the population of certain values in Negro song and Negro dance has already heightened Negro self-pride and has affected white attitudes toward the Negro. For the Negro to be similarly proud of his entire past as manifested in his present customs should carry further these tendencies" (1998 [1941]: 299).

Thus it was because of his commitment to the anti-racist agenda of the 1930s and 1940s that Herskovits took such a strong interest in African retentions and origins. His Africanism paradigm was not as much the result of the theoretical limitations of acculturation theory as a consequence of a progressive political choice regarding the US "Negro" problem.

That is why his political interest in African roots did not entail a complete empirical denial of cultural change. In the case of *The Myth of the Negro Past*, for example, it can be argued that Herskovits was aware of the extent to which US "Negro" culture had been affected by processes of transformation. After all, most of the evidence he proposed – from "progressive monogamy" to "shouting churches" and "Negro spirituals" – was a proof of that. Having previously done fieldwork in Surinam, Trinidad, Haiti and Dahomey, Herskovits could not but be aware of the extent to which African heritage had been transformed in the US. That is why, in *The Myth of the Negro Past*, he put so much emphasis on reinterpretation and advocated the principle of "multiple causation", thus admitting the role of "slavery and the present economic and social scene" (1998 [1941]: 189) in the continuation of African heritage. The subtext of *The Myth of the Negro Past* is that, notwithstanding the transformations that had occurred in the New World, US "Negro" culture was still recognisably African. The first point being evident, he concentrated on the latter.

That Herskovits was aware of the risks he was taking is evident in his later work. His "scales of intensity of Africanism in the New World" (1966 [1945]), where Africanisms in the US are set against a comparative background, can be seen as an admission of the excesses of the Africanist enthusiasm of *The Myth of Negro Past*. Similarly, in some of the papers he wrote in the 1950s, Herskovits was eager to admit his initial Africanist excesses: the reaction to the widespread opinion "that Africa had no functioning part in New World Negro

culture […] forced a too emphatic stress on these Africanist carry-overs. Inevitably, this obscured the appraisal of other historical factors that were equally operative" (1966 [1950]: 36). And he goes on to emphatically add that in the New World "purity of retention is the exception, not the rule" (1966 [1950]: 36) and reinterpretation the dominant pattern.

A more sustained shift from the study of African origins to the appraisal of New World context would have to wait, as Sidney Mintz and Richard Price (2003 [1992]) have argued, for a second generation of African-American scholars. It can be argued, however, that Herskovits has paved the way for such a reassessment of the dialectics of retentions and reinterpretations in African-American cultures.

Historical context can thus give us a more nuanced and sensitive understanding of Herskovits's predicaments than the usual presentist approach, mostly based on mechanisms of academic *distinction* which tend to overemphasize the possible differences between "now" and "then".

I am not saying that all contemporary judgements of Herskovits and other acculturation theorists are misleading. For instance agency – in the post-modern sense of the word – is actually absent from Herskovits's concerns with acculturation, even though Herskovits was not completely unaware of the role of the individual in culture. Thus, as Walter Jackson has pointed out, in *Rebel Destiny* (Herskovits and Herskovits 1934) "the Herksovitses discussed in narrative form the personalities of several Saramaccans" (Jackson 1986: 111). Similarly, in his critique of the definition of acculturation proposed by The Social Science Research Council (1938, 1948) Herskovits also stressed the fact that the contact of cultures was not only contact between groups or fractions of groups, but also contact mediated by single individuals. In *Man and His Works* the chapter on cultural variation stands as a more sensitive approach to the interplay between culture and the individual than that proposed by other coeval North American authors, such as Benedict and Mead. These examples notwithstanding, agency was actually not a prominent part of Herskovits' theoretical agenda, as Matory has convincingly argued (2006: 157-164). Neither could it be. The theoretical and empirical invisibility of agency was actually a defining feature of almost all anthropological schools of modernist anthropology. Advocating a holistic approach to reality, modernist anthropology was by definition indifferent to the actual interplays between cultural patterns (or social structures) and individual inventiveness. Acculturation theory – at least in its Herskovitsian fashion – was no exception. As Sally Price has put it: for Herskovits "history often took the form of continent-to-continent processes, *involving peoples more than people*, and discernible largely through culture-to-culture comparisons" (2006: 89; my emphasis).

As to power, the question seems to be more complex. Issues of power were not completely absent from Herskovits's concerns. On the one hand, as we have

seen, the empowerment of African-Americans was the driving force behind his research. Even if he hadn't written about power, power would paradoxically be the rationale for his work. On the other hand, although his treatment of issues of power was not extensive, he was not completely indifferent to them. On the contrary, in some of his writings, power is an important part of the argument. In *The Myth of the Negro Past*, for instance, countering prevailing theses on "the acquiescence of the Negro to slavery" (1998 [1941]: 86), Herskovits dedicated a whole chapter to slave rebellions in the New World and to other forms of passive resistance – such as "slowing down work", "misuse of implements" (1998 [1941]: 99) – that foreshadow James Scott's acclaimed book on *The Weapon of the Poor*. A similar emphasis in "the constant active discontent" of black slaves – "through open revolt, sabotage, the practice of the *vodun* cult and *marronage* revolt" (Jackson 1986: 113) – can also be found in *Life in a Haitian Village* (Herskovits 1937). Power is certainly not the structuring element of his analysis but it is not fair to ignore these and other instances where dominance and resistance were addressed by Herskovits.[5]

Some of these arguments are also true of Bastide. His Africanist leanings are most evident in *O Candomblé da Bahia* (2005 [1958]), where they result from a weird combination of the "indigenous point of view" of ritual specialists interested in emphasizing the African purity of Nagô rituals with Bastide's own fascination with Marcel Griaule's interpretation of the complexities of African thought (Peixoto 2000: 109-110, 123-124). The role of Griaule in Bastide's thought must be stressed: as it is usually admitted, the Dogon saga initiated by Griaule was in its time one of the most serious challenges to prevailing notions of African inferiority. In its own way Bastide's Africanism was thus over-determined, as in Herskovits, by issues of empowerment. It must also be added that the role of Africanism has been overemphasized by several readings of Bastide's work. Thus, if instead of focusing on *O Candomblé da Bahia* one focus on *Les Religions Africaines au Brésil* (1960), it is fair to note that this second book conveys a much more complex interpretation of Afro-Brazilian religions, in which cultural and sociological context plays a key role in the study of the acculturative processes of religions of African origin in Brazil. Similarly, in *Les Amériques Noires* (1967) some particular New World syncretisms were viewed as a third culture unstably located between African roots and Western cultural impositions.

One also cannot say that Bastide was indifferent to issues of power. On the contrary, Bastide viewed Africanisms in the New World as an expression of African resistance to Western physical and symbolic violence:

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5   Similarly, in *Man and His Works*, Herskovits stressed that Malinowski's approach to processes of "modernization" in Africa, not only reduced the analysis of cultural contact to an analysis of the impact of Western culture, but was also a study of "cultural imposition," which undervalued acculturation as a process of resistance (1948: 527-528).

"La civilisation africaine (et la religion en est parte intégrante) est devenue au Brésil […] une 'sous-culture' de groupe. *Elle va donc se trouver engagé dans la lutte de classes, dans le dramatique effort de l'esclave pour échapper à une situation de subordination à la fois économique et sociale*" (1960: 107, my emphasis).

The fact that *Les Religions Africaines au Brésil* dedicates two chapters to the discussion of issues of dominance and resistance – "The protests of the slaves and religion" (ch. III) and "The religious element in racial struggles" (ch. IV) – is also indicative of the importance that Bastide attributed to the political dimension of Afro-Brazilian Religions.

In a 2004 issue of *American Anthropologist* some anthropologists have challenged the de-constructionist efforts directed towards the concept of culture that have pervaded North American academia in late 20th century (e.g. Bunzl 2004; Bashcow 2004; Rosenblatt 2004). They do not contest that new issues have been added to the classical agenda of culture. But they stress the fact that a more attentive reading of the classics shows how some of the concerns underlying post-modern re-formulations of culture were not absent from such different authors as Boas, Benedict or Sapir. In the same vein, Michel-Rolph Trouillot has remarked that contemporary anthropology has adopted a biased view of its past. Valuing "newness over accumulation", most anthropologists lean towards "an overly loud rejection of previous thinkers" even though their claims "that the wheel [has] just been invented […] are not always supported once the package is open" (2003: 119). Against such positions, Trouillot advocates a strategy based on both the explicit embracing of "a disciplinary legacy as a necessary condition for present practice" and on the identification of "specific changes that help redefine the practice" (2003: 119). The approach I am advocating is similar. We should reframe the terms of our dialogue with acculturation theory. Before stressing too hastily our divergences, we should return to the original texts and probe into how the classical authors have dealt with the issues we are now addressing.

RE-READING ACCULTURATION THEORY (2)

Besides the reframing of current criticisms, our reappraisal of acculturation theory should also stress the ways in which some of the questions we tend to address as new and exclusively linked to contemporary globalization, have already been addressed by acculturation theorists.

Some of these questions are methodological. Consider for instance the recent calls for multi-sited fieldwork. This is something usually presented as a novel way of doing fieldwork. George Marcus has defined it as "a still emergent mode of ethnography" (1998 [1995]: 80) that "moves out from the single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine

the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space" (1998 [1995]: 80). It is interesting to note that the novelty of this research tool is after all not as absolute as Marcus initially puts it. Later on in his paper he provides some examples of monographs that have anticipated this "still emergent mode of ethnography" which include – quite ironically – Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*.

What I would like to stress, following Gupta and Ferguson (1987) acute comments on alternative models of fieldwork, is the relationship between acculturation theory and several forms of what is now called multi-sited field-work. These alternative models of ethnography stem from extensive survey, which, as George Stocking (1983, 1995) has shown, has been a neglected step in the history of the invention of classical Malinowskian fieldwork. Being the dominant mode of ethnographical research among early diffusionists, extensive survey presented a problem: although the number of observations was enough to establish probable routes of circulation of cultural forms, each observation proved too thin to specify modes of acculturation. Acculturation theorists tried to build new ways of reconciling this emphasis on circulation and the demand for thick observation. The whole research history of Herskovits, who did field-work in Surinam, Trinidad, Haiti, Dahomey and Brazil, always looking at the same problems, can be seen as an example of an old and more demanding ver-sion of multi-sited fieldwork. Departing from the "one observer/one place/one time" (Trouillot 2003) modernist strategy of fieldwork, Herskovits's Atlan-tic journeys were pioneer experiments with multiple places and times. His tight theoretical supervision of several Brazilian researchers – such as Octavio Eduardo, René Ribeiro and Ruy Coelho – might also be seen as a tentative approach to the multiplication of observers.

Besides dealing with methodological issues similar to the ones we are now addressing, acculturation theory has also developed concepts and theoretical observations that can be useful to our current interest on issues of cultural globalization. I will give three examples.

The first concerns Herskovits's views of acculturation. As mentioned above, Herskovits's approach to acculturation is more complex than it is usually admitted by his critics. From an earlier assimilationist view of acculturation, Herskovits moved to a far more elaborated view of the forms and outcomes of the processes of contact between cultures, in which concepts like convergence, retention, syncretism, reinterpretation and counter-acculturation played a prominent role. The concept of convergence – which has its roots in early diffusionism – stands in Herskovits's work as a means of admitting a third way between independent invention and diffusion. Although Herskovits – like most diffusionists – did stress diffusion as the major mechanism of human history, he did not rule out the idea that in some cases similarities between cultural items might derive from independent invention.

As to syncretism and reinterpretation, they stand in Herskovits's work as the two most important conceptual tools for probing into the processes of cultural innovation resulting from contacts of cultures. Marking "all aspects of cultural change", they apply to "the process by which old meanings are ascribed to new elements or by which new values change the cultural significance of old forms" (1948: 553). Borrowing (or imposition), retention, change, and amalgamation are key elements of both processes, which, according to Herskovits, are often two-way processes. Thus, in *The Myth of the Negro Past*, Herskovits argued that syncretic forms of "Negro" Baptist Christianity had been central to white North American religious revivalism. As he has put it, "In the New World, *exposure of the whites to Negro practices* as well as of Negroes to European forms of worship could not but have had an influence on both groups, however prone students may be to ascribe a single direction to the process from whites to Negroes" (1948: 231, my emphasis). As to counter-acculturation, Herskovits viewed it as a variant – based on the refusal of external influences – of acculturation. Occurring when culture contact involved "dominance of one people over another", counter-acculturation took the basic form of "contra acculturative movements […] wherein a people come to stress the values in aboriginal ways of life, and to move aggressively, either actually or in fantasy, toward the restoration of those ways" (1948: 531).

The second example concerns Herskovits's views on the underlying mechanisms of acculturation. One of the main goals of Herskovits was to explain why some aspects of African cultures in the New World were more resilient than others. The concept of cultural focus was central to his analysis. According to Herskovits, the cultural focus is "that phenomenon which gives a culture its particular emphasis" (1966 [1945]: 59): "More elements in the area of focus of a receiving culture [such as religion in the African-American case] will be retained than those appertaining to other aspects of the culture, acceptance being greater in those phases of culture further removed from the focal area" (1966 [1945]: 59). However, besides cultural focus, other factors intervened in the interplay between retention and transformation, the most important being the role played by non-conscious aspects of culture, or, as Herskovits has put it, "less overt aspects of culture" (1998 [1941]: 158). In *The Myth of the Negro Past*, for instance, Herskovits stressed the cultural tenacity of motor habits in a way that recalls our contemporary concerns with *habitus* and embodiment (1998 [1941]: 145-146, 219). In the same vein, his approach to religious syncretism in the New World was not so much interested in singling out equivalences between isolated elements as in stressing the continuity of world views. Thus, cultural factors such as the alleged pliability of West Coast African religious systems, the organizational autonomy of African communities of believers, and the role played in African religions by possession were viewed by Herskovits as responsible for the overall African tone of "Negro"

Baptist Christianity in the US, even in the absence of any material traces of African ritual. The emphasis was thus put on the important role played in acculturation by those aspects of culture "that are carried below the level of consciousness": "the cultural imponderables" evident in "linguistic patterns and musical styles […], types of motor habits, systems of value, codes of etiquette" (1966 [1945]: 59). "In situations involving change, cultural imponderables are more resistant than are those elements of which persons are more conscious" (1966 [1945]: 60).

The third example concerns Bastide's thematization of the social contexts of acculturation processes. Bastide's emphasis on a "sociologie en profondeur" (1960: 22) was the most important difference between his own approach of acculturation and Herskovits's views on the topic. Following Georges Gurvitch emphasis on the "social framing of religion", Bastide's focus upon the social dynamics of Afro-Brazilian religions and cultures foreshadowed more recent approaches to the topic, such as the ones proposed by Sidney Mintz and Richard Price (2003 [1992]; see also Matory 2006: 161). For instance, Bastide viewed certain social conditions – like the plantation system or the concentration of free slaves in urban areas – as central to the survival of African religions, albeit in a syncretic form, in Brazil (1960: 65-66). He also regarded acculturation as a kind of technique for the social advancement of Brazilian Black population:

"L'acculturation apparaît […] sous son vrai jour qui est d'être une lutte pour le statut social […] La civilisation des blancs a été désirée, commme technique de mobilité sociale, comme seule solution laissée, après l'échec de l'insurrection, pour sortir d'une situation insupportable; elle a été voulue délibérément, systématiquement" (Bastide 1960: 94).

Despite his emphasis on the social contexts of syncretism, Bastide's views of the relationship between the social and the cultural was far from determinist. On the one hand, he defended that in order to understand the development of Afro-Brazilian religions one ought to admit the reciprocal autonomy of the social and cultural. This was the reason why related religious forms could have developed in social contexts so different as Africa and Brazil: "les civilisations – he wrote – peuvent passer d'une structure [social] à l'autre" (1960: 215). At the same time, Bastide was aware of how Afro-Brazilian religions were essential to the production of new social forms: "les religions afro-brésiliennes ne peuvent être comprises que si on les examine […] sous [une] double perspective: d'un côté […] elles reflètent la structure de la société globale; de l'autre […] *elles sont elles-mêmes créatrices de formes sociales*" (1960: 223, my emphasis).

The concepts and analytical observations that we have been addressing might provide interesting starting points for contemporary research on cultural

globalization. Let me start with some aspects of Herskovits's thematization of acculturation. Stressing reinterpretation as a general property of acculturative processes Herskovits's concerns are, in general terms, similar to those shared by contemporary reflections on the dialectics of global influences and local appropriations. Current discussions on the concepts of globalization and localization (Friedman 1990), appropriation (Schneider 2003; Hahn 2008), re-territorialization (Inda and Rosaldo 2002) or friction (Tsing 2005), while introducing new variables, such as transnationalism or the market, share the same concern towards reinterpretation already present in acculturation theory. In a similar way, the current interest in processes of de-syncretization and anti-syncretism, despite Shaw and Stewart (1994) claims to the contrary, can be viewed as a revival of the strong interest in counter-acculturation showed by several North American diffusionists in their studies of Native-American sun and ghost dances (Herskovits 1938). The case of Afro-Brazilian religions in Sergipe (Brazil) studied by Beatriz Dantas (1988) is also a case in point. Although Dantas is trying to distance herself from Bastide's diffusionist emphasis on African purity, she nevertheless recognizes the strength of what, in Herskovits's (and Bastide's) terms, could be called the counter-acculturative purifying discourses of African roots in Afro-Brazilian rituals. As to convergence, as Christoph Bruman (1998) has suggested, it could provide a corrective to our contemporary dependence on the metaphors of circulation as the exclusive way of addressing cultural creativity and change. It might be that some processes that we think as linked to the contacts of cultures in the conditions of late globalization turn out to be, at a closer look, convergent developments producing apparently similar results. Finally, globalists' observations on the ways in which the periphery talks back to the centre in the contemporary globalized world can be viewed as reminiscent of Herskovits's views on acculturation as a two-way process.

Herskovits's emphasis on the persistent counter-acculturative role of non-overt aspects of culture has been a more controversial issue. Sidney Mintz and Richard Price have criticized Herskovits's analyses of African-American cultures for their excessive emphasis on African origins as opposed to the importance of New World context. But they are nevertheless close to Herskovits when they admit that a common African cultural heritage in the New World could be sought in shared systems of values and in unconscious grammar principles regarding social relationships or the phenomenology of the world (Mintz and Price 2003 [1992]: 27).[6] The Herskovitsian approach can also have a stimulating role in contemporary research on cultural globalization. After all, when anthropologists stress the importance of powerful mechanisms of selective

6   As shown by recent approaches to the topic by Apter (2004) and Palmié (2006), this remains an open issue in Afro-American studies.

appropriation and reinterpretation in regulating the circulation and local reception of Western cultural goods in non-Western cultures, what seems to be at stake is the role played by Herskovitsian "cultural imponderables" in the dynamics of culture contacts, as Jonathan Friedman (1990) has argued for the Congolese *sapeurs*.[7] In a similar vein, when Glazer and Moynihan (1963) wrote, in the early 1960s, about the improbable survival of Italian or Jewish ethnicity in "melting pot" New York, they were stressing the resilience of "systems of value" among otherwise quintessential American citizens.

After a period of radical deconstruction of the classical concept of culture marked by the conflation of culture and identity, it seems that some anthropologists are now more attentive to the "invisible, implicit and behind-the-scenes workings of culture" (Eriksen 2000; see also Bruman 1999). This might provide the opportunity for a more thorough reassessment of Herskovits's views on the role played by cultural "imponderables" in processes of acculturation.

Bastide's views on the social dimensions of acculturative processes can also provide an interesting starting point for a more comprehensive view of contemporary processes of hybridization. These are often interpreted, as Aisha Kahn (2007) has stressed, as free-floating devices associated with the aesthetics of the global vs. the local. Bastide's ideas about the mutual implication of culture and society offer an important corrective to this culturalist view of creolization. Not only hybridity is socially produced, but it also reflects the unequal distribution of power between distinct social groups and, most importantly, some of its outcomes – such as syncretic religious cults – are essential in the production of new social configurations. This last point should be stressed. As Bruno Latour (2005) has recently argued, religion is not so much a Durkheimian mirror of social cohesion, but a contentious site for the unstable production of society. Roger Bastide could have subscribed to such a constructivist vision of religion, which he actually applied in *Les Religions Africaines au Brésil* to the realm of Brazilian hybrid religions.

FROM ACCULTURATION TO GLOBALIZATION

Does that mean that acculturation theory and globalization are one and the same thing, and that we are today where we were fifty years ago? That is not my argument. What I am saying is that we should have a more complex dialogue with acculturation theorists, based on a fair identification of what we can learn from them and what we have to discover by ourselves. Instead of focusing on sometimes imaginary divergences we should concentrate on differences that make a difference. Some anthropologists and historians have been actively

7   The same point can be made about the circulation of *Dallas* among Native Australians (Michaels 2002) and of McDonalds among Chinese city dwellers (Yan 2005).

involved in the identification of such differences within the African-American field of research (e.g. Yelvington 2006a). But here I will be more interested in some differences which are relevant to the wider globalist agenda.

One of these differences has to do with the new phenomena that characterize the current stage of globalization when compared to its previous stages. Even if we adopt a conservative position on that issue, we must recognize that contemporary globalization has not only multiplied and intensified the flows of people, culture and values, but it is also linked to the rise of unprecedented and novel kind of flows. In this sense, one of the tasks that the anthropology of cultural globalization has to face is the empirical and theoretical upgrading of previous approaches to phenomena of cultural dynamics. This is an ongoing process.

For instance, we know a lot more than we previously did about tourism, one of these new flows of people that has become so relevant in the current stage of globalization. Tourism is of course strongly associated with particular forms of contacts of culture that acculturation theorists used to study under the heading of acculturation and that we now study under such diverse headings as hybridization, creolization, etc. García Canclini (1995), has emphasized how tourism is linked to emergent "hybrid cultures" that fuse the once separated worlds of ancient "folk culture" and post-modern "popular culture", of the "genuine" and the "spurious", to quote the title of the famous essay written by Handler and Linnekin (1984). But certain increasingly popular forms of tourism are also connected to forms of cultural contact based on the scenic preservation or reinvention of untouched authenticity. Indeed, ethnological safaris, folklore performances directed towards a tourist audience, some forms of rural tourism, are based on the promise of a cultural contact with unspoiled otherness.

We can say that this promise rests on an illusion. However, from the point of view of the tourist, as Dennis O'Rourke has demonstrated in his *Cannibal Tours*, what is at stake is an actual contact with cultural authenticity. Addressing the contemporary dialectics of tourism and heritage, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) has defined heritage in the following terms: "Heritage not only gives buildings, precincts, and *ways of life* that are no longer viable a second life as exhibits of themselves. It also produces something new" (1998: 150, my emphasis). It thus can be viewed as "*a new mode of cultural production* in the present that has recourse to the past" (1998: 149, my emphasis) based on a "discourse of reclamation and preservation" (1998: 150). The foundational mechanism of this new mode of cultural production, in the case of cultural tourism, is the replication of authenticity and the denial of cultural contact. Having "acculturated" primitives and peasants, we now ask them, in our "insatiable and promiscuous [...] appetite for wonder" (1998: 150), to de-culturate. In this sense tourism rests on a powerful paradox: while providing a

context for cultural contact – between tourists and primitives, between urban-
ites and peasants, between inauthentic and authentic ways of life – its *modus
operandi*, based on wide spread mechanisms of *replication*, rests upon the denial
of cultural contact.

What I am suggesting is that cultural contacts associated with tourism
present us with new challenges that cannot be addressed by conceptualizations
about cultural contacts that we have received from acculturation theory.
We have to think not only in broader terms, but also in different terms.

The same occurs when we consider the larger social and cultural land-
scape in which the current stage of globalization takes place. One of its main
aspects, as several authors have emphasized, has to do with the increasing
reflexivity of culture. As a consequence, the contemporary landscape is satu-
rated with movements and politics of identity. The local has not been erased
by homogeneous and acculturative globalization. On the contrary, globaliza-
tion is associated with the multicultural proliferation of particular identities
(e.g. Tomlinson 2003; Agier 2001). Together with the constant production
of hybrids and acculturated forms, the current stage of cultural globalization
is thus linked, to quote again Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, to new modes
of cultural production that stress boundaries instead of circulation, purity –
even if it is an imaginary purity – instead of mixture, immobility instead of
movement. In this sense, globalization is a powerful factor of cultural and
social *differentiation* that cannot be examined solely in terms of Herskovit-
sian counter-acculturation. These processes of differentiation have been more
thoroughly studied in relation to contemporary multicultural conditions and
struggles located below. But they are also evident if, instead of looking down,
we look up, if, instead of focusing on the ethnicities of the racialized others,
we concentrate on what has been called "white ethnicity". The contemporary
proliferation of private condominiums in the contemporary global and multi-
cultural "cities of walls" – to quote the title of Teresa Caldeira's book on São
Paulo (2000) – is a case in point. As Zygmunt Bauman (2007) has argued,
these cities of walls can be viewed as results of processes of differentiation that
respond to increasing multiculturalization by the constant building of new dif-
ferences and borders, both in a symbolic and in a material sense.

The theoretical landscape in which our current attempts to address cultural
globalization are located is also different. We are more attentive – as I have pre-
viously emphasized – to issues of agency and power. Simultaneously new forms
of theorization of the processes of disjunction of place and culture (Gupta and
Ferguson 1992; Inda and Rosaldo 2002) have emerged. Transnationalism is a
case in point. Even if we view it, as Alejandro Portes (2003) has argued, not as
new phenomenon but as a new point of view on an old phenomenon we shall
anyway emphasize how the adoption of this new point of view has reorganized
the way in which we used to address contacts of culture associated with the

mobility of people. Roger Rouse has described the transnationals as "skilled exponents of […] cultural bifocality" (2002: 163), who combine "ways of living [that] are fundamentally distinct, involving quite different attitudes and practices concerning the use of time and space, the conduct of social relationships, and the orchestration of appearances" (2002: 163). Sometimes, some of these distinct ways of living can be hybridized. But often they are linked to movements of *alternation* rather than creolization: between "proletarization" in the immigrant context and "independent operation" at home (2002: 163); between the political culture of the homeland and that of the country of residence; between the religious procession at home and the ethnic parade in a US city (Leal 2009). Much of the "multiple attachments" that characterize the contemporary world derive from such alternations between cultural worlds brought together but kept apart.

We can provisionally call *replication*, *differentiation* and *alternation* the processes I have evoked. And we can define them both as new modes of cultural dynamics, in the sense that acculturation theorists gave to this expression, or, following Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, as new modes of cultural production under the current regime of globalization. But we have to recognize that they were not part of the agenda of acculturation theory, mainly focused on retention, acculturation, syncretism and counter-acculturation.

A FINAL REMARK

In this sense, contemporary concerns with cultural globalization require that we move ahead of acculturation theory. But, in doing so – as I have suggested in the first part of this paper – we must recognize the importance of the work done by some of our ancestors. To quote again Trouillot's ironical observation on anthropology's troubled relation to its past, they were the ones who have "invented the wheel".

Conversely, we must be more critical towards some directions that our current interest in globalization has sometimes taken. As the philosopher Peter Sloterdijk (2008 [2005]) has argued, globalization is a project of homogenization of time and space driven by an ideology of unrestricted movement. Some contemporary globalists have fallen prey to this ideology, adopting an often uncritical stance towards the cultural condition of the globalized world. For instance, as Aisha Kahn (2007) has shown, most conceptualizations of contemporary hybridization are driven by a teleological optimism that, paradoxically enough, eschews issues of agency and power. In a similar vein it has been frequently forgotten that, besides its creative and hybridizing power, unrestricted movement – of people and culture, commodities and capitals, ideology and values – has a serious potential for cultural destruction. The contemporary celebration of particular ethnic *identities* – as in the case of

Brazilian Indians – is often what remains after the dismantlement of *culture* in the pre-Lila Abu-Lughod sense of the concept. Besides its liberating effects, movement – unrestricted movement – can also be a threat to the local as a site where the spatial and temporal abstractions of globalization can be resisted (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001). Movement is also selective, or as Appadurai (1990) has put it, "non-isomorphic": capital circulates faster and better than labour, global financial deregulation goes hand in hand with restrictive policies of immigration or the generalization of the cheaper policies of "virtual migration" (Anesh 2006). Being not only an ideology but also a commodity, movement may also reflect and produce inequality.

To sum up: besides being more sensitive towards our disciplinary past we must also be more critical towards our current predicaments: it might well be that we keep reproducing – albeit in a different jargon – the same mistakes that we have accused our ancestors to have made.

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"The past is a foreign country"? A teoria da aculturação e a antropologia da globalização ◆ João Leal ◆ Centro em Rede de Investigação em Antropologia, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas da Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal ◆ joao.leal@fcsh.unl.pt.

A antropologia contemporânea tem vindo a desenvolver um interesse consistente pelo estudo dos modos de circulação de pessoas, objectos e ideias associados à globalização. Esse interesse é usualmente apresentado como um novo desenvolvimento na teoria antropológica e os seus possíveis antecedentes,

como o difusionismo e a teoria da aculturação, são vistos como irrelevantes. Debruçando-se sobre o trabalho de Melville Herskovits e de Roger Bastide, este artigo defende a necessidade de uma imagem menos distorcida da teoria da aculturação e sublinha o modo como alguns dos seus contributos podem inspirar as discussões contemporâneas sobre globalização cultural.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: globalização, aculturação, história da antropologia, difusionismo, Melville Herskovits, Roger Bastide.