Studying Religion in Motion: A Networks Approach

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Abstract
This essay offers some theoretical and methodological reflections on how the study of religion might look if we were to assume that complexity, connectivity, and fluidity are preponderant features of our present age, without ignoring the strong countervailing global logics of segregation, surveillance, and control. After characterizing transnational, global, and diasporic modalities of religion in motion, the essay explores the strengths and weaknesses of the analytical tools of flows, landscapes, and networks in the study of mobility. I argue that by placing power front and center, the concept of networks provides a necessary corrective to hydraulic models of flows and spatial metaphors of landscapes. These metaphors tend to overstate the pervasiveness of porous boundaries and movement or to privilege the hermeneutic and phenomenological dimensions of religious activity.

> Though there are multiple sources of turbulence, one of the most important factors creating unrest in today's world is the unprecedented noise generated by proliferating networks whose reach extends from the local to the global. As networks relentlessly expand, the mix of worlds, words, sounds, images, and ideas becomes much more dense and diverse. When this media-mix approaches the boiling point, multiple cognitive and cultural changes become inevitable.
>
> —Mark C. Taylor, *The Moment of Complexity* (202)

> Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. And "Power," in so far as it is permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing, is simply the overall effect that emerges from all these mobilities, the concatenation that rests on each of them and seeks in turn to arrest their movement.
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> —Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality: An Introduction. Volume 1* (93)

Globalization today is radically transforming the cartographies that have dominated the social sciences and humanities. Although globalization is a complex cluster of economic, socio-political, and cultural phenomena, at its core is a

tensile interplay between time-space compression and distanciation. On the one hand, innovations in the capitalist regime of production and consumption, working in tandem with advances in communications and transportation technologies, accelerate the pace of life and shrink distances dramatically, "annihilating space through time" (Harvey 1989: 293). On the other hand, these same processes disembed social relations, rendering them independent of face-to-face interactions in specific locations. Through disembedding, social relations are "lifted out… from local contexts of interaction" and are "restructur[ed] across indefinite spans of time-space," giving rise to new, recombined cultural artifacts (Giddens 1990: 21).

At a minimum, the dialectic of time-space compression and distanciation challenges the modernist assumptions that have equated territory with both culture and polity. Widespread flows of people, capital, goods, and ideas make it increasingly untenable to map the world according to the tidy logic of one nation, one culture, one language, one religion, one history, and one self-contained social formation. These flows, however, have not produced a totally deterritorialized world. Today's world is not like Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's "body without organs" (1987: 149-166). In fact, mobility and connectivity have been accompanied by an exacerbation of socio-economic inequalities. Globalization is as much about cultural melánge as it is about the concentration of wealth in the metropole, the reinvigoration of the national security state, and the emergence of virulent nativist movements. For example, in 1960 the per capita GDP of the twenty richest countries in the world was eighteen times that of the twenty poorest countries. By 1995, the gap more than doubled, to thirty-seven times (World Bank 2001).

> More than 800 million people suffer from undernourishment. Some 100 million children who should be in school are not, 60 million of them girls. More than a billion people survive on less than one dollar a day. Some 1.8 billion people live in countries where political regimes do not fully accommodate democratic, political, and civil freedoms. And about 900 million people belong to ethnic, religious, racial or linguistic groups that face discrimination. The picture that emerges is increasingly one of two very different groups of countries: those that have benefited from development, and those that have been left behind. An unprecedented number of countries saw development slide backwards in the 1990's. In 46 countries people are poorer today than in 1990. In 25 countries more people go hungry today than a decade ago (Robinson 2004).

Still, the unruly reality of transculturation and shifting individual and collective identities challenges the ways in which modernity has understood religion. Religion can no longer be domesticated as a purely privatized choice in the midst of deregulated markets, nor can it be fixed within the parameters of traditional local life or of the nation-state (as in "the United States is an Anglo-

Protestant, or even Judeo-Christian, country"). There is a surplus of religious artifacts, narratives, practices, and institutions which now circulate globally, becoming localized in paradoxical ways that alternatively foster a cosmopolitan hybridity or erect new exclusionary boundaries in the name of purity. Flying in the face of modernization and secularization theories, religion today is public, compelling, and paradoxical, equally at home in the reconstructed bodies of itinerant Latino gang members who have converted to Pentecostalism and in transnational movements such as Hindutva, which rely heavily on a planetary cyber-space to convey a "long-distance nationalism."

How can we study religion in this setting? How can we build approaches that take "*itinerancy* as [their] guiding theme and propose that religions orient itinerant individuals and groups in time and space as they map the natural and social terrain, mark the always shifting horizon, and offer the means to cross over it" (Tweed 2002: 262)? In this essay, I offer some theoretical and methodological reflections on how the study of religion might look if we were to assume that complexity, connectivity, and fluidity are preponderant features of our present age, without ignoring the strong countervailing global logics of segregation, surveillance, and control. To avoid getting caught in the abstract debates that tend to characterize discussions about religion and globalization (Robertson 1992; Beyer 1994), I draw on research that I have been conducting on religion and transnational migration (Vásquez and Marquardt 2003; Vásquez 2005). I am interested primarily in exploring how religion is lived by individuals as they negotiate globalization's time-space compression and distanciation. In other words, my goal is to develop anchored theories that analyze the multiple roles of religion in the simultaneous construction of "the local" and "the global."

Defining Religion in a Global Context

To study the distinctive roles religion plays amid global and transnational processes, it is necessary to specify first what I mean by "religion." I do not intent to rehearse debates that are well known to readers of *Method & Theory*. I will only offer enough elements of these debates to highlight some of the ways in which religious practices, discourses, and institutions are articulated transnationally and globally.

Like "culture," "community," and "globalization," the term "religion" is highly contested. It can be used to characterize anything from anthropophagy to Marxism or faith in the invisible hand of the market. In view of this indeterminacy, Willi Braun argues that "religion" is "substantively empty..."

infinitely fillable with aeolian qualities" (2000: 8). Jonathan Z. Smith goes further, claiming that:

> there is no data for religion. Religion is solely the creation of the scholar's study. It is created for the scholar's analytic purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalization. Religion has no independent existence apart from the academy. For this reason, the student of religion, and most particularly, the historian of religion, must be relentlessly self-conscious. Indeed, this self-consciousness constitutes his primary expertise, his foremost object of study (1982: xi).

In *Discovering Religious History in the Modern Age*, Hans Kippenberg (2002) convincingly demonstrates that the comparative study of religion is a historical artifact, the rise of which is intimately bound up with the process of modernization in Europe. Religion became Enlightenment reason's primitive other, to be analyzed through the application of newly developed philological and evolutionary paradigms. From a global perspective, one that takes into account colonial and imperial histories in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, the problem of defining religion is even thornier. In these regions, the discipline of religion was constituted through the application of "technologies of subjectivation," acts of physical and symbolic violence perpetrated by missionaries, explorers, conquistadors, and colonial administrators (Chidester 1996; King 1999). By the mid-19th century, the carriers of colonial projects had provided a wealth "data" out of which armchair sociologists, anthropologists, and orientalists built *Religionswissenschaft*. The work of these scholars, in turn, served colonial administrations to exert "biopower" to manage native populations (Foucault: 1978: 140-144).

"Indigenous" populations, however, were not mere passive subjects of the colonial gaze. They resisted the imposition of Euro-centric dichotomies, such as those between faith and reason, modernity and tradition, the private and the public, and between religion and politics (Asad 2001). The unresolved tension between colonizer and colonized not only led to the juxtaposition and hybridization of discourses and practices in "folk" religions, but also generated persistent gaps in the analytical apparatuses of the emerging sciences of religion. Religion, although an inescapably orientalist regime of knowledge, does not just refer to discourses of the West about its other, which are normalized as authoritative, but also bears the irreducible marks of asymmetrical and irreconcilable encounters. In other words, while the subaltern cannot speak with its own voice, it cannot be erased or sublated, as Hegel would say, under a totalizing, harmonious Western system (Spivak 1988). This is why, borrowing from postcolonial scholar Dipesh Chakrabarty, I argue that the study of religion in a global setting involves above all a reconstruction of "conjoined and disjunctive genealogies" (2000: 255). This painstaking, yet always incom-

plete reconstruction pays close and careful attention to multiple histories, discourses, and practices at the periphery of the metropole, while exploring "the genealogies of the guiding concepts of the modern human sciences. The point is not to reject social science categories [or religious studies categories for that matter] but to release into the space occupied by particular European histories sedimented in them other normative and theoretical thought enshrined in other existing life practices and their archives" (Chakrabarty 2000: 20).

In other words, as Gutavo Benavides rightly claims, "there is data for religion" (2003). But this data is not just Enlightenment-driven discourses that interpellate religion as an authoritative epistemological category. This data also includes what David Chidester calls "intercultural relations of production." In the production of knowledge about religion, natives "on the colonized periphery were drawn to the process as informants—often as collaborators, sometimes as authors," while "local European 'experts' on the colonized periphery synthesized" ethnographic data, and "metropolitan theorists" constructed scientific analyses of "primitive" religious systems (2003: 275). Further, "this triple mediation—indigenous, colonial, and imperial—" means that "we are all entangled, implicated, and one way or another engaged in the same history" (2003: 276). What the Western academy has normalized as "religion" has had and continues to have a powerful, even material, impact outside the academy as it shapes the ways in which individuals live their daily lives and construct identities.

Secularizing Christian (more specifically Protestant) theology, the discipline of religious studies has tended to construct transhistorical, transcultural, and privatized definitions of religions (McCutcheon 1997). In the West, religion has been equated with intimate, immediate personal knowledge of the self's true and irreducible essence. Mircea Eliade is, of course, the prime example of this tendency. In his attempt to define religion *sui generis*, Eliade placed the sacred at the center of religious life by inscribing it in ontological archetypes shared by all humanity. The tendency to define religion as an inner essence, however, is reproduced by recent scholars such as Clifford Geertz. In his influential essay "Religion as a Cultural System," Geertz links religion to "powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting motivations" produced as individuals confront existential predicaments such as bafflement, suffering, and evil (1973: 90). These moods and motivations are expressed and rendered meaningful through systems of symbols that the anthropologist reads as complex texts and carefully decodes.

As Talal Asad has shown, Geertz appropriated a post-Reformation definition of religion that privileges inner feelings and belief over public rituals, and text and meaning over power and embodied practice. By privileging symbolic and

psycho-cognitive dimensions, Geertz falls into a kind of genesis amnesia, failing to take into account "the entire range of available disciplinary activities, of institutional forms of knowledge and practice, within which [religious] dispositions [which enable legitimate moods and motivations] are formed and sustained" (Asad 1993: 50). According to Asad, "religious symbols—whether one thinks of them in terms of communication or of cognition, or guiding action or of expressing emotion—cannot be understood independently of their historical relations with nonreligious symbols or of their articulation in and of social life, in which work and power are crucial" (1993: 53). In the end, Asad's reconstruction of the genealogy of the category of religion (as part and parcel of Western modernity) leads him to caution us against "employing it as a normalizing concept when translating Islamic traditions" (or, for that matter, any other non-Christian tradition or even medieval Christianity) (1993: 1). Geertz's "universal" definition of religion reproduces the dualism between private and public, symbol and matter, and society and religion that is at the heart of Western modernity.

In response to the limitations of Geertz's hermeneutic-phenomenological approach, scholarship in religious studies has increasingly moved away from universal definitions of religion as a unique, socio-historically autonomous depth experience, preferring to approach contextualized and historicized religious discourses, practices, and institutions. The key questions then become: (1) how, in a given context, do discourses, practices, and institutions come to be constituted as *religious* (pointing to or expressing a supernatural, "sacred" power hidden in things, for example); and (2) how these religious discourses, practices, and institutions interact with non-religious phenomena.

What are the implications of these theoretical debates for the study of religion in motion? First, we cannot rely on universal, *a priori* definitions of religion. Rather, we must be attentive to ways in which local, grassroots, official, national, and transnational actors define and live religion. These multiple situated perspectives (which often lead to contested canons, traditions, and orthodoxies), in interplay with the researcher's own unstable positionality, determine the object of study. Second, we need a richer definition of religion that challenges the exclusive emphasis on symbols, beliefs, and theologies, and brings into focus the "material" aspects of religion: embodied practices, emplaced institutions, and the sacralized artifacts that sustain complex relations with global commodity and financial flows. Re-materialized and re-historicized, this approach can still help us to understand the complex roles religions play in "globalization past and present" (Narayanan 2003: 516).

Characterizing Mobile Religion

All religions are mobile in one way or another by virtue of the need to bridge their claims to universal truth and their focus on the salvation, redemption, or transformation of the self. It is a modernist prejudice to see religion as essentially static. Modernity opposed provincial and superstitious tradition against cosmopolitan secular progress in order to mark its rupture from the "Dark Ages." If we accept that religion is as dynamic as any other realm of human activity, then, the task is to evaluate the types, rates, genealogies, causes, and vectors of that mobility.

As a sociologist of religion, I am primarily concerned with mobile religion in the current episode of globalization. I contend that migration, particularly in its post-1965 version, has contributed to the historicization and re-materialization of the study of religion (Vásquez 2005). More specifically, I contend that increased migration to the U.S. from Latin America, Asia, and Africa has played a key role in the shifts from text to territory, from theology and doctrine to lived religion, and from symbol to practice that characterize emerging approaches in religious studies (Gill 1998; Hall 1997; Tweed 2002). Since Latin America, Asia, and Africa have been affected by capitalism, modernization, and globalization in uneven and contradictory ways, migrants from these regions are likely to bring to the U.S. "popular," grassroots religions, alongside more rationalized, bureaucratized, and "official" religious discourses and practices. These popular religions typically stress what we may call the "performative": they involve the body and operate by primarily carving out new sacred spaces through ritual action and the transposition of spatio-temporal tropes in the diasporic imagination (Orsi 1999). These religions also create a rich material culture, ranging from religious kitsch to traveling relics (McDannell 1995). It is precisely this stress on embodied and "emplaced" religious practice that has forced scholars of religion to historicize and re-materialize their analyses.

Religion's entwinement with contemporary migration has also led to intense processes of de- and re-territorialization. It is true that "religious communities are among the oldest of the transnationals: Sufi orders, Catholic missionaries, and Buddhist monks carried word and praxis across vast spaces before those places became nation-states or even states" (Rudolph 1997: 1). However, in the modern imagination, religion has been contained within the space of the nation (van der Veer and Lehmann 1999). Within the nation, religion has been understood in primarily two senses: 1) as an anachronism attached to locality, part of the traditional way of life associated with *Gemeinschaft*, which for better or worse secular modernity will eventually erase; 2) as the nation's secularized collective conscience, the source its moral habits. Transnational

migration and other globalizing processes have destabilized Western modernity's equation of religion with the nation. Religion has become both a conduit for global flows and a source of the "scripts" (Appadurai 1996: 35) that crisscross various spatial scales.

Given this context, mobile religions assume at least three overlapping, mutually implicative modalities: transnational, global, and diasporic religion. According to the now classic definition in Linda Basch, Nina Glick-Schiller, and Cristina Szanton Blanc's *Nations Unbound*, transnationalism refers to "the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders" (1994: 7). They call immigrants engaged in multiple social relations spanning national borders "transmigrants."[1] Transmigrants, they continue, "take actions, make decisions, and develop subjectivities and identities embedded in networks of relationships that connect them simultaneously to two or more nation-states" (1994: 7). In attempting to sustain the fabric of everyday life across national borders, transnational migrants often build dense transnational social fields, sets of "multiple interlocking networks of social relations through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed" (Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004: 1009).

The central metaphor behind the concept of transnationalism is that of simultaneous embeddedness: individuals are multiply located and thus must articulate multiple identities to negotiate the demands of different settings across the terrain delineated by the transnational social field. Simultaneity, in turn, leads to cultural innovation and hybridity or, alternatively, to the quest to stabilize individual and collective identities (Hannerz 1997; Nederveen Pieterse 2004). Transnational religions would then be those sets of discursive and non-discursive religious practices, as well as institutional morphologies, that enable individuals to "live their lives across international borders," that is, to "move across international borders and settle and establish social relations in a new state [and] maintain social connections with the polity from which they originated" (Glick-Schiller 1999: 96). A prototypical example here would be the transnational Pentecostals churches that I have studied, which minister to Salvadoran youths who moved to the United States during the 1980s, when the tiny Central American nation was engulfed in a civil war. Many of these

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[1] Strictly speaking, then, transnationalism arose only after the formation of the modern sovereign nation-state with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. Of course, religion had been involved in translocal movement much earlier than that.

young immigrants encountered American youth gang subculture in cities like Los Angeles, Houston, or Washington, DC and ended up being deported back to El Salvador because they committed a crime. In El Salvador, they very quickly formed gang chapters that were persecuted by a state still driven by the quest for law and order. Many of these deported gang members have returned again to the U.S. as undocumented immigrants, this time fleeing a Salvadoran society that no longer recognizes them as legitimate citizens. Churches have attempted to save souls transnationally, at various points in the transnational social field constructed by these gangs (Vásquez and Marquardt 2003).

Scholars of transnationalism have been careful to distinguish this term from globalization. Whereas transnationalism refers primarily to lived experiences of individuals that are simultaneously embedded in two or more nation-states, globalization generally refers to processes that are planetary, that is, interregional and intercontinental. These processes have been going on with different intensities since at least the dawn of the colonial era in the 1500s (Held et al., 1999).

> Global processes tend to be de-linked from specific national territories while transnational processes are anchored in and transcend one or more nation-states. Global processes take place throughout the world while transnational practices are the political, economic, social, and cultural processes occurring beyond the borders of a particular state, including actors that are not states but that are influenced by the policies and institutional arrangements associated with states (Levitt 2001: 202).

Contemporary capitalism is the most obvious example of global dynamics. While wealth and power are heavily concentrated in a few global cities like New York, London, and Tokyo, capital circulates at blinding speeds across the world, making it almost impossible for a single nation or even a group of nations working in close coordination (as in the case of NAFTA and the European Union) to regulate their economies through the application of monetary policies (Sassen 1998). Moreover, in contemporary capitalism production and consumption are de-centered (Harvey 1989). A fashionable product that carries the logo of a corporation with headquarters in the rural south in the U.S. and is consumed in a small village in Nigeria may have been assembled in Mexico out of parts produced in the Honduras or the Dominican Republic, under the supervision of Taiwanese or Pakistani managers.

In terms of global religion, a good example is the case of an apparition of the Virgin Mary in Clearwater, Florida, which Marie Marquardt and I studied (Vásquez and Marquardt 2000). Soon after the virgin appeared on the windows of a bank building in a strip mall, web sites sprang up sending pictures and detailed accounts into cyberspace. Through the Internet, devotees from

around the world came to experience the event along with other recent sightings of Mary in places as diverse as Conyers, Georgia; Lubbock, Texas; Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Mexico City, and Argentina, and the more traditional pilgrimage sites of Fatima and Lourdes, which are all part of a global digital Marian devotional circuit. The virgin of Clearwater became a site in an unbounded virtual sacred landscape instantaneously and simultaneously available to believers worldwide. It is important to note that, although this sacred cyber-landscape is planetary, it is anchored in particular localities which are beamed globally and stretched worldwide to allow those who cannot be present physically to experience the power of local hierophanies. In other words, global religion may be deeply deterritorialized and deterritorializing, but it does not automatically erase local or personal modalities of religion. Rather global, local and personal religious processes are engaged in a complex and paradoxical interplay that often intensifies all parties involved.

Finally, there is the concept of diaspora, which is much older than globalization and transnationalism. The term originally referred to *galut*, the formation of scattered Jewish colonies outside of Palestine as a result of the Babylonian exile in the fifth century BCE, and the Greek colonization of Asia Minor through migration, trade, and conquest in 800-600 BCE (Reis 2004). Currently, the term refers to

> much wider categories which reflect processes of politically motivated uprooting and moving of populations, voluntary migration, global communications and transport. The term has acquired a broad semantic domain that now encompasses a motley array of groups such as political refugees, alien residents, guest workers, immigrants, expellees, ethnic and racial minorities, overseas communities (Shuval 2000: 42).

This dispersion of meaning has led some scholars to complain about "the 'diaspora' of diaspora" (Brubaker 2005: 1). The trouble with this dispersion is that the "category becomes stretched to the point of uselessness. If everyone is diasporic, then no one is distinctively so. The term loses its discriminating power—its ability to pick out phenomena and make distinctions. The universalization of diaspora, paradoxically, means the disappearance of diaspora" (Brubaker 2005: 3).

To avoid the lack of analytical rigor behind the diaspora of diaspora, while at the same time not reifying the Jewish and Greek cases (which themselves show quite a bit of heterogeneity),[2] I suggest that we strategically take these

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[2] In fact, in addition to *galut*, Hebrew has other words, such as *golah* and *tefutzot*, to describe different experiences of dispersion, which may have positive, negative, or neutral connotations (Safran 2004: 15). "Only the loss of a political-ethnic [and religious] center and the feeling of

early experiences as points of departure in the search for what Wittgenstein would call "family resemblances" in other historical and contemporary processes. This is in line with anthropologist James Clifford's call for a "polythetic definition" of diaspora.

> Whatever the working list of diasporic features, no society can be expected to qualify on all counts, throughout its history. And the discourse of diaspora will necessarily be modified as it is translated and adopted. Different diasporic maps of displacement and connection can be compared on the basis of family resemblances, of shared elements, no subset of which is defined as essential to the discourse. A polythetic field would seem most conducive to tracking (rather than policing) the contemporary range of diasporic forms (Clifford 1994: 306-07).

What are some of the most salient features entailed in the cluster of signification that is diaspora? If we take *galut* as a point of departure, we see a forced, often traumatic dispersion from the homeland, where the homeland need not be a single place of origin, but multiple horizons of being and belonging.[3] According to William Safran (2004: 13),

> the members of a diaspora may or may not have adjusted to life in the hostland, but they have a spiritual, emotional, and/or cultural home that is outside the hostland. Whether that home is necessarily the 'original' homeland is a matter of controversy. It may, in fact, not be the ancestral homeland at all but rather the place where one was born and raised but that was originally a hostland, that is, a diaspora.

So, Jews in Brazil and the Dutch Antilles in the seventeenth century looked to Iberia as their homeland in diaspora, while consulting the *mahamad* (the religious governing body) in Amsterdam, writing to rabbis in North Africa, and preserving the memories of Palestine in their songs and poems (Bodian 1997). This is what some scholars call "rediasporization": "Zion longed for and imagined through Cordoba, Cairo, or Vilna, and these frequently palimpsested one on the other such that Cairo becomes a remembered Cordoba and the new Jerusalem a remembered Vilna" (Boyarin and Boyarin 2002: 11).

Because the dispersal(s) take(s) place amidst a hostile environment and is (are) experienced as a durable condition across generations, people in diaspora attempt, despite considerable creolization, to preserve a distinctive identity vis-à-vis the receiving societies. This ambivalent and tense reception also encourages those in diaspora to relate to the homeland through desire, through

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uprootedness" turns *tefutzot* (dispersion) into *galut* (exile). *Tefutzot*, then, fits more Greek trade and migratory diasporas, as well as the present-day situation of Jewish communities throughout the world. See the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 7: 275-294 and vol. 6: 8-19.

[3] See Johnson (2007: 258), especially for his nuanced definition of diasporic religion. I would like to thank Hilit Surowitz for her helpful suggestions on this topic.

the unfulfilled longing for a paradise lost and the utopian dreams of a future return to mythic origins. In that sense, diaspora is characterized by a shared feeling of profound dislocation and exclusion mixed with nostalgia, remembrance, hope, and futurity.

> [D]iasporas comprise special kinds of immigrants because they have retained a memory of, a cultural connection with, and a general orientation toward their homelands; they have institutions reflecting something of a homeland culture and/or religion; they relate in some (symbolic or practical) way to their homelands; they harbour doubts about their full acceptance by the hostland; they are committed to their survival as a distinct community; and many of them have retained a myth of return (Safran 2004: 10).

In *Our Lady of the Exile*, Tweed (1999) offers an instructive example of diasporic religion. Unable to return to Cuba, Cuban Americans in Miami draw from translocative narratives, institutions, and rituals to move symbolically between the homeland and Florida.

> Diasporic institutions like the Confraternity of Our Lady of Charity at the Miami shrine focus on shared nationalistic symbols with historical importance. That institution also maps the landscape of the homeland onto Miami by organizing the list of 42,000 members according to native regional affiliation. The confraternity, then, is the religious equivalent of the 'municipalities in exile.' As with those secular organizations, exiles from the same township are brought together. The confraternity at the shrine does this in an ingenious way. Each of the 126 townships is reconstituted and celebrated in one weekday mass during the year.... Through this exilic institution, then, the dispersed return to their past and their native region.
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>   As with those weekday masses for the 126 townships, diasporic rituals bridge the two worlds and construct an imagined community, the Cuban "nation" (Tweed 1999: 96-97).

It is obvious that diaspora as a polythetic field of signification has a lot in common with transnationalism. In fact, very often the terms are used interchangeably to refer to the immigrant experience of "bifocality"—that is, of living in two worlds. However, I believe that it is useful to distinguish trasnational and diasporic modalities in order to understand the nuances of mobile religion. Whereas transnationalism, as I have defined it, helps us capture simultaneity across present-day localities, such that decisions taken in the host society have an impact in the society of origin and vice-versa, diaspora refers to operations that are also trans-temporal, and which join multiple spaces through a work of imagination that links past, present, and future. Transnationalism entails a strategic presentism, a multiple embeddedness in the now, as the transmigrant seeks to creatively adjust to the rapidly changing demands of flexible production in contemporary capitalism. Diaspora, in contrast, retrieves or invents a

common origin and tradition and commemorates idealized geographic spaces as a way to dwell in an inhospitable present and perhaps bring about a return to the future. Although there are transmissive gaps in both, transnationalism stresses simultaneity in everyday life, while diaspora often involves intense ritualized and momentary fusions of past and future and connections with the homeland, as the weekly masses of the Confraternity of Our Lady of Charity show. To be sure, there is also simultaneity in diasporic religions, since the affective tie to the homeland is experienced in full force abroad. That is precisely the whole point of performing a ritual exactly as it was done at home (in *illo tempore*). However, diasporic simultaneity links a present population with an imagined community, a community that is often elevated to mythical status. Thus, in diaspora there is a different management of time and space where staging, memorializing, imagining, and sacralizing the past and future play a more fundamental role.

According to Karen Olwig, "whereas diaspora denotes a largely mental state of belonging, which may be grounded in physical movements that took place many generations back, transnationalism is shaped by present-day movement between at least two nation-states and the resulting cross-border relations" (2004: 55). She elaborates: transnationalism "refers to the actual networks of social, economic, and political ties that people develop and sustain across political borders" (Olwig 2004: 55). I do not agree with her distinction between the mental (diaspora) and material (transnationalism). Both transnationalism and diaspora entail "material" and "mental" dimensions, since all practices are by definition non-dualistic. However, she is correct in highlighting differences in space-time management in mobility and the process of identity formation.

I would suggest that both transnationalism's and diaspora's distinctive constructions of "time-space envelopes" are accompanied by different religious modalities. Tweed's work with Cuban-Americans and my own with Pentecostal churches and gangs show significant similarities. In both cases religion is heterotopic: it generates multiple overlapping spaces, but often conflict-ridden, spaces. However, the experience of diaspora is built on deferral, on the gap between actual and imagined land. It is this irresolvable gap (and yet one that needs to be resolved through religious imagination) that leads Cuban exiles in Miami to engage in locative, translocative, and supralocative religious practices. The gaps in the transnational Salvadoran gangs and Pentecostals networks have a different character. They have to do with the distribution of resources and power along a coeval but distended social field. Can the clique in Gotera, in eastern El Salvador, decide its modus operandi without consulting the leadership in Los Angeles? How can a Pentecostal church in Takoma

Park in Washington, DC collect enough funds to send missionaries to follow Salvadoran youths who have been deported and are now in a high security prison in the working-class outskirts of San Salvador? It is not that power does not matter in diasporic religion, but power in this modality of mobile religion is strongly mediated by symbolic dimensions. Given the existential deferral in diaspora, what is at stake is the power to name, to represent the past and, thus, to shape the present and imagine the future.

Given the complexity of today's world, the boundaries among the transnational, global, and diasporic religious modalities are very porous. These terms should not be seen as exclusive of each other, nor should they be read as stages ordered in a linear succession. More specifically, we must be careful not to see diaspora as a static and anachronistic strategy that is superseded by modern, more dynamic transnational and global religious modalities. In fact, a person can be engaged in two or even all three modalities of mobile religion at the same time. For example, many Jews throughout the world may now sustain durable and day-to-day exchanges with the nation-state of Israel (i.e., engage in transnationalism). Yet, they may continue to construct diasporic identities marked by experiences of historical dislocation and utopian dreams of a restored, truly welcoming homeland (which may or may not be envisioned beyond the nation-state). Or perhaps a Haitian in Brooklyn or Palm Beach County, who has fled his country because of widespread political and economic turmoil, might use the Internet to build a "diasporic public sphere," where s/he comes together with other compatriots to reminisce about the land left behind, a land to which s/he can only return under the threat of death, and to imagine a new Haiti (Parham 2004). Simultaneously, this immigrant might be using the on-line services of Western Union to send monthly remittances back to his/her village so that, among other things, the local *lwa* [the ancestor spirits] can be properly served and feted (Richman 2005). As a result, relatives who collect those remittances in Haiti may come to structure their everyday lives around the immigrant's fate in Brooklyn or South Florida, entering a transnational social field even when they have not physically moved across national borders. To give yet another instructive example: a Nigerian or Ghanaian neo-Pentecostal preacher may work in New York City to found a new church, another node in a transnational network of congregations that links the West African diaspora in Europe and the United States, while following the "Great Commission" and preaching a global gospel of personal salvation in Jesus (Wakin 2004). While this gospel is announced to all, regardless of nationality, it may be stamped with a prosperity theology that bears a close elective affinity to the neo-liberal capitalism advocated by elites in the United States. Here global religion might be a carrier of a certain type of neo-

imperialism (Glick-Schiller 2005). Nevertheless, various congregations in the transnational network may consume this homogeneous gospel of health and wealth in heterogeneous ways, depending on local needs and on their class, gender, racial, age, and national configuration.

As we can see from these hypothetical but quite plausible examples, the distinctions between global, transnational, and diasporic religious discourses, practices, and institutions can only be heuristic, serving to provide more finely tuned tools for studying the different modalities which mobile religion assumes. Overall, in providing infra-structural support for and entering into transnational, global, and diasporic flows, religion plays multiple roles. Religion may respond to dislocation by transposing sacred spaces from the nation of origin to the nation of settlement (Brown 1999). Or alternatively, it may help form transnational social fields, new spaces of sociability generated through dense, interlocking chains of ties spanning multiple nation-states. Religion is also central in the emergence of new hybrid forms of identity, which combine hitherto disparate cosmologies, ritual practices, and institutional forms. Or it may lead to the re-affirmation of "old" identities in diaspora through the recovery and/or invention of primordial origins. Religion may contribute to a fluid, ecumenical cosmopolitanism, or to the formation of an exclusionary particularism, or to both simultaneously. Thus, part of the task of studying mobile religion is to relate it to issues of context and diversity. In particular, we need to explore under what socio-historical conditions (which may include church-state relations, the level of religious pluralism, patterns of incorporation and types of migration, etc.) mobile religion contributes to hybridity versus purity, and to cosmopolitanism versus particularism.

Studying Religion in Motion: Space, Flows, and Networks

What would it mean to study religion in ways that acknowledge national and regional histories, the impact of the state, and the power of religious institutions in imposing orthodoxy while taking into account transnational, global, and diasporic processes and recognizing the pervasiveness of religious flows and creativity? What kinds of metaphors can we deploy to study religion in motion? Thus far, three clusters of metaphors have emerged: spatial metaphors, including terms such as landscapes, maps, territories, fields, geographies, cartographies, and place-making through the practices of dwelling and crossing; "hydraulic" tropes such as flows, fluxes, confluences, currents, and streams; and models of relationality and connectivity like networks, webs, and pathways. Like the global, transnational, and diasporic modalities of

religion, these three clusters of metaphors are not opposed to each other. In fact, they are often deployed in various combinations. However, for the purposes of analytical sharpness, we can assess the epistemological assumptions and the strengths and weaknesses of each of these clusters.

Spatial metaphors have been central to the academic study of religion since its inception, as Durkheim's approach to ritual and Eliade's analysis of foundational hierophanies demonstrate. The recent proliferation of spatial approaches to religion also shows the vitality and fruitfulness of this line of inquiry (Smith 1987; Chidester and Linenthal 1995; Basso 1996; Gill 1998; Orsi 1999; Tweed 1999; Lane 2001). Kim Knott nicely summarizes nicely overall pay off of the use of spatial metaphors: "the spatial approach has two benefits for locating religion in everyday spaces. One is that, as a methodological approach, it coheres ... with the purpose of locating religion within particular places" (2005: 233). As such, spatial metaphors compel us to go beyond the study of de-contextualized texts and cosmologies and to focus on religion as it is lived by situated individuals. The second benefit is the re-materialization of religious studies through a focus on the emplaced body.

With the publication of Arjun Appadurai's groundbreaking *Modernity at Large* in 1996, hydraulic tropes have become increasingly prominent in the study of culture and religion. Appadurai re-conceptualizes culture as "a complex, overlapping, disjunctive" interplay of flows, among which are ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes (1996: 32-33). Appadurai uses the suffix *-scape* "to point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes, shapes that characterize international capital as deeply as they do international clothing styles" (1996: 33). Notice here how the hydraulic metaphor of flows complements the spatial metaphor of landscape, rendering it more cosmopolitan. By using the notion of -scapes, Appadurai is able to explore the dynamics of various place-making flows from the personal to the institutional, and from the local to the national, transnational, global, and diasporic.

Since Appadurai does not mention religion among his list of flows, McAlister has coined the term "religioscapes" to refer to "the subjective religious maps (and attendant theologies) of diasporic communities who are also in global flow and flux" (1998: 156). Along the same lines, Tweed introduces "sacroscapes" to refer to the traces, trails, and landscapes that religious flows sketch as they transform "peoples and places, the social arena and the natural terrain" (2006: 61, 62).

Spaces and flows, then, have received some sustained attention in cultural and religious studies. In contrast, aside from a handful of works, the concept of networks has been primarily the province of the social and natural sciences

(see Taylor 2001; Clarke 2004; Cooke and Lawrence 2005). What would be the analytical pay-off of approaching mobile religion through the concept of networks? In what follows, I will strategically privilege the concept of networks to see where that takes us. I undertake this thought experiment because, while all analytical tools have limitations, I find the metaphor of flows particularly problematic because it tends to conjure up a thoroughly de-territorialized world. According to Anna Tsing, "world-making 'flows' . . . are not just interconnections but the recarving of channels and the remapping of the possibilities of geography" (2000: 327). As the drastic militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border shows, not every flow is created equal. While capital, drugs, and consumer goods may indeed flow freely across this border, both nation-states are heavily involved in regulating the movement of people, either by intercepting "illegal aliens" or by collecting their remittances to mitigate the dislocation caused by the imposition neo-liberal economic reforms. This is why Ronin Shamir argues that globalization today is accompanied by a "mobility regime" that operates through a "selective osmosis," allowing only certain kinds of movements across semi-permeable (or even reinforced) borders, while subjecting vast sectors of the world's population to a "paradigm of suspicion" (2005: 200). The latter seeks to classify, contain, exclude, and police "strangers," particularly immigrants, who are increasingly linked to crime, erosion of national core values, and terrorism. Regulation of difference, in turn, is organized around a global logic of risk management and implemented through advanced technologies of "biosocial profiling" (2005: 200). Thus, it is more appropriate to characterize the post-9/11 environment of "enclosed mobilities, regulated transnationalisms, and monitored rather than simple flexible sovereignties" as a "gated globe" (Cunningham 2004: 332) rather than a confluence or a dissemination of multiple flows.

Spatial approaches, in turn, have had the opposite problem of those relying on hydraulic tropes. They have tended to reify the local (be it the *congregation*, the *neighborhood*, or the *community*) as a bounded whole held together by a unified cultural system. However, as Appadurai (1996) rightly argues, locality can no longer be assumed to stand automatically for stable, self-contained places of meaning, authenticity, and intimacy. Locality is produced by the constantly de-territorializing and re-territorializing circulation of people, commodities, knowledge, and capital. Thus, to render spatial tropes more flexible and dynamic, they have to be nuanced by the use of hydraulic metaphors. This is not sufficient, however. In order to avoid focusing only on the phenomenological and hermeneutic dimensions of space, the psycho-cognitive and existential dynamics of world-centering, orientation, and place-making, which have been central in the works of Mircea Eliade, David Carrasco, Thomas

Tweed, Robert Orsi, and Karen McCarthy Brown, among others, we need a set of tropes that highlight the fact that places are always interconnected and marked with crisscrossing relations of power. This is precisely where the metaphor of network can be fruitful, allowing us to embed space and the practices of place-making in dynamic fields of domination and resistance.

The concept of networks is, of course, hardly novel. Network analysis has a long trajectory in the social sciences (Mitchell 1969; Granovetter 1973). It has also had a distinguished career in the sociology of migration (Boyd 1989; Portes 1995; Menjívar 2000). In the study of immigrant religions, the concept of networks is emerging as tool to enrich and critique work on territorially-bounded congregations, which has been the dominant paradigm in the field (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2002; Vásquez and Marquardt 2003).

From the perspective of religious studies, the language of networks may appear reductionist and anti-humanist, failing to take into account the symbolic, affective, and axiological aspects of religious life. "[T]he structure of a network itself says very little about the qualitative nature of relationships comprising it" (Vertovec 2003:647). There is also the danger of functionalism, the assumption that networks work primarily to unify and balance self-contained systems. Finally, we must confront the contradictions of a hardcore methodological holism, which hypothesizes networks as not only self-generating agents, but unitary actors with their own consciousness and intentionality. This is a version of the longstanding problem of agency: "networks research typically rests on a default conceptualization of human beings acted upon by networks rather than acting on them and through them" (Smilde 2005: 758).

To avoid these dangers, we must re-conceptualize networks. Rather than assuming that they are always closed, linear systems that automatically integrate constituent parts in a harmonious whole, we need to realize networks take different morphologies that evolve across time and space. While some networks will, at particular junctures, be relatively simple and uni-directional, others will be flexible, highly dynamic, non-totalizing, and multi-directional structures of relationality. For example, Brazilian immigrants in Pompano Beach in South Florida sustain durable relations not just with various communities in Brazil, each with its own regional flavor, but also with groups in Boston, New York, and New Jersey as well as with growing Brazilian populations in Orlando and Atlanta. Interacting business and church networks are crucial in linking these various locations, facilitating movement and exchange across state and national boundaries. To cite another, more visible example: "Structured around dispersed nodes that communicate with one another in non-linear space, the al-Qaeda network relies on neither hierarchical chain of command nor conventional rules of engagement. Rather it mobilizes nimble,

dispersed, and highly elusive units capable of penetrating and disrupting, or even destroying, massive structures" (Cooke and Lawrence 2005: 25).

Networks mark relatively stable but always contested differentials of power, of inclusion and exclusion, of cooperation and conflict, of boundary-crossing and boundary-making. Networks are socio-politically, culturally, and ecologically embedded relational processes that constrain and enable practices as diverse as place-making and identity-construction (Dicken et al. 2001). In other words, the worldviews, beliefs, and behaviors of particular individuals cannot be mechanically read from their location in a given network. Building on the work of theorists of practice such as Marx, Pierre Bourdieu, and Anthony Giddens, a network approach can help us explore how positionality in a field of power differentials shapes and is shaped by relatively stable and embodied dispositions, propensities, and competences to act in certain ways.[4] Thus, network analysis enables us to take a praxis-oriented approach, focusing on how individuals engage in "invention within limits" (Bourdieu 1977: 96) by drawing from resources available to them through the shifting fields of relations and webs of exchanges they sustain.

As Foucault (1980) has demonstrated, power is intertwined with the production of knowledge and articulation of selfhood. Networks, therefore, are not just shifting and multi-centered capillaries through which power, and economic, social, and cultural capitals circulate. As temporal and spatialized forms of relationality, they are also negotiated "phenomenological realities" (White 1992) consisting of narratives, practices, cognitive maps, and micro-histories. In other words, meaning, orientation, and intentionality are not just commodities that circulate but are constitutive of the networks themselves (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994). Within and through networks, actors carve out spaces to dwell, itineraries, and everyday routines, drawing from religious symbols and tropes to reflect on and orient their own praxis and to "sacralize" nature and build environments.

Networks also embody and produce moral geographies, "maps of piety and [religious] behavior" (DeRogatis 2003: 5). As an illustration, let us go back to the example of Brazilians in Pompano Beach, Florida. Since they lack the established immigrant organizations available in Miami and face a de-centered exurban space of sprawling shopping malls and gated communities connected

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[4] This is what Bourdieu calls habitus: "systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to obtain them" (1990: 53).

only by busy thoroughfares, these immigrants carve out defensive spaces anchored in the domestic sphere. More specifically, they map out their homes in South Florida as "slices of Brazil abroad" [*pedaços do Brasil na distância*] through the prominent display of Brazilians flags and other symbols of the homeland. Alternatively, they sacralize their domestic spaces, turning them into "bits of heaven" [*pedaços do céu*], marked by homemade altars to their patron saints. As part of this sacralization, Brazilians set their homes, as realms of peace, safety, and intimacy, against the evil space of the street, which is construed as dangerous, cruel, and impersonal. For Brazilian Pentecostals, this moral map built on good-evil and purity-danger axes, dovetails with a Manichean cosmos that opposes those who have been baptized in the Spirit (the church) to the temptation-filled outside world.

Central to the Brazilians' sacralization of home is the weaving of interpersonal networks with relatives and friends from the same village in Brazil. These networks, which are often imbued with intimacy, trust, emotional attachment, and meaning render the sacred domestic space mobile and transportable, stretching it over the hostile and baffling exurban environment. This explains why many of our informants told us that their churches are like their "home away from home," both in Florida and Brazil, or like "my mother's house, where I feel accepted and safe." However, this process of sacralization and extension of the domestic space is inflected by power and conflict, since Brazilian immigrants are often forced to live in crowded apartments where "no one knows each other" and "everybody works all the time." In situations like these, the "home" in Florida becomes a space of alienation and mistrust, the antithesis of the remembered home in Brazil. Moreover, narratives of home among Brazilian women in the immigrant networks are often different from those among Brazilian men, stressing the never-ending, unrecognized struggles to keep the family fed and healthy rather than celebrating the warmth of the domestic space.

We should, therefore, not assume that intimacy, trust, and emotional attachment are automatic ingredients of all networks. Sometimes constraints, proximity, or lack of resources compel people to enter into networks on the basis of competition or antipathy. This is often the case for evangelical Protestant churches in their missionary work among immigrants. Immigrants may circulate among various churches despite strong attempts by pastors to disqualify each other as not upholding a sufficiently orthodox message.

Still, even in the midst of conflict, the Brazilian example demonstrates that narratives, meaning, emotion, and morality are constitutive of the religious networks immigrants build. This is precisely where the non-reductive materialist study of mobile religion can benefit from the insights of thinkers

working in the hermeneutic tradition, such as Paul Ricoeur (1984).[5] As immigrants move and encounter obstacles across the networks, they "emplot" their experiences drawing from narratives of exile, conversion, spiritual pilgrimage and renewal, homecoming, or the coming of reign of god. These narratives often provide the motivation to migrate, as well as the cognitive and affective frames to render movement and settlement meaningful. As one Brazilian Catholic told our research team: "[When I came to this country,] I did not have anyone to rely on: my childhood friends, my family, or the certainty [*segurança*] of being in my own country. Well, I thought, now I can only rely on God. I have to hold on to him to be able to keep going. And so once I saw myself alone in an ocean, shipwrecked, and He was my only life raft."

Given the inter-subjective meaning inherent in religious networks, they can generate "counter-publics" (Fraser 1997: 81), alternative spaces of sociability in tension with the normalizing power of the state. Often these spaces nurture discourses and practices that contest dominant secular readings of civil society and citizenship. For instance, religious movements such as Charismatic Christianity, the Islamic revival in the so-called Third World, and among immigrant communities in Europe and the U.S. can be partially understood as transnational "popular publics," an "intentionally organized relational context in which a specific network of people from popular classes seek to bridge to other networks, form coalitions, and expand the influence of its discourses" (Smilde 2004: 181). In the case of the Islamic revival movement, the new popular publics challenge not only taken-for-granted constructions of masculinity and femininity, but also the stress on unencumbered individualism as well as the private-public split at the heart of Western bourgeois civil society. As with any social reality, these publics are "not liminal 'free spaces' but structured relational contexts in which new articulations of structure can occur" (Smilde 2004: 181).

Overall, these examples show how, for all their pitfalls and contradictions, the hermeneutic-phenomenological concern for meaning, emotion, experience, and intentionality, if properly historicized and materialized, can enhance the study of mobile religion through a networks approach. Properly embodied and emplaced hermeneutic and phenomenological approaches can critique and supplement positivist and reductive tendencies in network analysis (Csordas 2007). More specifically, work focusing on the lived, performative, and material aspects of religion, as opposed to a mere focus on belief and interpretation, can enrich debates about the nature of ethnography, locality, and

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[5] I thank James Cochrane for this valuable insight.

identity in transnational settings, cross-fertilizing with the growing literature on the anthropology of flows, space, travel, tourism, pilgrimage, and diaspora (Clifford 1997; Eade and Sallnow 2000; Low and Lawrence-Zuñiga 2003; Marcus 1998; Meyer and Geschiere 1999.).

Studying Religion through Networks: The Agenda

To avoid fetishizing the concept of networks, we need to specify the morphologies that religious networks adopt. How are the conduits configured? Are these conduits gendered? Is access to them mediated by variables like class, race, ethnicity, time of arrival, and status? More generally, who are the key actors involved in the transnational, global, and diasporic religious networks? Is it religious elites, missionaries, itinerant pastors, pilgrims, and/or religious tourists? In what spatio-temporal scales do they operate? By what specific mechanisms? Informal exchanges or formalized chains? What kind of media are involved (from familial/kinship ties to electronic media)? What is flowing? Is it commodities, gifts, texts, relics, saints, theodicies, (video) taped sermons, money, bodies, etc?

To tackle these questions, it may be helpful to borrow from commodity chains analysis, which maps the circulation of cultural artifacts across space and time, taking into account the contexts of production and consumption (Appadurai 1986; Haugerud et al. 2000; Hughes and Reimer 2004). For example, if we are investigating the circulation of religious elites, such as Buddhist monks or Christian missionaries, we might study the locales and institutions in which they are trained, invested with legitimate authority as they incorporate a particular orthodox habitus. We might also study how religious elites adapt doctrines and ritual practices to particular localities and how locals creatively appropriate the teachings, opening the way for heresies and other forms of religious innovation. We can then trace how these recreated teachings are fed back to the "core" areas of religious training. A similar commodity chain analysis can be undertaken for other religious phenomena as diverse as conversions, glossolalia, missions, textual canons, myths and narratives of origin, dietary and sexual taboos, initiation rites, and notions of community and schools of law (for example, *umma* and schools of *shari'a* in Islam). In this way, we can explore the interplay between "text" and "context" or "doctrine" and "belief," on the one hand, and practice, material culture, and political economy on the other.

Since networks mark both inclusion and exclusion, flows and closures, we can use the analysis of chains of religious goods to find the points at which

power is applied and resisted, to identify "zones of awkward engagement" (Tsing 2005: xi), sites in which religion is a key factor in the negotiation of difference and diversity. In other words, the question is who has access to sanctioned religious goods? Who is denied this access? How does this differential access interact with other power dynamics based, for example, on class, race, ethnicity, and nationality?

In addition to the synchronic study of networks, we need to develop historically rich genealogical studies of the development of particular linkages. At a more abstract level, we need to ask how religious networks come to be constituted and rooted in a particular space and time. How do different kinds of ties come together to form transnational social fields? Here we should not assume that the development of networks is necessarily a linear process, moving smoothly to increasing complexity and interconnection. There might be periods of disjuncture where the morphology, density, intensity, and content of religious networks can shift radically in response to events ranging from natural disasters and the introduction of religious innovation to changes in migration regimes and conflicts in the articulation of collective (ethnic, national, imperial, and regional) identities. In reconstructing the genealogy of various networks, we need to ask how global, transnational, and diasporic religious linkages which are salient today compare to and contrast with age-old extensive mercantile (both overland and maritime), pilgrimage, missionary, military, and scholarship circuits such as the Silk Road, the Atlantic Slave Trade, the Spice Routes, and the Inca trail system (Hourani 1951; Ray 1994; Risso 1995; Foltz 1999; Klein 1999). For example, the Iranian Revolution of 1978-79 depended on the mobilization of pre-existing Shiite "mosque networks," which involved

> time-honored practices such as training, communication, financial donations, and pilgrimage, including ritualized formulas for the expression of respect, condolence, congratulation, and other routinized interactions. The structure of the network was expressed in hierarchies of master-pupil relationships, formalized through the granting of *ijazat* (licenses), the collection and distribution of *zakat* (religious taxes), and the recognition of *maraji'-i taqlid*, the handful of religious scholars deemed by laypersons and others scholars to be 'sources of imitation' (Kurzman 2005: 70-71).

One of the distinctive aspects of contemporary mobile religion is its relation to the restructured but still binding modern nation-state. Although it has been relativized by globalization processes, the state still plays a central role in the way networks are nucleated, deploying a whole host of legal, social scientific, ideological, bureaucratic, military, and geographic apparatuses to project itself globally and to extract surplus from transnational migrants. For instance,

Aihwa Ong argues that Cambodian immigrants to the United States are con-
stituted into "self-motivated, self-reliant, and entrepreneurial citizen-subjects"
through "technologies of governmentality" which rely on "a network of wel-
fare offices, vocational training schools, hospitals, and the workplace" (2003: 9).
These technologies aim to override traditional Buddhist ethics and produce
autonomous, individualistic, and disciplined yet flexible "entrepreneurs of the
self," entirely compatible with neo-liberal capitalism. A parallel dynamic may
be at work in some of the discourses of global neo-Pentecostalism which
appear to legitimate U.S. hegemony by imagining the world as the arena
where a cosmic struggle between Jesus and the devil is taking place and by
celebrating a strongly individualistic prosperity gospel in line with the Ameri-
can Dream. In the meantime, the U.S. economy is more and more dependent
on the cheap labor of undocumented workers who, in the post-9/11 nativist
climate, have become criminalized (Glick-Schiller 2005). This is, in other
words, the obverse side of networks as "popular publics."

Religiously inflected networks today are also different from those in the past
in terms of the media used to establish connectivity. For instance, the vitality
and ubiquity of the Hindutva movement is due in large part to the activities
of successful Indian entrepreneurs, doctors, software engineers, journalists
turned free-lance scholars in diaspora, who have the resources and techno-
logical competence to spread their message through the Internet. They are able
to combine racial and religious primordialism, that is, the recovery of an
imagined ancestral land and a unified people with a glorious myth of origins,
with hypermodernist, deterritorialized, and de-centered cyber-spaces. Another
example of how today's media shapes networks in distinctive ways is the recent
massive demonstrations against the draconian immigration reforms proposed
by the U.S. House of Representatives. More than half-a-million marchers
appeared to materialize out of thin air in Los Angeles, while other impressive
demonstrations took place in cities as diverse as Chicago, Omaha, Phoenix,
Dallas, Atlanta, Salt Lake City, and New York. At the heart of these mobiliza-
tions were diffuse networks of grassroots immigrant advocacy groups, includ-
ing Catholic and Evangelical Protestant churches, which worked closely
Spanish-language radio hosts and TV news anchors. In between playing
salsa, reggaetón, or popular *telenovelas*, these media personalities encouraged
their listeners and viewers to turn up for the various public demonstrations,
instructing people to carry the U.S. flag and those of their nations of origin
in order to mark their multiple belonging (Flaccus 2006). Instead of the
Internet, which is not readily accessible to Latino immigrants, many of whom
are undocumented, a rapidly expanding Latino cultural industry provided the
media to articulate and mobilize local and national networks and to mark the

simultaneous embeddedness that is the hallmark of transnationalism. The size and organization of the protests surprised the mainstream media and English-speaking public because they have not been paying attention to the growth of this Latino cultural industry, which includes a mixture of entertainment, business, community service, and religion (since many of the local radio stations are owned by Evangelical churches). The examples of Hindutva and Latino protests show that, when studying networks today, we need to be sensitive to the differential access and use of media. We will have to be attentive to issues like the digital divide, which is conditioned by factors such as class, gender, race, and immigrant status.

The production, circulation, and consumption of religious goods have always interacted with the dynamics of "profane" economies. For instance, historian Peter Brown shows how the dissemination of relics in late antiquity and early medieval Christianity, including the physical remnants of saints, offered a way to relocalize the sacred, that is, to make it present in everyday life at the margins of the Christian world. Simultaneously, the movement of relics contributed to the rise of a politically and religiously powerful class of "impresarios" operating through "intricate systems of patronage, alliance and gift-giving that linked the lay and the clerical elites of East and West in the late Roman Empire" (Brown 1981: 89-90). The transfer of relics from one community to another became part of "a network of 'interpersonal acts,' that carried the full overtones of late-Roman relationships of generosity, dependence, and solidarity … [coming] to link the Atlantic coast [of Europe] to the Holy Land; and, in so doing, these 'interpersonal acts' both facilitated and furthered heightened the drive to transmute distance from the holy into the deep joy of proximity" (1981: 90).

In the wake of a global neo-liberal capitalism driven by the instantaneous production, circulation, and consumption of cultural goods, the imbrication of "sacred" and "profane" has intensified to such an extent that it is blurring the boundaries separating religion and economics. As Madonna's use of Kabala and Yoga in her music videos illustrates, religious symbols and practices are increasingly detached from their local contexts of production and incorporated into profane global networks driven by the cash nexus (Kalra and Hutnyk 1998). Conversely, David Chidester persuasively argues that globalization charges consumer products like Coca-Cola, McDonald's and Tupperware with transcendence, omnipotence and omnipresence. "In the production and consumption of popular culture, even ordinary objects can be transformed into icons, extraordinary magnets of meaning with a religious cast. In conjunction with these objects of popular culture, the term religion seems appropriate because it signals a certain quality of attention, desire, and even reverence for

sacred materiality" (Chidester 2005: 34). Moreover, neoliberal capitalism itself is often sacralized, presented as a this-worldly eschatology in which endless consumption is the mark of grace (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001). A networks approach to religion can help us track these kinds of transmutations, which Marx (1978: 319-329) described so presciently as "fetishism of commodities" in *Capital*, allowing us to identify the specific processes, actors, and contexts that make the sacred and profane convertible to each other.

One last aspect that is unique to the concept of networks in relation to spatial and hydraulic tropes is the linkage between socio-cultural processes, ecological systems, neuroscience, and cognitive psychology. The concept of networks links emplacement with embodiment, since the neural infrastructures of cognition enable and constrain the production and experience of religious ideas, emotions, practices, and identities in complex interaction with various social and natural environments. Work on religion, ecology, cognitive science is in its infancy. There is promising research identifying cross-cultural patterns in ritual action, belief fixation, conversion, memory, and religious transmission, as well as seeking to answer the question of the origin of religion (Boyer 2001; Pyysiainen 2001; Whitehouse 2004; Barrett 2004; Dennett 2006). Suspicious of social constructionism, this cognitivist-evolutionist research program still has not yielded models flexible enough to deal with variation, creativity, innovation, and fluidity, all of which are hallmarks of mobile religions. For example, there is evidence that the kind of religion that enters hyper-accelerated global, transnational, and diasporic networks with the greatest ease shares many features with what anthropologist Harvey Whitehouse calls an "imagistic mode of religiosity," including a stress on high levels of arousal, iconicity, multivocality, and episodic memories (2004: 70-74). This is made clear in the recent controversy around the cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed published by a Danish newspaper. Failing to hold the Danish government accountable at the local level, leaders of the Muslim Danish community circulated the cartoons across their networks, skillfully using a combination of face-to-face lobbying and cell phone and Internet messaging. Eventually, the caricatures achieved extensive publicity in the Middle East, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, and the Philippines. The "memorable" images generated emotionally charged waves of intense social cohesion among aggrieved Muslims across the globe. In turn, the Muslim reaction entered the global networks anchored in the West in select powerful images of trampled Danish flags, burning consulates, and violence against Christians. Note here that imagistic transmission stands in complex interaction with a "doctrinal mode" of religiosity, as many Arab governments are using the controversy to blunt the challenge of growing Islamic rectificationist movements by showing

that they are defending the purity of faith against the secular West. Here the tendency is to centralize, codify, and homogenize Islam.

This example shows that the cognitivist-evolutionary research program has some valuable things to teach us about mobile religion. However, the research program can tell us little about specifics of the selection of images, forms of collective action, and the situational "oscillation" between imagistic and doctrinal modes of religiosity. In this case, the choice and oscillation are conditioned by many contextual factors including the nature of Western media, the morphology of Muslim networks, orientalism as an ideology of othering, and the construction of sovereign subjectivities (with an unalienable freedom of conscience and expression) which are central to the idea of the modern secular nation state. Thus, we need a richer theory of networks and mobile religion than that offered by cognitive psychology and evolutionary biology.

Nevertheless, further work on modularity, emergent properties, and connectivity in Multiagent Systems (MAS) and Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS), in which "intelligent" networks are involved, may contribute, at a minimum, to a further materialization of religious studies (Buckley 1998; Weiss 2000). Borrowing from research on the architecture of the brain, distributed artificial intelligence, and other complex networks consisting of a large number of mutually interacting yet asynchronous individual components, we can derive probabilistic modelsto map the turbulence of mobile religions. More ambitiously, research on neuroscience may lead to a richer understanding of the non-linear interaction among networks operating at various scales, from the micro in the human brain to the macro, such as the capitalist world system.

Conclusion

In this article, I have offered some theoretical and methodological tools to study religion in motion. After heuristically defining key modalities of mobile religion, I offered a flexible, fallible, and context-sensitive analytical framework built around a strategic privileging of the concept of networks. When stripped from its functionalist and positivist tendencies and balanced with phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches that focus on vicerality, emplacement, and performativity, network analysis can be very fruitful. It contributes to a historicized and materialized perspective on religion which is attentive to the dimensions of power and resistance.

Network analysis should not be construed as the key that unlocks all the secrets of mobile religions. Postmodernism has taught us above all to be humble. We

may never be able to generate a unitary, totalizing theory of religion in motion. For instance, network analysis, even when nuanced, might not be able to shed sufficient light on the various dimensions of diasporic religions, particularly in the "work of imagination" (Appadurai 1996: 31). Network analysis may prove more helpful when dealing with transnational and global religious practices and institutions.

Perhaps what we need then is the strategic combined use of the spatial, hydraulic, and connective metaphors, privileging each cluster of tropes to highlight certain saliences in the "data" at hand. In *Crossing and Dwelling*, for example, Thomas Tweed offers a sophisticated and compelling theory of religion that combines the concepts of landscapes and flows through the tropes of routes, trajectories, itineraries, and boundaries. He sees religions as "confluences of organic-cultural flows that intensify joy and confront suffering by drawing on human and superhuman forces to make homes and cross boundaries" (Tweed 2006: 54). Although Tweed often mentions networks, he believes that flow is "a better metaphor than network for cultural analysis" (2006: 210). For him, networks are derivative traces or relatively stable reifications of motion. "To say that religions are organic-cultural flows, then, is to suggest they are confluences of organic channels and cultural currents that conjoin to create institutional networks that, in turn, prescribe, transmit, and transform tropes, beliefs, values, emotions, artifacts, and rituals" (69). Thus, because Tweed sees networks as a second moment in the process of religious creativity, he runs the danger of totally disembedding religious flows, presenting them as it they had no source, direction, points of relay, actors, or targets until they become institutionalized.

In placing networks front and center and exploring more systematically their analytical potential, my aim here has been to offer a different, possibly complementary, angle to the study of religion in motion. I have focused on networks as a way to underline the fact that religion in motion entails the activity of specific individuals and groups which are located in and connected through shifting but binding differentials of power. Although networks are deterritorializing—deeply implicated in globalization's time-space compression and distanciation—they are always territorialized and prone to hierarchization. In this sense, networks are completely compatible with the spatial metaphors that are emerging in the study of religion, since it is the configuration of networks that lays the contours of the landscapes we inhabit. Networks, nevertheless, go beyond the locating of religion at particular nodes, which is the strength of spatial tropes. They allow for multi-scalar relationality, movement, and connectivity without falling into the radical anti-structuralism implicit in flow metaphors.

Tweed is aware of the limits of his "hydrodynamics of religion" (2006: 172). Toward the end of *Crossing and Dwelling*, he asks: "Which flows should the interpreter follow, and if the answer is all of them, and more, then would that ever allow analysis of more than a single event, and even then only with the sense that surely we have missed some of the transverse currents that have propelled religious history?" (Tweed 2006: 173). In other words, if the world is an ever-changing sea of amorphous flows, how can we study it? And do we—as scholars interested in questions of justice—have the critical resources to uncover and challenge domination? Can chaos theory, which Tweed tentatively points to, provide sufficient tools to critique egregious and intransigent forms of power such as those that many of the immigrants I study face in their daily lives?

In a globe filled with gated communities, regulated by panoptical regimes of mobility and characterized by selective osmosis, the metaphor of networks provides a necessary corrective to the aquatic model of flows, which runs the danger of overstating the pervasiveness of porous boundaries and movement in its legitimate quest to avoid "essentializing religious traditions as static, isolated, and immutable substances" (Tweed 2006:60). As Shamir rightly complains, globalization has hitherto been "overtheorized in terms of social openness and undertheorized in terms of social closure" (2005: 214). My hope is that a strategically deployed networks approach can correct this imbalance. Network analysis offers both a robust social epistemology, enabling erudite "ascending analyses" of the "infinitesimal mechanisms of power" (Foucault 1980: 99), and a politically astute strategy for intervention against intransigent power asymmetries. By power here I mean not just the power to negotiate meaning, carve contested sacred geographies, and invent hybrid identities, but also power over life, over the need, means, and capacity to move. Networks can help us to account for mobile religion's flexibility, mobility, connectivity, and innovation, without ignoring how it is often implicated in the hard realities of exclusion, exploitation, and subjugation, which are also part and parcel of globalization.

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