

- Bernhard, Thomas. *Walking: A Novella*. 1971, The University of Chicago Press, 2015.
- Deleuze, Gilles. "He Stuttered." *Essays Critical and Clinical*, University of Minnesota Press, 1997, pp. 107–114.
- Kittler, Friedrich. "Der Mensch, ein betrunkenener Dorfmusikant." *Text und Wissen. Technologische und anthropologische Aspekte*, edited by Stefan Rieger and Renate Lachmann, Gunter Narr, 2003, pp. 45–72.
- Mauss, Marcel. "Techniques of the Body." *Economy and Society* vol. 2, no. 18, 1973, pp. 70–88.
- Shell, Marc. *Stutter*. Harvard University Press, 2005.

Philipp Schweighauser

13 Of Syncretisms, Foils, and Cautionary Examples: Ruth Fulton Benedict's Poetic and Ethnographic Styles

Abstract: Starting from the Comte de Buffon's loose 1753 definition of 'style' as "nothing but the order and movement one gives to one's thoughts" while insisting on the potentially violent act of inscription that the etymological origin of 'style' in Latin *stilus* points to, this essay explores major Boasian anthropologist Ruth Fulton Benedict's ethnographic and poetic styles. Focusing on her bestselling *Patterns of Culture* and her remarkable poem "Myth," I probe Benedict's politics of representation of ethnic others, which takes divergent forms depending on the author's choice of genre: while her ethnographic prose styles ethnic others as foils to Western civilization or cautionary examples in the service of cultural critique, her poetry expresses a profound desire for redemption through the syncretistic fusion of cultures that is primitivist in nature even as it qualifies the doctrine of the incommensurability of cultures that her brand of cultural relativism announces.

Keywords: Style, primitivism, syncretism, foil, cautionary example, culture, modernism, Apollonian, Dionysian, inscription, Boasian anthropology, Ruth Fulton Benedict

As the author of the bestselling *Patterns of Culture* (1934), Ruth Fulton Benedict was instrumental in popularizing cultural anthropology and in promoting the cultural relativist paradigm of her academic teacher Franz Boas.¹ But Benedict was more than a cultural anthropologist; she was also an accomplished poet who published her poems in literary magazines including *Palms*, *The Nation*, and *The Measure*. Her preferred venue of publication was *Poetry*, one of the major vehicles of the modernist movement. Benedict, who published much of her verse under the pen name Anne Singleton, shared her passion for poetry with Margaret Mead and Edward Sapir, two other major Boasian anthropologists. Together with Boas, they played a crucial role in the development of modern cultural anthropology and in making 'culture' a major keyword in the humanities and social sciences of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (see Silverman). Benedict, Mead, and Sapir form a closely knit group whose cooperation was not restricted to their scientific work. Together, they wrote a body of over one thousand poems that they exchanged and commented on. Importantly, a substantial number of these poems deals with the foreign cultures they studied in their ethnographic work. In zooming in on Benedict's verse and scientific prose, this essay tackles questions

that are relevant to all three anthropologist-poets: why does she write poetry and what are the stylistic, epistemological, and ethical convergences and differences between her poetic and her ethnographic negotiations of other cultures?

The most significant divergence between Benedict's anthropological poems and her ethnographic scholarship concerns her negotiation of the relations between different cultures. Anthropological poems like "Myth" (1949) and "In Parables" (1926) are syncretistic in that they give expression to a profound desire for the fusion of cultures. By way of contrast, in ethnographic treatises such as *Patterns of Culture*, Benedict stresses each culture's wholeness and difference, subscribing to a strong version of cultural relativism that proclaims cultures incommensurable. Starting from Georges-Louis Leclerc, the Comte de Buffon's broad 1753 definition of 'style' as "nothing but the order and movement one gives to one's thoughts" (Leclerc 5, my translation),² my comparative readings of a small sample of Benedict's texts show that this basic difference is inscribed in the specifics of her poetic and ethnographic styles.

In Benedict's ethnographic texts, claims for incommensurability do not amount to a complete disassociation of cultures. Early essays of hers such as "The Vision in Plains Culture" (1922) still firmly adhere to Boas' diffusionary paradigm, which calls for studies of the origin and cross-cultural dissemination of cultural traits by "painstaking attempts at reconstruction of historical connections based on studies of distribution of special features" (Boas xix). Even in *Patterns of Culture*, we find traces of the diffusionism Boas himself would abandon in his later work: "The extent of the primitive areas over which traits have diffused is one of the most startling facts of anthropology" (241). But in her ethnographic prose, Benedict's variety of cultural relativism entails that if cultures are connected and compared, one culture tends to become another's *foil* or *cautionary example*.

In *Patterns of Culture*, she portrays three widely divergent cultures: the Zuñi of the U.S. Southwest, the Kwakiutl of the U.S. Pacific Northwest, and the Dobu of Papua New Guinea. Drawing on Friedrich Nietzsche's distinction, in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), between Apollonian and the Dionysian types and forces in ancient Greek art and culture (see Benedict, *Patterns* 78–79) and also C. G. Jung's appropriation of Nietzsche's binary in *Psychological Types* (see "Stocking" 298), Benedict conceives of whole cultures as "personality writ large" (Mead, "Preface" xi): "A culture, like an individual, is a more or less consistent pattern of thought and action" (Benedict, *Patterns* 46). Thus, she describes the Zuñi as a harmonious, integrated, and well-balanced Apollonian culture and the Kwakiutl as an ecstatic, megalomaniac, and intensely competitive Dionysian community.³ The Dobu do not fit Nietzsche's dichotomy but they, too, are personality writ large: a

paranoid culture driven by treacherousness, misanthropy, and morbid fears. These three cultures, Benedict argues, are radically distinct expressions of specific psychological traits:

The three cultures of Zuñi, of Dobu, and of the Kwakiutl are not merely heterogeneous assortments of acts and beliefs. They have each certain goals toward which their behaviour is directed and which their institutions further. They differ from one another not only because one trait is present here and absent there, and because another trait is found in two regions in two different forms. They differ still more because they are oriented as wholes in different directions. They are travelling along different roads in pursuit of different ends, and these ends and these means in one society cannot be judged in terms of those of another society, because essentially they are incommensurable. (*Patterns* 223)

All cultural relativists emphasize the diversity of cultures and maintain that they must be studied on their own terms, through analyses of their own social structures, norms, and values rather than by imposing the external, supposedly universal standards of Western culture. Since the rise to prominence of the Boasians in the 1920s and their (all too often inconsistent) displacement of the original evolutionary paradigm promoted by, among others, E. B. Tyler, Lewis Henry Morgan, and James George Frazer (see Silverman), this has become common sense among cultural anthropologists. Few if any would take issue with this weak version of cultural relativism. But in Benedict's strong version, cultures are seen "as incommensurate, each particular to itself and comprehensible only in terms of itself" (Silverman 269). Thus, when Benedict does compare her three foreign cultures with each other as well as with her own, she is not looking for universal features shared by all. Instead, she conceptualizes them as opposites. The passage quoted above serves as an example of how Benedict's ethnographic style emphasizes the incommensurability of cultures through insistent reiterations of a rhetoric of wholeness ("goals," "intentions," "as wholes") and difference ("differ," "different forms," "differ," "different directions," "different roads," "different", and "incommensurable").

This style of cross-cultural comparison is integral to the structure of *Patterns of Culture*: the Zuñi of chapter 4 and the Kwakiutl of chapter 6 are not only presented as radically distinct but as polar opposites: "The Dionysian slant of Northwest Coast tribes is as violent in their economic life and their warfare and mourning as it is in their initiations and ceremonial dances. They are at the opposite pole from the Apollonian Pueblos, and in this they resemble most other aborigines of North America" (Benedict, *Patterns* 181–82). Importantly, this opposition is not presented as a mere synchronic fact but as the result of a cultural achievement on the part of the Zuñi:

It is not possible to understand Pueblo attitudes toward life without some knowledge of the culture from which they have detached themselves: that of the rest of North America. It is by the force of the contrast that we can calculate the strength of their opposite drive and the resistances that have kept out of the Pueblos the most characteristic traits of the American aborigines. For the American Indians as a whole, and including those of Mexico, were passionately Dionysian. (80)

Of course, this presentation of two types of culture owes much to Benedict's dichotomous Nietzschean framework, which her ethnographic style again highlights through a prominent rhetoric of wholeness ("the American Indians as a whole") and difference ("detached," "the rest of North America," "contrast" "opposite drive," "kept out"). But it is also fueled by a desire that jars with our cultural relativists' public assertions of the equality of cultures. As is the case with all dichotomies, this one involves a hierarchy in which the Kwakiutl function as the foil against which the Zuñi shine all the more brightly. It is to their benefit that the Zuñi have detached themselves from other Native American cultures; it is them who manage to steer clear of Dionysian excesses: "The Zuñi are a ceremonious people, a people who value sobriety and inoffensiveness above all other virtues. Their interest is centered upon their rich and complex ceremonial life" (Benedict, *Patterns* 59). There is, then, a strongly evaluative dimension to Benedict's ethnographic style.

Cultures also function as each other's foils when Benedict compares Zuñi culture with her own. It is here that she most visibly gives expression to her longing for a simpler, more authentic and, above all, more harmonious and balanced way of life. Benedict's primitivism is all the more striking because she explicitly dissociates herself from it:

Nor does the reason for using primitive societies for the discussion of social forms have necessary connection with a romantic return to the primitive. It is put forward in no spirit of poeticizing the simpler peoples. There are many ways in which the culture of one or another people appeals to us strongly in this era of heterogeneous standards and confused mechanical bustle. But it is not in a return to ideals preserved for by primitive peoples that our society will heal itself of its maladies. The romantic Utopianism that reaches out toward the simpler primitive, attractive as it sometimes may be, is as often, in ethnological study, a hindrance as a help. (19–20)

Though twenty-first-century readers will immediately notice that Benedict's reference to "simpler" and "primitive peoples" to whom one may or may not wish to "return" falls prey to the very practice she disavows, passages such as this one do testify to her awareness of the impasses of primitivist yearning. What clearly comes to the fore here is that *Patterns of Culture* is primarily addressed to a lay audience: Benedict's ethnographic style assumes a distinctly popular

and didactic tone as she validates her readers' desire for a simpler life in complex times, acknowledging that her book may well cater to that desire while disassociating herself from it, for two reasons: because the cure for modern ills cannot be found in a return to the primitive and because primitivist yearning is incompatible with the ethnographer's scientific ethos. Yet even here, Benedict's distancing is qualified. While the stress is on "hindrance" in the final sentence of this passage, she also suggests that, sometimes, primitivism may come to the ethnographer's aid; it is "as often" the one as the other. Thus, it comes as little surprise that Benedict freely indulges in primitivist discourse elsewhere. She does this, for instance, when writing about the Zuñi later in *Patterns of Culture*. Here, she emphasizes their "romantic history," nostalgically looking back to "the golden age of the Pueblos" which produced "the greatest Indian cities north of Mexico" whose traces are still visible in "some of the most romantic habitations of mankind" (57–58).

Unlike Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilisation* (1928), which wears its primitivism and didactic intent on its sleeve (or, rather, in its subtitle), *Patterns of Culture* does not suggest that the Western world of "heterogeneous standards and confused mechanical bustle" seek its remedy in the structures and practices of premodern societies. But like her younger colleague, Benedict uses her representations of other cultures to throw the dysfunctionality of her own into relief:

[The Zuñi] do not picture the universe, as we do, as a conflict of good and evil. They are not dualistic. ... It is difficult for us to lay aside our picture of the universe as a struggle between good and evil and see it as the Pueblos see it. They do not see the seasons, nor man's life, as a race run by life and death. Life is always present, death is always present. Death is no denial of life. The seasons unroll themselves before us, and man's life also. Their attitude involves "no resignation, no subordination of desire to a stronger force, but the sense of man's oneness with the universe." (127–28)⁴

Compared to Mead's, Benedict's cultural critique is subdued. Employing one of the two major modes of her ethnographic style, Benedict uses the other culture as a *foil*, inviting her Western readers to denaturalize fundamental traits of their own. The image of Zuñi culture that emerges in this passage and throughout *Patterns of Culture* is that of a harmonious, unified community free of the divisive power of dichotomous thinking. Benedict here taps into a well-established discourse on mythical thought to which some of the most prominent voices in the scientific community of the early twentieth century—among them Sigmund Freud, Jean Piaget, and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl—made substantial contributions. Ernst Cassirer sums up one of the central claims made within that discursive

field when he writes, in the second volume of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (1925), that “a mere glance at the facts of mythical consciousness shows that it knows nothing of certain distinctions which seem absolutely necessary to empirical-scientific thinking. Above all, it lacks any fixed dividing line between mere ‘representation’ and ‘real’ perception, between wish and fulfillment, between image and thing” (36). For both Cassirer and Benedict, the absence of dualisms from mythical thought correlates with its immediacy, both of which Cassirer explains as an effect of one of its most fundamental qualities: “[I]f we examine myth itself, what it is and what it *knows* itself to be, we see that this separation of the ideal from the real, this distinction between a world of immediate reality and a world of mediate signification, this opposition of ‘image’ and ‘object,’ is alien to it” (38, my emphasis). But there is a significant difference. For Cassirer, the ‘primitive’ mind’s negation of the difference between objects and their representation—its conviction that the totem *is* the animal, that the dead ancestor *is* present in ritual—marks mythical thought as deficient compared to the empirical-scientific thinking that predominates in the West. For Benedict, immediacy and non-dualistic thought are what is most sorely missing from her own culture’s episteme. In studying Zuñi culture, Benedict is looking for what is lacking in her own.

The second style of cross-cultural comparison shapes Benedict’s discussion of the Kwakiutl of the Pacific Northwest. Unlike the Zuñi, the Kwakiutl are not presented as Western culture’s foil but as its aggravated version. In the second major mode of her ethnographic style, the other culture serves not as a foil but as a *cautionary example*. Benedict devotes most attention to Kwakiutl culture’s intense competitiveness—which structures all of social life, including religion and the relations between the sexes—and ostentatious displays of wealth, which manifest themselves most prominently in potlatches. Though Benedict does at one point admit that “we can see in Kwakiutl society and in the rugged individualism of American pioneer life” that “the pursuit of victory can give vigor and zest to human existence” (*Patterns* 248), she zooms in on the deleterious effects of ambition: “The manipulation of wealth on the Northwest Coast is clearly enough in many ways a parody of our own economic arrangements. These tribes did not use wealth to get for themselves an equivalent value in economic goods, but as counters of fixed value in a game they played to win” (188–89). Benedict uses ‘parody’ in the extended sense of ‘travesty’ here, but later passages make clear that she does not consider Kwakiutl competitiveness and its social and psychological costs (conspicuous waste, self-aggrandizing, and intense distrust of others among them) as aberrations from American normalcy:

The segment of human behaviour which the Northwest Coast has marked out to institutionalize in its culture is one which is recognized as abnormal in our civilization, and yet it is sufficiently close to the attitudes of our own culture to be intelligible to us and we have a definite vocabulary with which we may discuss it. The megalomaniac paranoid trend is a definite danger in our society. It faces us with a choice of possible attitudes. One is to brand it as abnormal and reprehensible, and it is the attitude we have chosen in our civilization. The other extreme is to make it the essential attribute of ideal man, and this is the solution in the culture of the Northwest Coast. (222)

At this point in her argument, Benedict suggests that U.S. culture too harbors Dionysian energies but for the greatest part manages to rein them in. It is not ‘here’ but ‘there’—in Kwakiutl practices such as ecstatic ritual dancing, potlatches, and cannibalism—that these energies unfold their most destructive potential. However, when, on the last pages of *Patterns of Culture*, she elaborates on the lessons Western readers should draw from her presentation of three foreign cultures, there is a marked shift in tone. Much of Benedict’s final chapter, “The Individual and Culture,” is dedicated to a discussion of those humans who deviate from their culture’s norms. Zooming in on U.S. culture, she mentions ‘hoboes,’ homosexuals, and mystics, calling for tolerance, recognition of their social usefulness, and for a denaturalization of culturally conditioned ideas of normalcy. Next, Benedict turns to further, less widely recognized forms of aberrancy that she considers either pathogenic or outright pathological: the excessive conformity of “Middletown” (the shorthand of intellectuals of Benedict’s time for what they perceived as the narrow-mindedness and shallowness of American small-town life), the inferiority complexes of those who do not manage to live up to societal expectations, and, finally, “the abnormals who represent the extreme development of the local cultural type” (276). It is in her discussion of this last group that Benedict’s cultural critique turns sharpest:

This group is socially in the opposite situation from the group we have discussed, those whose responses are at variance with their cultural standards. Society, instead of exposing the former group at every point, supports them in their furthest aberrations. ... In our own generation extreme forms of ego-gratification are culturally supported in a similar fashion. Arrogant and unbridled egoists as family men, as officers of the law and in business, have been again and again portrayed by novelists and dramatists, and they are familiar in every community. Like the behaviour of Puritan divines, their courses of action are often more asocial than those of the inmates of penitentiaries. In terms of the suffering and frustration that they spread about them there is probably no comparison. There is very possibly at least as great a degree of mental warping. Yet they are entrusted with positions of great influence and importance and are as a rule fathers of families. Their impress both upon their own children and upon the structure of our

society is indelible. They are not described in our manuals of psychiatry because they are supported by every tenet of our civilization. (276–77)

It is here, in this feminist critique, that Benedict comes closest to what F. H. Matthews describes as the Boasians' use of "anthropology as a weapon in the attack upon 'Americanism'" (Matthews 17). This becomes possible through a curious shift of argument: fifty pages earlier, Benedict claimed that her "civilization" branded as "abnormal and reprehensible" types of behavior she now considers "supported by every tenet of our civilization." In the first instance, the Kwakiutl way of life still functions as a latent threat in Benedict's own culture. By the closing of the book, the Dionysian energies they embody have permeated the American body politic. The cautionary example receives a new interpretation: it is no longer a latent threat but a manifest pathology.⁵ Benedict glosses over this inconsistency through a rhetorical sleight of hand: she makes the Kwakiutl disappear in her concluding dissection of social and psychological American pathologies. As foils and cautionary examples, the Zuñi and the Kwakiutl serve Benedict as grounds upon which she stages a critique of her own culture. Comparisons in general and these specific uses of foreign cultures in particular are integral to her ethnographic style, which uses a rhetoric of wholeness and difference, evaluates the relative merits of each culture, employs a popular and didactic tone, and uses other cultures as foils or cautionary examples as she puts cross-cultural comparison in the service of cultural critique.

In her poetry, the self and the other meet in distinctly different ways. Take "Myth" as an example. The poem remained unpublished during Benedict's lifetime but is included in *Ruth Fulton Benedict: A Memorial*, a 1949 volume edited by Alfred Kroeber, and is now most readily accessible in *An Anthropologist at Work* (1959), a collection of Benedict's writings edited by Mead. Mead includes the poem in the section "Selected Poems: 1941," explaining that "[t]he selection is one she [Benedict] herself made in 1941, when she wrote these poems out by hand in a little hand-bound book as a present for me, and it expresses the most recent personal choice of which there is any record of what she liked best" (Benedict, *Anthropologist* 563).

Myth

A god with tall crow feathers in his hair,
Long-limbed and bronzed, from going down of sun,
Dances all night upon his dancing floor,
Tight at his breast, our sorrows, one by one.
Relinquished stalks we could not keep till bloom,
And thorns unblossomed but of our own blood,
He gathers where we dropped them, filling full

His arms' wide circuit, briars and sterile shrub.
And all alone he dances, hour on hour,
Till all our dreams have blooming, and our sleep
Is odorous of gardens,—passing sweet
Beyond all, wearily, we till and reap.

In view of the fact that these lines were penned by an anthropologist, a number of questions immediately impose themselves. What desire does the poem express and how does that desire manifest itself in its dichotomy of sterility and vitality? What are the epistemological and ethical ramifications of Benedict's combination of Western and non-Western cultural elements? And, most importantly for this essay's concerns, how does the style of her literary evocation of an ethnic other differ from her ethnographic style of presentation? As we ponder this last question, we find that other cultures serve very different purposes in Benedict's two genres.

It is difficult to pin down with precision the cultural provenance of the poem's dancing god. But we can be fairly certain that it is set in a Southwest Native American community, where Benedict did most of her scant fieldwork (see "Stocking" 296; Young 65). Quite possibly, given Benedict's admiration for 'Apollonian' Pueblo cultures and the poem's promise of fertility (its evocation of "odorous gardens," of blooming, tilling, and reaping), the actions she portrays are part of the Zuñi rain dance, which she describes in her unpublished, undated paper "They Dance for Rain in Zuñi" (*Anthropologist* 222–25) as well as in *Patterns of Culture* (see 92–93). In that case, the dancing god would be a "masked god" or *kachina*, i.e., a spirit being that may represent any number of entities in the cosmos or natural world and is impersonated by masked dancers wearing feathers in a variety of communal rituals, including rain dances (see Benedict, *Patterns* 67–71).

What is most remarkable about the poem is that it approaches its anthropological content with images culled from both the portrayed culture and the Judeo-Christian tradition. For Benedict's European and American readers, combining "thorns" and "our own blood" in a single line (and the thorny "briars" in the same stanza) will immediately evoke the crucifixion and Christ's redemption of humanity through his "own blood" (Acts 20:28; Heb. 9:12, 13:12; Rev. 1:5). Thus, while the "sorrows" of the poetic speaker and her community remain unspecified, Benedict's Christian imagery opens the poem up to an interpretation that locates that source at a level deeper and more concrete than a general disaffection with urban, industrial modernity. Such a 'Christian' reading of "Myth" finds further evidence in the poem's evocation of the scent of "gardens"—a cultural space associated with the Christian idea of paradise rather than Native American

mythologies or the Southwestern imaginary. The promise invoked by this scent is a redemptive return to innocence before the fall, that ultimate source of all “our sorrows.” Thus, mythemes from two different cultures are amalgamated in the actions of the dancing god. It is in his arms that the blocked, “unblossomed” energies of the poetic speaker’s own culture are released.

In contrast to her ethnographic work, the other culture does not serve Benedict as a foil or cautionary tale here but as an imaginary space in which a redemptive fusion of the self and the other becomes possible, a space where Christian and indigenous iconographies merge. As two myths become “Myth,” Western culture blooms again, is healed. *Patterns of Culture* and “Myth” employ different methods to different ends: in the ethnographic style of *Patterns of Culture*, two modes of cross-cultural comparison (the foil, the cautionary tale) are inscribed by a rhetoric of wholeness and difference that serves cultural critique. In “Myth,” cultures are fused rather than compared. In contrast to her ethnographic style, Benedict’s poetic style operates with flattened hierarchies and restrained value judgments, considers wholeness less an attribute of individual cultures than a desirable effect of the fusion of cultures, and is characterized by a syncretism that gives expression to a desire for cultural rejuvenation. Benedict’s ethnographic and poetic styles employ different forms to perform different functions: *critical* and *therapeutic*.

What Benedict’s two styles share though beyond all differences is that they employ the ethnic other in the service of the self. Though Benedict does participate in the discourses of salvage ethnography, seeking to preserve traces of cultures deemed on the verge of extinction,⁶ what appears most sorely in need of redemption in both her poetry and ethnographic work is her own culture. She shares this concern with her fellow Boasian Mead, though Benedict’s calls for therapy and critique are much less pronounced than her younger and more famous colleague’s, who concludes *Coming of Age in Samoa* with two overtly didactic chapters, “Our Educational Problems in the Light of Samoan Contrasts” and “Education for Choice.” Benedict’s primitivist rhetoric is also more subdued, but when we read about the “[l]ong-limbed and bronzed” god dancing as the sun goes down, we are not mistaken in seeing the same desire at work that fuels both Mead’s mourning of the “dancers” that “no longer form a goddess’ face / From the maize sheath” in her own poem “The Need that Is Left” (1927) and her evocation of trysting Samoan youths at the beginning of her important yet notoriously controversial first ethnographic study. In their poetry and ethnographic writings, Benedict and Mead remind us that, for all its genuinely progressive influence on the humanities and social sciences, Boasian cultural relativism remains tied to a primitivist style that exerts epistemological violence, reminding us of the origin

of ‘style’ in the Latin *stilus*: “a stake or pale, pointed instrument for writing, style of speaking or writing” (OED). A concluding look at the etymological source of ‘style,’ then, not only invites us to recognize the materiality of writing—the fact that ‘style’ derives from the word for a writing tool made of iron or reed that scribes from classical antiquity to early medieval Europe used to carve signs into wax tablets and, later, the margins of codices—but also to consider the extent to which inscription (with the pointed end of the stylus) and deletion (with its flat end, which is used both for smoothing the surface after inscription and for the deletion of earlier inscriptions) mean violence. As the ethnographer-poet readies the other for the use of the self, she not only preserves traces of other cultures but also leaves marks of her own.

Notes

1. This essay grows out of the Swiss National Science Foundation research project “Of Cultural, Poetic, and Medial Alterity: The Scholarship, Poetry, Photographs, and Films of Edward Sapir, Ruth Fulton Benedict, and Margaret Mead,” which I co-directed with Walter Leimgruber and Gabriele Rippl from 2014 to 2017. A. Elisabeth Reichel, one of the project members, usefully discusses Benedict’s poem “Myth” as an instance of largely non-hierarchical “palimpsestuous layerings of diverse mythologies” in “Cultural Palimpsests: Ethnic Watermarks, Surfacing Histories,” a talk given at the 10th MESEA Conference at the University of Warsaw on June 24, 2016. As will become apparent below, my own reading of the poem emphasizes its syncretic style instead and is less charitable than Reichel’s. I thank her, the whole project team, including Silvy Chakkalalal, and my assistant Ridvan Askin for their insightful feedback on an earlier version of this essay.
2. In the French original, the statement reads “Le style n’est que l’ordre et le mouvement qu’on met dans ses pensées” (Leclerc 5). Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht argues convincingly that this characterization of style as a cognitive faculty captures much better Buffon’s understanding of the notion than the much more frequently quoted “Le style est l’homme même” (Leclerc 13), which is often wrongly interpreted as giving voice to an aesthetics of expression in which style is the expression of personality (see 754–56).
3. Note that Benedict’s characterization of the Kwakiutl as highly competitive and status-driven does not sit easily with Nietzsche’s description of Dionysian forces, which in his account efface individuality and bring about a carnivalesque leveling of social hierarchies. As I write this, I can hear the drums and pipes of the Basler *Fasnacht*, my hometown’s carnival.
4. The quote in the final sentence is from Bunzel (486).
5. The psychoanalytic vocabulary is not chosen gratuitously. Benedict’s references to psychoanalysis are less extensive and less specific than Mead’s but consider her recourse to Jung’s elaboration of the Nietzschean Apollonian/Dionysian dichotomy, her extensive reflections on what a psychological or psychiatric look at cultures and cultural types

might reveal, and her co-development, with Mead, of the culture-as-personality paradigm (Stocking 298; Manganaro 152; Handler 149–50).

6. Jacob W. Gruber introduced the notion of 'salvage ethnography' into anthropological debates in "Ethnographic Salvage and the Shaping of Anthropology" (1970), where he describes the salvage imperative thus: "In the face of the inevitable and necessary changes, in the face of an almost infinite variety of man whose details were essential to a definition of man, the obligation of both scientist and humanist was clear: he must collect and preserve the information and the products of human activity and genius so rapidly being destroyed" (1293). For a classic critique of salvage ethnography's ideological impasses, see James Clifford's "On Ethnographic Allegory" (1986). See also Manganaro (160–61) for a pithy discussion of Benedict's trope of the 'broken cup' and its relation to both salvage ethnography and T. S. Eliot's modernist discourse of loss in *The Waste Land*.

References

- Benedict, Ruth Fulton. *An Anthropologist at Work: Writings of Ruth Benedict*. Edited and introduced by Margaret Mead, Houghton Mifflin, 1959.
- . "Myth." *An Anthropologist at Work: Writings of Ruth Benedict*, edited and introduced by Margaret Mead. Houghton Mifflin, 1959, p. 477.
- . *Patterns of Culture*. Houghton Mifflin, 1989.
- . "The Vision in Plains Culture." *American Anthropologist* vol. 24, no. 1, 1922, pp. 1–23.
- Boas, Franz. "Introduction." *Patterns of Culture*, edited by Ruth Fulton Benedict. Houghton Mifflin, 1989, pp. xix–xxi.
- Leclerc, Georges-Louis, Comte de Buffon. *Oeuvres complètes de Buffon, mises en ordre et précédées d'une notice historique*. Edited by M. A. Richard, Baudouin Frères, 1827.
- Bunzel, Ruth L. "Introduction to Zuñi Ceremonialism." *Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology* vol. 47, 1932, pp. 467–544.
- Cassirer, Ernst. *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Vol. 2: Mythical Thought*. Translated by Ralph Manheim, Yale University Press, 1955.
- Clifford, James. "On Ethnographic Allegory." *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, edited by James Clifford and George Marcus, University of California Press, 1986, pp. 98–121.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Totem and Taboo*. Translated by Abraham Arden Brill, Moffat, Yard, 1918.
- Gruber, Jacob W. "Ethnographic Salvage and the Shaping of Anthropology." *American Anthropologist* vol. 72, no. 6, 1970, pp. 1289–99.
- Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich. "Schwindende Stabilität der Wirklichkeit. Eine Geschichte des Stilbegriffs." *Stil: Geschichten und Funktionen eines Kulturwissenschaftlichen Diskurselements*, edited by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and K. Ludwig Pfeiffer, Suhrkamp, 1986, pp. 726–787.
- Handler, Richard. "Vigorous Male and Aspiring Female: Poetry, Personality, and Culture in Edward Sapir and Ruth Benedict." *Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict, and Others: Essays on Culture and Personality*, edited by George W. Stocking, Jr., University of Wisconsin Press, 1986, pp. 127–55.
- Kroeber, Alfred, editor. *Ruth Fulton Benedict: A Memorial*. Viking Fund, 1949.
- Lévy-Bruhl, Lucien. *Primitive Mentality*. Translated by Lilian A. Clare, Macmillan, 1923.
- Manganaro, Marc. *Culture, 1922: The Emergence of a Concept*. Princeton University Press, 2002.
- Matthews, F. H. "The Revolt Against Americanism: Cultural Pluralism and Cultural Relativism as an Ideology of Liberation." *Canadian Review of American Studies* vol. 1, no. 1, 1970, pp. 4–31.
- Mead, Margaret. "The Need that Is Left." *The Papers of Margaret Mead*. Library of Congress, March 1927, Vol. MS S9/5 vii.
- . "Preface." *Patterns of Culture*, by Ruth Fulton Benedict. Houghton Mifflin, 1989, pp. xi–xiv.
- Piaget, Jean. *Judgment and Reasoning in the Child*. Translated by Marjorie Warden, Harcourt Brace, 1928.
- Reichel, A. Elisabeth. "On the Poetry of an Early Cultural Anthropologist: Ruth Benedict's Palimpsestuous Writing." Talk, 10th MESEA Conference, Cultural Palimpsests: Ethnic Watermarks, Surfacing Histories, University of Warsaw, Poland, June 24, 2016.
- Silverman, Sydel. "The Boasians and the Invention of Cultural Anthropology." *One Discipline, Four Ways: British, German, French, and American Anthropology*, edited by André Gingrich, Fredrik Barth, Robert Parkin, and Silverman, University of Chicago Press, 2005, pp. 257–74.
- Stocking, George W., Jr. "The Ethnographic Sensibility of the 1920s and the Dualism of the Anthropological Tradition." *The Ethnographer's Magic and Other Essays in the History of Anthropology*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1992, pp. 276–341.
- Young, Virginia Heyer. "Benedict, Ruth F." *Theory in Social and Cultural Anthropology: An Encyclopedia*, edited by R. Jon McGee and Richard L. Warms, SAGE, 2013, pp. 64–68.

Jasmin Herrmann / Moritz Ingwersen /
Björn Sonnenberg-Schrank / Olga Tarapata (eds.)

**Revisiting Style
in Literary and Cultural Studies**

Interdisciplinary Articulations



PETER LANG

**Bibliographic Information published by the
Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data is available online at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A CIP catalog record for this book has been applied for at the Library of Congress.

Cover image: Stefanie Schrank, soft structure #1, 2016.
Courtesy of the Artist.

For Hanjo

Printed by CPI books GmbH, Leck

ISBN 978-3-631-78172-2 (Print)
E-ISBN 978-3-631-80701-9 (E-PDF)
E-ISBN 978-3-631-80702-6 (EPUB)
E-ISBN 978-3-631-80703-3 (MOBI)
DOI 10.3726/b16345

© Peter Lang GmbH
Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften
Berlin 2019
All rights reserved.

Peter Lang – Berlin · Bern · Bruxelles · New York · Oxford · Warszawa · Wien

All parts of this publication are protected by copyright. Any utilisation outside the strict limits of the copyright law, without the permission of the publisher, is forbidden and liable to prosecution. This applies in particular to reproductions, translations, microfilming, and storage and processing in electronic retrieval systems.

This publication has been peer reviewed.

www.peterlang.com