

TWO OR THREE THINGS THAT I KNOW ABOUT CULTURE. (Transcript)

by Marshall Sahlins

This lecture is mainly about the enduring significance of culture as an anthropological concept and the significance of its endurance among the peoples anthropologists study. It argues against the easy functionalist dismissal of the peoples' claims of cultural distinction (the so-called invention of tradition) and for the continued relevance of such distinction (the inventiveness of tradition). It also argues that the anthropological codgers such as Boas, Linton, et al., far from being guilty of all the bad things people are now saying about them, had ideas about culture that are still pertinent to the understanding of its contemporary forms and processes. But then, they had one advantage over most of us today: they had no paralysing fear of structure.

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The preamble

I thought to begin with the intellectual background to my idea of culture, which is midwestern American civilization as I knew it, and with some reflections on the different fate of the concept in Britain. Two peoples indeed divided by a common language: the transatlantic working misunderstandings of the culture concept are still about what they were nearly half a century ago when George Peter Murdock and Raymond Firth debated the issues in the pages of the *American Anthropologist*. As Murdock saw it, American cultural anthropology and British social anthropology had two different scientific objects: the first studied culture, the second social systems. And since the British neither appreciated culture nor examined its processes, Murdock (1951: 471) was moved by these 'peculiarities' to the 'startling conclusion that they are actually not anthropologists'. They were sociologists, he said, although of an old-fashioned sort, vintage 1920s, the kind not yet redeemed by a concept of culture. To see just how much things have not changed, consider the equal and opposite put-down of 'the American project of cultural anthropology' recently expressed by Adam Kuper. Informed by a 'political spirit', which Kuper (1994: 538-9) finds distinctively American and in its romantic populism akin to the 'position favoured by nationalist and also socialist writers', this cultural anthropology is 'quite distinct from the dominantly European project of social anthropology'. Indeed, in so far as American anthropology is preoccupied with the cultural construction of ethnicity and other such 'culturological talk', it is not actually a social science. The 'cultural anthropology of the neo-Boasians is a project in the humanities.' New whines in old bottles.

It is possible to conclude from several decades of disciplinary self-reflection that anthropology doesn't exist, since if it isn't sociology, it's humanities. Alternatively, it is reassuring to know that anthropologists are able to share with the peoples they study the ability to construct ethnic differences by developing epitomizing contrasts of selected cultural values. In fact, there is a long history of ethnic differentiation behind this controversy, involving also

the Germans and the French, and a complex ideological chess game in which the pieces 'culture', 'civilization' and 'society' have gone through numerous exchanges of geographic and semantic space. I cannot go into all this. (1) I pick it up as I knew it at the University of Michigan in the 1950s, where Leslie White had a certain idea of what was at stake in the going debates about 'culture' - the best idea, I still think, because it is still at stake.

The symbol is 'the origin and basis of human behavior', as White put it in the title of a well known essay (1949: 22-39). In all its dimensions, including the social and the material, human existence is symbolically constituted, which is to say, culturally ordered. That is a position I was not then, nor have ever been since, prepared to give away. White used to say that no ape could appreciate the difference between holy water and distilled water - because there isn't any, chemically. How would an ape be able to apply, let alone devise, a marriage rule that proscribes parallel cousins and enjoins unions with classificatory cross cousins? (In all fairness, current anthropology graduate students in America cannot do that either.) The culture-nature oppositions in such examples were motivated; they amounted to the proposition that the cultural co-opts the biological and includes the social. Neither did practical utilities escape White's claims for the human symbolic capacity. True that he was a confirmed technological determinist. He thought that people who have hand axes as their principal tools, hunters and gatherers, must have a correspondingly simple society and limited (true) ideas of the cosmos. On the other hand, with a characteristic flair for self-contradiction, White also insisted that such determining technology, even the hand axe, was constituted by and as ideas. An axe was a symbolic phenomenon, as much in regard to its mode of production as to its values and purposes as an object. For White, symbolicity encompassed the technological determination of the symbolic. (2)

This was not the view of Radcliffe-Brown and other structural-functionalists, or indeed most of the English-speaking world, for whom culture was rather the ideational content of the real stuff, the real stuff being 'social structure' or 'the system of social relations'. Culture

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was the local customary idiom by means of which the social system was expressed and maintained. By contrast to Whitean symbolic monism, here was a classic dualism of culture and society, involving also the devaluation of the former relative to the latter. Merely contingent or historical in relation to the systematicity of social structure, culture, as Edmund Leach put it, 'provides the form, the "dress" of the social situation' (1954: 16). The costume/custom metaphor is apt - the artifice that clothes a more fundamental reality - for it barely conceals, under this notion of 'culture', the older Anglo-French sense of 'civilization' as an overlay of polish on more basic dispositions, as of the bourgeoisie or the colonized peoples. Burdened with this history, the culture concept got into a whole lot of epistemological difficulties in Britain, even beyond its popularity in America. By comparison to the reality, substantiality and instrumentality of social structure, culture was an 'abstraction' as Radcliffe-Brown had it (1940: 2). The more so, since the notion of social structure was always secreting out pragmatic individuals whose interests and intentions, whether for the system or against it, were constituting of it. Society was where the action was, and it responded to real politics and real economics. As for the abstract culture, could you imagine two of them coming together and producing a third culture, Radcliffe-Brown asked, the way American anthropologists - and Bronislaw Malinowski - talk of 'culture contact'? 'Never was such a fluffy notion at large in a self-styled scientific universe', Mary Douglas has said of culture, 'not since singing angels blew the planets across the medieval sky or ether filled the gaps of Newton's universe' (in Weiner 1995: 18).

White's reaction to such blue-skying of an abstract culture was something like Durkheim's arguments about the social fact, something to the effect that cultural practices, ideas and objects - including social relations - are likewise realia of human experience, though they are not all substances like physical things. Neither are they abstractions:

Words are culture traits. Why call them abstractions any more than the bark of a dog or the quack of a duck . . . Polygynous households are culture traits. But why call one husband and three wives an abstraction any more than one atomic nucleus and three electrons? . . . A wild horse is not an abstraction. Why call a domestic horse (a culture trait) one? (1949: 96-7).

Such 'culture traits' were no less empirical than social forms. In fact, one of them, the polygynous household, is a social form. Polygynous families, motherhood, kingship, genders, chiefs, lineages, all such relations and statuses are symbolically constituted. So which is it, culture or society? Truly, they had real ontological cockfights in those days. And when it comes to the scholarly assessments of

contemporary indigenous claims to cultural distinction, the 'culturalism' which my lecture will be about, the basic disagreements are still at work, although again with new distributions on the international chessboard.

The lecture

All of a sudden, everyone got 'culture'. Australian Aboriginals, Inuit, Easter Islanders, Chambri, Ainu, Bushmen, Kayapo, Tibetans, Ojibway: even peoples whose ways of life were left for dead or dying a few decades ago now demand an indigenous space in a modernizing world under the banner of their 'culture'. They use that very word, or some near local equivalent. They back their claims with references to distinctive traditions and customs that typically involve invidious contrast to the money-love and other character defects of their erstwhile colonial masters. 'If we didn't have kastom', the New Guinean said to his anthropologist, 'we would be just like White Men.'(3)

Anthropologists, along with the rest of the so-called developed world, have been taken completely by surprise. They thought New Guineans and their kind would become something like White Men - or some other such misfortune. They were firm believers in what might be called despondency theory. The logical antecedent of dependency theory, despondency theory envisioned the inevitable collapse of indigenous cultures under the shattering impact of global capitalism. Demoralized and paralysed, the peoples would be left historically motionless, trapped in the aimless anomie of a cultural void. Here is one of any number of such observations:

When Rivers mournfully refers to the Melanesians as 'dying from boredom', when we hear about the native [nomads] of Siberia that they are losing their zest for life, when the American Indians, especially the men, are represented by government officials as lazy, indolent parasites devoid of all stamina and ambition, these are merely different formulae for the same fundamental fact: that life in a cultural void is no life at all for man, and this is precisely the tragic setting bestowed upon the natives by the intrusion of White man and his civilization (Goldenweiser 1937: 429-30; see also 1937: 492; Kroeber 1948: 437-8; Locke & Stern 1946: 89, 99).

Of course, this destruction has happened all too often. But the dissolution of pristine worlds has been something more than an empirical finding of Western science, even as it lingers on despite the fact that the surviving peoples are culturally taking their afflictions in hand. Kerry Howe (1977) and Nicholas Thomas (1990) point out that the forebodings of a 'fatal impact' were already present in the journals of the first European discoverers (so-called) of the Pacific

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Islands. In the form of the Rousseauian topos of tragic history, the fear and loathing of the effects of laissez-faire capitalism on authentic culture, as of anarchy on sweetness and light or the disappearance of the pleasures and idiocies of rural life, such sentimental pessimism comes from deep in the European experience. Yet nostalgia for cultures lost, Renato Rosaldo (1989) notes, particularly haunts anthropology. So pretty soon everyone will have a culture; only the anthropologists will doubt it.(4)

Too many anthropologists say that the so-called traditions the peoples are flaunting are not much more than serviceable humbuggery. They are 'invented traditions', fabricated with an eye politic to the present situation. Signs of a supposed indigeneity and antiquity, the stories actually owe their substance as well as their existence to the Western capitalist cultures they would thus defy. Some are clearly self-serving inversions of the colonizers' traditions. 'The present image of the Maori people has been invented for the purpose of enhancing the power of Maoris in New Zealand Society, and is largely composed of those Maori qualities that can be attractively contrasted with the least desirable aspects of Pakeha culture' (Hanson 1989: 879). The same for the Eskimo 'subsistence' life style or Fijian 'living in the way of the land', both contrasting with Whiteman's ways of money (e.g., Hensel 1996; Thomas 1992). Indeed, by conforming to Western romantic ideals of the primitive, the way Amazonian Indians "love of the earth" gives pleasure to the Environmental Movement, these determinations of indigenous identity amount to proxy criticisms of Western society (Babadzan 1988: 206).

Likewise, culture signs such as Hopi kachina dances, Balinese temple ceremonies or the mipela wan bilas of Anga people (we of the same body fashions), meant to be diacritics of traditional cultures, come in for a wide range of anthropological scepticism. Traffic in such discriminators is variously criticized as the 'essentialization', 'simplification', 'reification' or 'rigidification' of the culture. Amounting to a kind of self-parody, the epitomizing signs also endow the native culture with a spurious 'timelessness', 'coherence', 'unity' and 'boundedness'. We will come to this critical move again: it consists of transferring to the people's own consciousness of their culture all the defects that used to be attributed to anthropological descriptions thereof. We have seen Orientalism, and it is them. Brumann (in press) remarks on the chiasmus of anthropological theory and indigenous practice: 'If anthropologists like it or not, it appears that people - and not only those with power - want culture, and they often want it precisely in the bounded, reified, essentialized and timeless fashion that most of us do now reject'.

Still, at the same time that the peoples' identity rhetoric is deemed all too stabilizing, it is conversely all too

'negotiable' and 'manipulable'. What is called culture or tradition is strategically adaptable to the pragmatic situation, especially to the class interests of acculturated elites, even as it leaves individuals free to change their identity when it serves them. This is perhaps the main criticism of contemporary culture-talk: it is really instrumental, an ideological smokescreen of more fundamental interests, principally power and greed - practical functions, nota bene, that have the added persuasive virtues of being universal, self-explanatory and morally reprehensible.

So Roger Keesing, for example, speaking of Pacific islanders:

Culture has become a smokescreen as well as, increasingly, a myth . . . Such distinctive local traditions as the villagers once had have in many areas been bleached of deep meaning. Ritualised enactments of cultural performances - traditional dances, etc. - and invocations of culture and custom by the elite hide the bleaching process through which peasants are losing meaningful local cultural heritages (already bleached by Christianisation) and even local languages. These rhetorical valorisations of tradition disguise as well the class relationships and conflicts being played out, since they proclaim unities in terms of common culture where there are in fact growing gulfs between rich urbanites and poor villagers, between center and periphery (Keesing 1996: 164).(5)

'Culture' is becoming a myth, a fabrication, a mystification - the collective misrepresentation of someone's particular interests. Clearly, such 'invention of tradition' is a good place to talk about the Emancipatory Social Science or Cultural Critique of recent decades. I mean the rhetorical shift to morality and politics that has overtaken all the human sciences, and in particular has effected a kind of anthropological amnesia, a loss of ethnographic memories. Critique has been able to perform such magical intellectual feats as changing Malinowski's mythical charters into Hobsbawm's invented traditions without anyone even noticing they are virtually the same thing.

'By invented tradition', reads a recent work on Fiji, 'I mean the mistaken belief that current codes of conduct, whether legal or moral, have their origins in a distant past, and act as a charter for present practice' (Rutz 1987: 536n). Yet when Malinowski (1926) rehearsed the stories of Trobriand subclan origins, of how their ancestors came out of 'holes' in the landscape carrying the implements and knowledges that distinguish local village industries, no-one thought to debunk these traditions or reproach the people for fabricating them. There were even the special myths of the ruling clans, establishing their distinction as the powers-that-be. Then as now, myth was functional. Recall

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the famous passage in 'Myth in primitive psychology', where Malinowski (1992 [1926]: 101) argues that myth is no idle rhapsody or scientific explanation in disguise, but 'a hard-worked active force', a 'pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom' that conveys 'the practical rules for the guidance of man'. In the same vein, those who now unmask the historicity of invented traditions find their truth in practical and political utilities: instrumental effects that are usually hegemonic and discriminatory or sometimes the emancipatory opposite (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983). The so-called ancient traditions are ideological artifices of class differences, gender differences, capitalism, the state, nationalism, colonial control or resistance to any of the above. They generally work on the Enlightenment principle that there is no god, but don't tell the servants. Thus plus ça change, the more the functionalism remains the same, with the important caveat that the instrumental purposes attributed to Trobriand myth were regarded more indulgently than the present analytic insights into who is doing what to whom under the cover of so-called traditions. The difference is not in the nature of the functional understanding so much as in the moral-political judgements framing it. In the heyday of structural-functionalism, whatever maintained the social system as constituted was rather a good thing. The always-lurking alternative was a dissolution into Hobbesian conflict and chaos - another, older version of culture and anarchy. But now we know better. We know these power-saturated social systems for what they really are, hence that what maintains them are prejudicial means of differentiation and discrimination. The great theoretical advance of recent decades has been the improvement in the moral character of the Academy.(6)

No doubt the correlated effect of forgetting culture, as Brightman (1995) calls it, is due to the hegemonic influences on anthropology of afterological studies (postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism and the like, henceforth collectively called 'afterology').(7) Still, it is astonishing from the perspective of North American cultural anthropology to claim that our intellectual ancestors constructed a notion of cultures as rigidly bounded, separated, unchanging, coherent, uniform, totalized and systematic. Talk of inventing traditions. The historiographic principle here, as Brightman also says, consists of attributing to one's predecessors the opposite of whatever is now deemed true (Brightman 1995: 21-2; cf. Wright 1998). As scholarly technique, it does not even allow the old-time anthropologists the benefit of the polyphony of contesting voices that is supposed to destabilize the ideologies and cultures of other tribes.

In fact, many of the same debates and critiques were at large in the anthropology of sixty years ago, but they had a more scientific cast. They appeared as anodyne and

commonplace arguments of an epistemological sort over the discrepancy between cultural norms and actual practices, between the ideal and the real, between cultural patterns and individual behaviours. (This was not only happening in American anthropology: Raymond Firth was running a whole theory of the same kind under the description of 'social structure' v. 'social organization'.) Such arguments, however, have been lost in their afterological translations as the subversion of authoritative by dissenting voices, the heteroglossia of contesting discourses and similar suitable expressions of anti-foundational moral concern. Again, the difference is that we know everything functionally, as devices of power; which is also to say, not substantially or structurally.

The American anthropological codgers who spent a good part of their lives studying historical diffusion hardly believed that cultures were unchanging and rigidly bounded. (On the contrary, in the first half of the twentieth century several accused their own predecessors of the same prejudices.) They could even speak of 'the fallacy of cultural separation': the mistaken idea that because cultures are distinctive they are closed, as well as inferior; a conceit, said Locke and Stern (1946: 9), with grounds in the European industrial and colonial expansion.(8) The old-timers virtually made a Heraclitean mantra of the incantation that 'cultures are constantly changing' (Herskovits 1938: 1; 1945; Linton 1936: 296; Locke & Stern 1946: 6). Contending with the evolutionism of Morgan, they also made a virtue of uneven development, the disarticulation of kinship, religion, demography and economy, what Boas called 'the lack of specific coherence between various aspects of culture' (1938: 680). 'We will look in vain for the close integration and perfect coordination posited by current writers on culture', said Linton (1936: 288; see also Radin 1965 [1933]: 149-50). And do not forget that 'Two Crows denies this': Two Crows' famous demurral to an authoritative point of Omaha tribal custom, which Sapir (1938) supposed must have been for good social and biographical reasons. More generally, American anthropologists were too imbued with individualism, and with the laissez-faire opposition of individual and society, to allow that cultures were universally shared, monolithic or otherwise coherent socially or consistent logically (Goldenweiser 1937: 414; Linton 1936: 271 et passim; Radin 1965 [1933]: 41-2).

How could cultures be uniform when, as Linton (1936: 362) said, the average individual himself 'can hold a whole series of conflicting beliefs', such as the nineteenth-century Protestants who were convinced that the souls of the dead slept till Judgment Day, that souls went to heaven or hell never to return, and that they appeared as ghosts to terrorize the living? Linton's Study of man (1936: 271 sq.) included a sustained analysis of

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the multiple dimensions of variation and contradiction within cultures. The main difference between this text and similar postmodern critiques of cultural unicity is that Linton had no fear of structure, so he tried to fathom the relationship between the variations rather than just pointing to them and assigning them plus or minus grades in Hegemony. In this connexion, the recurrent afterological litany on the cultural disagreements between men and women in the same society, as also between rich and poor, chief and commoner, etc., was already being rehearsed in the anthropological Dark Ages, as by Herskovits, for example:

To think in terms of a single pattern for a single culture is to distort reality . . . for no culture is [so] simple [as not] to have various patterns. We may conceive of them as a series of interlocking behavior and thought and value systems, some even in conflict with others. The patterns of fundamental values in a society . . . will be effective over the entire group; but there will be subpatterns by which men order their lives differently from women, young and middle-aged folk from their elders, members of lower from those of higher socioeconomic status . . . But all must be taken into account when an understanding of the mutations of culture in change is the end of the analysis (1945: 158; cf. Goldenweiser 1937: 43).(9)

Not to mention that such discursive discontinuities were for Durkheim a corollary of the division of labour in society, even as they were analogously conceived by Meillet (1905-6), and by Locke in the neglected semiotic classic which is Book III of *The Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.

The aforementioned individualism, however, indicates that a certain moral-political critique has been shadowing the culture concept for a long time. It goes back at least to the time anthropology was *Coming of age in Samoa*, or for that matter to the anthropological creation. Tylor's *Primitive Culture* ends with the line: 'Thus, active at once in aiding progress and in removing hindrance, the science of culture is essentially a reformer's science' (1903, II: 453). I think the difference from modern times is that anthropology, following a lot of afterology in succumbing to powerism, has now made political morality the beginning as well as the end of cross-cultural wisdom. Description as well as persuasion lies largely in the moral and political virtues of the practices under consideration. The new 'cultural critique' enters directly into play for or against the cultural forms it is talking about, with the apparent hope of having some effect on their existence. Something like missionary work. I have offered examples elsewhere (Sahlins 1993b): it is enough for interpretation to show that one or another cultural practice, ranging from Vietnamese second person pronouns to Brazilian workers' house construction, is

either hegemonic imposition or counter-hegemonic resistance in order to suppose it has been satisfactorily interpreted, even though these abstract functions as such cannot account for the specific attributes.

The brief explanation of this theoretical mode is that the 1960s is the longest decade of the twentieth century. I will not hazard any more, except to say that in the same period the apparent destruction of the old anthropology-cultures by an increasingly powerful global capitalism has not given us cause to shake off the received despondency theories and, what is the same, *The Horror*, the horror of such power. As we know of culture generally, explanations can be rhetorically sufficient even though they do not logically motivate the distinctiveness of things they explain. There are good and decent reasons for the current theoretical course. But there are also good reasons to suppose that knowing other peoples is not fully accomplished by taking the proper attitudes on colonialism, racism or sexism. These people have not organized their existence in answer to what has been troubling us lately. They do not live either for us or as us. And the main anthropological drawback of making them such moral objects is just that it makes their own cultural logics disappear - if you can still tolerate the s-word, their structures.

Apologies for structure are now necessary. Michael Brown and others point out that current afterological interpretation is marked by an inverse relation between structure and morality, exception made for the totalized narratives of the structures of domination (Brown 1996; cf. Dirlik 1994). The more our morality, the less need for their relationships. Not long ago in the vanguard journal *Cultural Anthropology*, a certain tendency to speak of the relativity of cultural orders was dismissed on the intellectual grounds that it was 'politically unacceptable'. A summary comment in a book of essays on Melanesian history warns that Geertz's *Negara* and some of my Polynesian works, by attempting to understand history in terms of 'culture' or 'structure', introduce 'dangerous' notions into the understanding of others: essentializing notions that spuriously endow a people with eternal cultural qualities or over-value hegemonic ideologies by neglecting 'the politically fractured and contested character of culture'. A wide array of violent deconstructive metaphor testifies to the going fear of structure. Thomas's *Entangled Objects* is a very fine book, but the title suggests what I mean, as does his not-idiosyncratic declaration therein of the intent to 'fracture' general conceptions (1991: 26-7), 'disable' simple connexions (1991: 18) and 'disfigure' the anthropological project (1991: 6). Yet I do not think there is any necessary opposition of this kind between morality and structure. The mutilation of cultural order requires an interpretive third term; it passes by way of a certain functionalism.

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Indeed, Sartre likened the analogous functionalism of the cruder Marxism to the Terror, because of the way it purged cultural forms of their specific properties by dissolving them in generic inclinations of class standing and class interest. All one needs to know about Valery's poetry is that it is a species of bourgeois ideology. The explanation, Sartre said, 'is a project of elimination'.

The method is identical with Terror in its inflexible refusal to differentiate; its goal is total assimilation at the least possible cost. The aim is not to integrate what is different as such, while preserving for it a relative autonomy, but rather to suppress it . . . [T]he Marxist would believe he was wasting his time if, for example, he tried to understand the originality of a bourgeois thought. In his eyes the only thing which matters is to show that the thought is a mode of idealism . . . The Marxist therefore is impelled to take as an appearance the real content of a behavior or of a thought; when he dissolves the particular in the Universal, he has the satisfaction of believing that he is reducing appearance to truth (1968: 48-9).

So Sartre's famous riposte on Valery: 'Valery is a petit bourgeois intellectual, no doubt about it. But not every petit bourgeois intellectual is a Valery' (1968: 56).(10)

Anthropological cum afterological understandings of modern culturalism, including its 'invented traditions' and diacritic distinctions, have the same quality of explanation by way of elimination. As I say, the problem is the functional advantages that are supposed to motivate the cultural claims and forms at issue cannot do so. At best they are insufficient even if present, because they speak to the effects of cultural things rather than their properties. Japanese sumo wrestling, Hawaiian hula dancing, Alaskan Eskimo subsistence hunting, Ojibway fishing: such things are accounted for - or as it is often said (in French) their 'raison d'être is': a double evasion that means they are not really accounted for - by some group's quest for power, material gain, resistance or a need of identity. Yes, but how does it motivate the characteristics of sumo, the earthen floor and celestial roof, the installation of the yokozuna at the Meiji shrine, to say that certain people wanted to make money or that the Japanese needed a national emblem? Maybe that is true, they needed a national emblem. So why did they do that?

A peculiar ontological hybridity in the argument is the source of its logical difficulties. It is composed of a cultural and historical particularity, like sumo, and a cross-cultural or human universal, such as greed or the desire of power-afterpower. Hence something that is not particularly Japanese is supposed to explicate something that is particularly Japanese. Such ontological cocktails, moreover, entail a number of corollary logical difficulties.

Power is not only the same all over, but its unexamined character, its contentless self-evidence, is rather evidence that is fair average Western common sense. But how could Japanese in the late eighteenth century know power or avarice in the way we do? And, finally, we are mixing phenomena of two different orders, historical customs with human dispositions, forms with desires, structures with subjectivities, in the vain hope of reducing the one to the other. All of this is to say that if such functionalism were taken to its logical conclusions, which few apart from sociobiologists or economists are prepared to do, we would wind up either in ethnocentrism or human nature - or rather both, as here they are one and the same.

The way out is to realize that what is functional, in this sense of instrumental, must be structural. Desires depend on historical contexts of values, on existing or potential relationships of the culture, not only for their content but for their possible realizations. Maybe Fijian chiefs of yore conceived vaulting ambitions for power; that is why they generally gave things away to people, after a youth spent cultivating a reputation for atrocious cannibalism. The proposition can only hold by way of the Fijian culture. The same structural relativity holds for modern culturalisms, e.g., for sumo as the constructed national sport. I am taking cues here in part from a book of essays on Japan, *Mirror of modernity: the invented traditions of modern Japan*, published this year (Vlastos 1998). It is one of those Japan debunkers, of the genre devoted to deconstructing Japanese claims to cultural distinctiveness. I do not know why this is such a social science growth industry, so much effort going into the expose, of Japan as an empire of phoney signs. (Or perhaps I do know something, as will appear by-and-by, when we get to discussing the twinship of global integration and local differentiation.) For sumo, the argument is made by Japanologists that it differentiated in the late eighteenth century from ritual, popular and military wrestling, promoted by entrepreneurs interested in the gains they could make by professionalizing it in the developing mercantile cities. To this end, the promoters, whose own legitimacy was rationalized by the guise of their Shinto priestly lineage, also secured the sanction of the imperial authorities, as in a famous court performance of 1791. The officialdom for its part was interested both in the control of urban sumo and its use as a means of control. As sumo developed thereafter, it appropriated elements of its ancestral versions, to which were added improvisations such as the ritual installation of a yokozuna champion, the ring canopy constructed on the model of the Ise Shrine roof (shrine of the sun goddess Amaterasu) and other such trappings of the empyrean and the imperium. What has been making money here is Japanese cosmology (Bickford 1994; Bolitho 1988; Cuyler 1979; Thompson 1998).

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Staged in arenas constructed as microcosms, sumo in its present incarnation evokes memories of the divine battles of founding myths and legendary victories of the imperial dynasty (Aston 1972; Philippi 1968). The celestial and terrestrial elements that frame the matches, the imperial shrine roof and the ring of packed earth, were until recently joined and oriented to the cardinal directions by four pillars whose colours represented the four gods, the four seasons and four animals (significations now carried by coloured tassels suspended from the canopy, as a concession to spectator viewing). Purified in elaborate ceremonies before the match, the ring and the wrestlers are under the discipline of a referee who in action and elements of costume doubles as a Shinto priest. 'The ring is still considered a sacred battlefield', the historian observes, 'even today women are not allowed to step up to the platform' (Cuyler 1979: 173). The contestants, of superhuman dimensions, enter the ring throwing salt - as purification, it is said. They make a demonstration of stamping the earth - to drive off evil spirits, it is said. But by the same tokens, their actions rehearse the foundational myth of the god who came down from heaven to drive off the earth spirit, thus opening the way for the descent of the first emperor, divine grandson of the goddess Amaterasu and ancestor of the still-reigning lineage. In more than one such episode of the dynastic chronicles, the imperial territory and privileges were secured by the triumph of a champion wrestler. The current system of yokozuna champions was developed in the late nineteenth century. The installation of the yokozuna at the imperial Meiji shrine is marked by his assumption of the regalia that traditionally signifies supernatural presence.

Yes, the installation as such only dates to 1911 - the invention of a tradition - but whence comes its meaning and its particularity? One may as truly speak of the inventiveness of tradition. Modern sumo is clearly a permutation of older forms and relationships, made appropriate to novel situations. The divinatory character of the wrestling match, the victory indicating the god's favour and the victor acquiring a consecrated status, has been a recursive feature of its varied history. More exactly, it is an invariant that helps explain the historical adaptations of the form as so many permutations of the same ritual combat between the godly and the earthly. Such ritualized wrestling has long been performed in popular shrines and festivals, often as a part of seasonal agricultural ceremonies, where it may function as an augury or, in the case of 'one-man wrestling' with a phantom god, a certainty. Urban shrines became a modern venue; performances were benefits for the shrine or god. Neither did the integration of wrestling in military training, or its staging in feudal and imperial courts, rid it of the ritual appurtenances and resonances of divine combat. Modified each one to its own context, the several varieties also

exchanged practices with each other and across time. This is a living tradition, precisely one that has been able to traverse history. That it may be suitably reinvented to fit the occasion might better be understood as a sign of vitality rather than of decadence. Indeed, something traditional is to be said for the fact that sumo sells. Again, it would be the reverse of the received instrumental reason. Sumo can serve venal interests, thus enter into entrepreneurial projects, because of its meanings, associations and relationships in history and the culture. Function must be the servant of custom if it schemes to be its pragmatic master.(11)

(An aside on the commodification of culture. If it is true that commodification is the death of authentic culture, how come Americans still have one? Or if you think they do not, consider that the following things are produced or reproduced there as commodities and distributed through market relations: Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, sons and daughters of Americans adopted from Mexico, the Bible (or word of God), anthropology, pornography, surgery, kosher meat, Hamlet and my dog Trink.)

From what I know about culture, then, traditions are invented in the specific terms of the people who construct them. Fundamentally, they are atemporal, being for the people conditions of their form of life as constituted, and considered coeval with it. It follows that if such traditions are authoritatively narrativized, or when they contingently rise to consciousness, they will be aetiologized: that is, as charter myths. But then, analytically to fix their historical appearance at some time short of the origin of things is always possible, and always falls short of understanding them, even as reducing them to current interests is likewise comprehension by subtraction. In all cases, the missing part is a comparative sense of cultures as meaningful orders.(12)

Of course I do not mean to deny historical agency. I do not say that either novel events or emergent forms are culturally prescribed. Just because what is done is culturally logical does not mean the logic determined that it be done - let alone by whom, when or why - any more than just because what I say is grammatical, grammar caused me to say it. What I have to say in detail about agency is expressed elsewhere (Sahlins 1991; 1999). It is sequitur to the principle that the larger relations of cultural (including political) order on which certain individuals by office or circumstance act, do not themselves determine the actors' individuality. But I learned to distrust the vulgar cultural determinism from masters. Kroeber's and (especially) White's ideas of the superorganic made Boas's culture-as-the-determinant-of-behaviour seem liberal, as indeed it was, being the contemporary antidote to racism (Kroeber 1917; White 1949; cf. Stocking 1968).(13)

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White's notion of the individual as the tool of his culture, destined merely to express it, was terrible. In relation to the culture, he said, an individual is like a pilotless aircraft controlled from the ground by radio waves. Until a certain concept of 'discourse' threatened to replace 'culture', I never thought I would see the like again, not in my lifetime.

But the handwriting was on the wall when Clifford made his celebrated observation that perhaps the culture concept has 'served its time', and proposed that it might be replaced, following Foucault, 'by a vision of powerful discursive formations, globally and strategically deployed' (1988: 274, emphasis added). As though, Clifford went on to say, these powerful discursive formations, globally and strategically deployed, would liberate us from the oppressive theoretical constraints of 'organic unity, traditional continuity, and the enduring grounds of language and locale' (1988: 274, emphasis added). One could indeed substitute White's 'culture' for 'discourse' in the following famous dictum of Foucault's without much offence to the ideas of either, except that Foucault's intention was historically much more specific: 'it is a matter of depriving the subject (or its substitute) of its role as originator and of analyzing the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse' (Rabinow 1984: 118).

Hence it is curious that many of the anthropologists who traded in their cultural heritage for a mess of Foucauldian discourse, or for the mess that has been made of Foucauldian discourse, would nonetheless disclaim the 'reified', 'hegemonic', 'essentialized' and 'totalized' character of the now obsolete culture idea. Having abandoned these superorganic defects, one may speak freely of 'discourse' as 'the process through which social reality comes into being', of how it selectively determines what can be said, perceived or even imagined (Escobar 1995: 40-1). In the event, 'discourse' for 'culture' has not been a great bargain. Discourse is not only the superorganic revisited, it has been made even more draconian as the expression of a 'power' that is everywhere, in all quotidian institutions and relations. I have often wondered whether, if Kroeber and White had thought of making individuals the moral and libidinous victims of the superorganic rather than simply its puppets, they could have got away with this cockamamie idea for a longer time. (14)

But to return to the central issue, there is still a lot to be said about contemporary cultural formations from what anthropology has already forgotten about culture. Consider again this surprising paradox of our time: that localization develops apace with globalization, differentiation with integration; that just when the forms of life around the world are becoming homogeneous, the peoples are asserting their cultural distinctiveness. 'An increasing homogenisation of social and cultural forms', as Marilyn

Strathern says, 'seems to be accompanied by a proliferation of claims to specific authenticities and identities' (1995a: 3; cf. 1995b). Appadurai (1996), Hannerz (1992) and many other students of globalization point out the linkage of these seemingly opposed processes, noting that the marking of cultural difference is responsive to the hegemonic threat of world capitalism. The short answer to the paradox is thus 'resistance'. Problem is, the people are not usually resisting the technologies and 'conveniences' of modernization, nor are they particularly shy of the capitalist relations needed to acquire them. Rather, what they are after is the indigenization of modernity, their own cultural space in the global scheme of things. They would make some autonomy of their heteronomy. Hence what needs to be recognized is that similitude is a necessary condition of the differentiation. For, in the end, culturalism is the differencing of growing similarities by contrastive structures. (15)

This dialectic of similarity and difference, of convergence of contents and divergence of schemes, is a normal mode of cultural production. It is not unique to the contemporary globalizing world. On the contrary, its precolonial and extracolonial occurrences help explain the colonial and postcolonial.

In regard to similitude, ethnography has always known that cultures were never as bounded, self-contained and self-sustaining as postmodernism pretends that modernism pretends. No culture is sui generis, no people the sole or even the principal author of their own existence. The a priori conceit that authenticity means self-fashioning and is lost by reliance on others seems only a legacy of bourgeois self-consciousness. Indeed, this self-centred determination of authenticity is contrary to the normal human social condition. Most peoples find critical means of their own reproduction in beings and powers existing beyond their normal borders and their customary controls. Accordingly, the prestigious acts of acquiring foreign powers are domestic social values - very commonly, of manhood. From heroic journeys into these culturally transcendent realms, men (usually men) returned with trophies of war or the chase, with commodities gained in raid or trade, with visions, songs, dances, names, amulets, spirits and cures, things familiar or novel that could be consumed, sacrificed, exchanged or otherwise used to renew and enrich the indigenous form of life. In this connexion, the current afterological fears that people trading in dances or artefacts, as by sales to tourists, are necessarily degrading their culture - decontextualizing it and refashioning to meet others' prejudices of their 'primitive' alterity - such 'spectres of inauthenticity', as Margaret Jolly (1992a) calls them, might be laid by considering that New Guineans (for example) are past

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masters of the sales gambit they now onomatopoeically call grisim (cf. Babadzan 1988; Handler & Linnekin 1984). Famous examples come from the kula trade: recall how Trobrianders deck themselves out to dazzle their trading partners (cf. Neumann 1992: 312). In any case, grisim or tok tru, such transactions in culture are commonplace in Melanesian ethnography, as Simon Harrison (1990) remarks, and also documents for Manambu people of the Sepik. Jolly notes other examples:

In these precolonial processes of intercultural communication, bits of culture - artifacts, songs, dances - were often used apart from the cultures themselves. There was much ritual borrowing whereby songs and dances from one region were performed elsewhere, in a way that drew attention to their foreign nature . . . For instance, in precolonial Vanuatu . . . dance styles were named in a foreign language long after they were purchased . . . It is Western and anthropological presumption to insist that Westerners delivered to Pacific peoples a novel sense of cultural awareness (Jolly 1992a: 58-9; see also Errington & Gewertz 1986: 99; 1996: 121; Lawrence 1984: 145-6).

From all this, it follows that hybridity is everyone. I mean hybridity in the way that Homi Bhabha's idea of it as deconstructed in-betweenness (e.g. 1994: 38-9), probably for lack of worldly referents, has popularly come to mean the cultural admixture we used to call 'acculturation'. In that sense, as Boas, Kroeber & co. taught, all cultures are hybrid. All have more foreign than domestically invented parts. Recall Linton's classic account (1937) of a morning in the life of the 100 per cent. American, who settles down after breakfast to smoke a cigar invented in Brazil as he reads the news of the day in characters invented by the ancient Semites imprinted by a process invented in Germany on a material invented in China. As he scans the latest editorial warning of the dire results to our institutions of adopting foreign ideas, he thanks a Hebrew deity in an Indo-European tongue that he is 100 per cent. (decimal system invented by the ancient Greeks) American (from Americus Vespucci, Italian geographer).

Hybridity is a genealogy, not a structure, as Jonathan Friedman (1997; in press) has said. It is an analytic construal of a people's history, not an ethnographic description of their way of life. In their way of life, externalities are indigenized, engaged in local configurations and become different from what they were. In this regard, the Hegelian dialectic of self and other may be the mother of all culturalisms. More proximately, complementary differentiation of similar structures among nearby peoples was the main dynamic of Levi-Strauss's *Mythologiques*: symmetrical inversions that ran the length and breadth of aboriginal North and South America. Bateson's analogous concept of schismogenesis was

originally meant to cover 'culture contact', including the precolonial specializations of interdependent Melanesian groups (Bateson 1935).(16)

Indeed, the anthropological codgers have known all this at least since Ruth Benedict (1932; 1934) wove the 'shreds and patches' left by an earlier diffusionism into coherent patterns of culture. Lowie's wandering minstrel act has been considered the anticipation of postmodern pastiche. But so far as Benedict (1934: 44) was concerned, he and other diffusionists had created a 'Frankenstein's monster, with a right eye from Fiji, a left from Europe, one leg from Tierra del Fuego, and one from Tahiti'. Thenceforth, the anthropological wisdom would be that cultures are largely foreign in origin and distinctively local in pattern.(17) Hence also the foreshadowings of the modern 'culturalism' that can be found not only in the codgers' observations on 'nativism' and 'revivalism' (e.g. Linton 1943), but in their reflections on their ethnographic experiences of acculturation especially among Native Americans. Radin insisted that even acculturated Native Americans remained 'aboriginal'. To suppose the changes they had undergone were 'a sign of degeneracy or hybridization or decline', he wrote, 'is to betray a lamentable ignorance of common historical processes' (Radin 1965 [1933]: 121; see Linton 1936: 360).

Saussurean structuralism later gave the pattern argument the added force of positional value. Even if coercively imposed, external practices and relationships are necessarily brought into value-determining associations with native categories. In the upshot, they acquire indigenous logics, intelligibilities and effects. Although in theory structure is supposed to be a concept antithetical to history and agency, in practice it is what gives historical substance to a people's culture and independent grounds to their action. Without cultural order there is neither history nor agency. Still, I am not speaking of a 'culture of resistance' so much as the resistance of culture. Inherent in the meaningful action of socially-situated persons, the resistance of culture is the more inclusive form of differentiation, neither requiring an intentional politics of opposition nor confined to the colonially oppressed. People act in the world in terms of the social beings they are, and it should not be forgotten that from their quotidian point of view it is the global system that is peripheral, not them.(18)

On the matter of complementary oppositions, Simmel pointed out that when elements already differentiated are forced into union, the usual effect is a more intense repulsion, 'an actualization of antitheses that otherwise would not have come to pass'. 'Unification', he said, 'is the means to individuation and its emergence into consciousness'. Was he speaking presciently of the

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current globalization and its local discontents? No, of the Holy Roman Empire, whose 'politics of world domination . . . only served to release the particularisms of peoples, tribes and nations'. The Empire contributed to its own destruction by the individuation 'it created, intensified and brought to awareness' (Simmel 1971 [1908]: 275, emphasis added). I stress the awareness, the emergence of difference into consciousness, because it brings us back to the diacritical claims of cultural uniqueness among contemporary peoples who are becoming ever more integrated and alike.

Again there are celebrated analogues in New Guinea: the homeland of famous 'borrowing cultures' of more than 700 distinct peoples who 'emphatically named themselves' (as Gewertz says); who may tell themselves apart on the principle of mipela wan bilas, the details of bodily appearance - something like the narcissism of marginal differences, as Freud said of the Balkans, which is still another case in point (see Gewertz 1983: 6; also Errington & Gewertz 1996: 124n; Lemonnier 1997). The strange argument with which I conclude is that these cultural claims are indexes of more basic structuring codes, modes of order that are themselves largely imperceptible yet make all the difference between peoples who are perceptibly similar. I take a page from Durkheim. **Such reifications of structural powers, epitomizations of order itself, are sacred symbols.** They are visible signs of an invisible constituting presence. And, as sacred, they give a people commitment as well as definition - dare one say, a sense of shared existence as well as determinate boundaries?

Durkheim said that god or the totemic spirit is the way men figure to themselves the power of a society that constrains their behaviour and provides their satisfactions, yet of which they know not whence or what, of which they have no experience as such. 'Social action', he wrote, 'follows ways that are too circuitous and obscure, and employs psychical mechanisms that are too complex to allow the ordinary observer to see whence it comes. As long as scientific analysis does not come to teach it to them, men know well that they are acted upon, but they do not know by whom' (1947: 209). It was a sociological permutation of the argument Hume made about 'cause' in general, to the effect that necessity is not a datum of experience. Neither, of course, is totality. In something of the same way, we have long known - from Herder through Boas and Levi-Strauss - that structure works in epistemological ways. 'The seeing eye is the organ of tradition' (Benedict). 'Seeing is dependent on hearing', for 'people do not discover the world, they are taught it' (Herder). Built into perception, endemic in the grammar, working in the habitus, **structure is the organization of conscious experience that is not itself consciously experienced.** Not

easy to figure. After decades of White men, the Pomo Indian said to the anthropologist Aginsky (1940: 44):

Your people are hard to understand. My brother lived with you people for twenty years, and he said he was used to you; but he cannot understand yet why you people act as you do. You are all the same in one way. We are all the same in another. What is wrong with you?

Unfathomable and yet powerful enough to make the difference between peoples, to make us right and you wrong, something like that has indeed intimations of the sacred.

Of course, it is also in the totemic spirit of Levi-Strauss. Manuela Carneiro recognized that cultural diacritics, constructed by opposition, are analogous to the species signs of a totemic system, so that different peoples assume positional statuses and values in regional orders of culture (1995: 288). In a complementary argument, Friedman (in press) says that just so, intellectualist critiques of the artifices of identity fail to understand the nature, scope and power of these signs as classes. The diacritics work by classification, by

linking a matrix of local identifications and experiences to a higher order category which then comes to function as a unifying symbol. The logic of territorial identity is segmentary. It moves in terms of increasing encompassment and it depends on a practice of creating fields of security. It expresses a life-orientation, an intentionality that cannot be waved away by intellectual flourishes.

The classificatory function is evident in the generic signs of ethnicity Barth (1969a) called 'basic value orientations'. For instance, the Fijian 'living in the way of the land' (bula vakavanua), determined by opposition to the whiteman's 'living in the way of money' (bula vakailavo), includes by extension a panoply of practices: chiefship, kinship, a certain generalized reciprocity (kerekere), even Wesleyan Christianity, as only Fijians could know it. But then, any one of these, functioning situationally as an ethnic diacritic (Barth's second type), indexes the class as a total mode of existence, that is by synecdoche or as prototype. The effect can be truly totemic. Gewertz (1983: 108) quotes a Chambri (New Guinea) account of a time the people were forced off their island and settled temporarily with a certain 'Bush people'. 'We did not become like Hills men', the Chambri said. 'They are of the bush and we are of the water. They are cassowaries and we are crocodiles'.

I mentioned the still pertinent and still brilliant interpretation of ethnic distinctions by Barth (1969a; 1969b). It already says about everything I have rehearsed here. Including

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that epitomizing signs are a condition of ethnic cum cultural differentiation, for given the likenesses among interacting peoples, such distinctions cannot be established quantitatively or concretely. Including that the diacritic marking of cultural differences may be inversely related to the apparent actualities, being conditioned rather by the similarities. Including the cunning of cultural reason whereby instrumental interests, as of acculturated native elites, adapt and extend the indigenous traditions to novel situations. Including that the signs of cultural distinction represent modes of organization rather than the traits in themselves, and that excellence is inherent in each mode. Including that in discriminating peoples by their ways of existing, the culture signs establish unambiguous boundaries between them. (19)

A final word about boundaries. Ironic it is (once more) that anthropologists have been to so much trouble of late denying the existence of cultural boundaries just when so many peoples are being called upon to mark them.

Conscious and conspicuous boundary-making has been increasing around the world in inverse relation to anthropological notions of its significance. But then, the phenomenon is corollary to the emergence of larger fields of cultural structuration, and structure is also something anthropology is set against for the time being. The local demarcation of peoples is the complement of an expanding segmentary scheme, involving the objectifications of ethnic-cultural entities on regional, national and international lands, which usually appear, from the vantage of particular groups, as concentric circles of diminishing moral community (e.g. Peltier 1998; T. Turner 1991). That such collectivities as 'Tolai', 'Australian Aboriginals' or even 'Japan' have latterly come into being through critical interactions with outside peoples and imperious forces has been something of a knock on them, although ontologically they seem no less authentic than (say) the invention of the 'working class' by Marx and Engels. Of course, we are speaking of boundaries in the sense of the determination of cultural communities, not as barriers to the flow of people, goods or ideas. Individuals may even traverse them and become other. But, just so, they then change their kind. Again Chambri say, 'It is not good. . . that river people and bush people should live together. They are of one kind, and we are of another' (Gewertz 1983: 31).

Note once again the classificatory move. Clearly the boundary work of culture-signs is a realization, in the social dimension, of their logical status as class names. Classes are inclusive and contrastive, hence also exclusive. By the same token (so to speak), the classification is a moral judgement: what is so distinguished is good, and right to be so distinguished. Hence in an important sense, people do share a culture

and are committed to it. They share a mode of existence and become a kind of being, or a species thereof. Indeed, they become a historical people: subject and agent of history, with a common memory, if only because they have a collective destiny. Yet in these days especially, their consubstantiality as a people may be largely insubstantial, based on ordering principles that, we know from Boas as well as Durkheim, do not normally rise to consciousness. Thus the sacredness of their epitomizing symbols, whose referent is an unseen, good and potent cultural presence.

There is here some suggestion of a better reason for living and dying with, and for, certain people than the fact that all are reading the same newspapers at the same time. But that would be another lecture. For the moment I have merely tried to say two or three things I know about culture, adopting the strategy that if I say a whole lot of things, two or three may be right.

NOTES

1 See Elias (1978); Hartman (1997: 205-24); for other references Sahlins (1995: 10-11).

2 White's specific emphasis on the symbolic - note, not on 'learned behaviour' - as the differentiating quality of culture was not the popular one in the anthropology of his time. But it did parallel, or in some cases interacted with, the powerful arguments to similar effect of Kenneth Burke (1966: 3-24), Ernst Cassirer (1933; 1955-7) and Susanne Langer (1976 [1942]).

3 Here is a characteristic notice of the modern culturalism.

One thing was clear about doing anthropology in contemporary Papua New Guinea: everyone was self-conscious about 'culture'. Papua New Guineans, like others worldwide, were invoking culture in dealing with a fluidity of identity and a shift in the locus of important resources in a late-20th-century, postcolonial 'modernity' - a modernity progressively affected by transnational capitalism and by state power. In contexts ranging from local assertion to state certification, culture, equated with 'traditional', was evermore employed in these changing circumstances as a source and a resource. It was understood as a central and explicit determinant for current identity and political efficacy (Errington & Gewertz 1996: 114).

4 Or perhaps the anthropologists will be joined by end-game social scientists such as Fukuyama, for whom 'it matters little what strange thoughts occur to people in Albania or Burkina Faso' (1989: 9). Dirlik notes the paradox posed by the disjuncture of postmodern cultural criticism, on one side, and the cultural politics of

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indigenous peoples on the other: 'Even as cultural criticism renders the past a plaything at the hands of the present, the burden of the past haunts contemporary politics in a reassertion of cultural identities' (1996: 3; cf Warren 1992: 209). Among anthropologists, the rejection of a substantial 'culture' has gone so far that many endorse the grammatical and semantic oxymoron advising us to abandon the noun 'culture' in favour of the adjective 'cultural,' as if the latter would mean anything without the former.

5 For recent discussions of culturalism (pro and con as it were) of identity practices and related phenomena in Pacific island societies, see, among others: Babadzan (1985; 1988), Carrier (1992), Chapman (1985), Errington & Gewertz (1996), Friedman (1994; 1996; in press), Handler & Linnekin (1984), Jolly (1992a; 1992b), Jolly & Thomas (1992), Keesing (1989), Keesing & Tonkinson (1982), Linnekin & Poyer (1990), Norton (1993), Sahlins (1993a), Tcherkezoff & Douaire-Marsaudon (1997), Thomas (1990; 1992; 1993), J.W. Turner (1997), van Meijl (1996), Wassman (1998).

6 Although Keesing was critical of the authenticity of Pacific islanders' culturalism, he had an astute understanding of the continuity of mythical charters and invented traditions. Perhaps there was for him no contradiction in these positions because both modern and precolonial forms were ideologies, the work of ideologues, thus serviceable misrepresentations:

The image of a Kwara'ae ideologue ingeniously reconciling biblical teachings and ancestral precepts, inventing myths and codifying commandments, will serve us well if it reminds us that long before Europeans arrived in Pacific waters, Melanesian ideologues were at work creating myths, inventing ancestral rules, making up magical spells, and devising rituals. They were cumulatively creating ideologies, which sustained male political ascendancy and resolved contradictions by depicting human rules as ancestrally ordained, secret knowledge as sacred, the status quo as eternal. We err, I think, in imagining that spurious *kastom* is radically different from genuine culture, that the ideologues and ideologies of the post-colonial present had no counterparts in the precolonial past (Keesing 1982: 300-1; see also 1989: 38n, 39).

7 The term 'afterological studies' was coined by Jacqueline Mraz. I adopt it from an unpublished paper of hers.

8 Wrote Locke and Stern:

It is by now apparent how a combination of particular circumstances, viz., European industrial and colonial expansion, has combined with the age-old tendency of

cultural chauvinism, to produce these serious modern misconceptions about culture . . . Under such circumstances, most cultural divergence is interpreted as cultural inferiority, and the appreciation of cultural interaction and indebtedness becomes almost completely obscured. This merges into one grand over-all misconception - the fallacy of cultural separation - the belief that in being distinctive, cultures are separate and water-tight units of civilization. Historical evidence shows this view to be unfounded; for, much to the contrary, all cultures are composite and most cultural elements are interchangeable [between them] (Locke & Stern 1946: 9).

9 Benedict's *Patterns of culture* evoked considerable argument over whether she had made the patterns too consistent and comprehensive, let alone too psychological, not allowing sufficiently for alternative patterns or lack of patterning. Even Boas (1938:682 sq.) thought so.

10 There has been a lot of loose neo-functionalist talk lately about the politically conservative character of anthropological attempts to determine the meaningful relations of cultural orders (e.g., Wright 1998). 'Casting political asparagus', we used to call this in the McCarthy days. The problem with such pseudo-politics of interpretation is that most of these arguments about cultural coherence can be read both ways, i.e. both right and left. After all, anti-structure has historically been associated with *laissez-faire* individualism, which makes it just as easy to link the criticism of cultural order, for its own part, to the antediluvian right. It was Margaret Thatcher, following Jeremy Bentham, who said, 'There is no such thing as society' (Durig 1993: 13). Hence the frequently observed convergence between afterological deconstruction and conservative politics: 'when cultural studies moved away from a marxian analysis based on class, it began to approach, if in a different spirit and register, certain Thatcherite themes. After all, both movements were strongly anti-statist; both affirmed, within limits, a decentred view of social organization' (1993: 15).

11 Barth appreciated this point in the context of so-called identity politics, notably that a politics of culture entails the culturalization of politics. The effect is an extension of culture in and as political action. 'The fact that contemporary forms are prominently political', he wrote, 'does not make them less ethnic in character. Such political movements constitute new ways of making cultural differences organizationally relevant' (1969a: 34, emphasis added). For a contrasting dualization of culture and politics, thus debunking the former by the latter, see Wright (1998).

12 Such traditions, we shall see, may develop in complementary opposition to other societies, but they are

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no less culturally integrated locally. In a well-known text, Boas (1966 [1911]) noted that when normally unremarked categories or practices rise to consciousness, they are typically rationalized in terms of contemporary values, their origins in fact being unknown. Boas's argument could be adapted somewhat as follows to the present concern: a commitment to tradition entails some consciousness; a consciousness of tradition entails some invention; an invention of tradition entails some tradition.

13 The current Native American reassertions of their 'culture' have an analogous anti-racist effect. Otherwise, given inter-ethnic marriage practices, the First Nations would be virtually extinct by the end of the twenty-first century, as defined by the existing minimum blood quantum measure of identity, one-fourth Native American (Dirlik 1996: 11).

14 The sense of the superorganic that has been imported into anthropology from poststructuralism may be judged from the following notice of the latter's impact on literary studies:

Post structuralist theories . . . whatever their disagreements, coincide in abstracting literary texts from the human world and relocating them in a nonhuman site - specifically, in the play of language-as-such, or else in the forces that operate within a discourse already-in-being. The first-order result of this shift in intellectual vantage is a radical transformation of the elementary components in the humanistic frame of reference. That is, the human agents who produce and interpret a literary work, as well as the world that the work is said (directly or indirectly) to refer to or represent, are all translated into the products, effects, or constructs of language or discourse; at the same time the functions of human agency are transferred to the immanent dynamics of the signifying system. Many of the salient novelties in present-day literary studies derive from this shift of intellectual vantage from a world of human activity to the systemic economies of language and discourse (Abrams 1997: 115).

15 Among numerous perceptive discussions of the interplay of global and local, beside those mentioned elsewhere in this text, see Eriksen (1993), King (1997), McCaskill (1997), Miller (1995), Pred & Watts (1993). The position I am taking here is like the one Myers voiced in a discussion of contemporary Australian Aboriginal art: 'The emphasis on how dominant cultures "produce" their others has, it seems to me, gone as far as it can with confident sermonizing on colonial processes; what is needed is a more ethnographic attention to the meaning of such transactions to participants, to what these others make of us, however unequal the power relations through which such mediation takes place' (1994: 694).

16 Speaking of Arawak-Carib relations, Drummond (1981: 634) elaborated the

problematic of complementary opposition in a way that links it with modern 'identity politics':

My argument is that the Arawak, like people everywhere, would gladly be rid of the practical and conceptual embarrassment represented by an alien adversary, whose very presence contravenes their own cherished order of things, but for the simple, bitter truth that they cannot say what they are without pointing at what they are not. The dilemma is that the Arawak are at once a people apart from others and a people implicated in the most intimate fashion with the origin and present situation of the Carib. The dilemma is really the problem of cultural identity.

17 Kroeber's classic 1948 textbook, *Anthropology*, reflected the theoretical course from Lowie through Benedict:

As regards the historical origin of its contents . . . every civilization is what Lowie has called it: a 'theory of shreds and patches', a 'planless hodgepodge'; but it does not ordinarily seem so to the people living under it, nor does it function as such . . . Plan or pattern there always is . . . The plan modifies the cultural material that flows in, sometimes rejects it, fits it all, native and foreign, into something that is not so discordant (1948: 286; see also Herskovits 1945: 155-6; Linton 1936: 340sq.; compare Boas 1920: 315).

18 See Ortner (1995) on 'thinning culture' in resistance studies.

19 The Yaqui call themselves Yoeme, a name, according to Spicer, that was unknown to the Mexicans who lived beside them and fought them for more than 200 years. Spicer (1994: 34-5) wrote:

For Yaqui, the word [Yoeme] had intense meaning and embodied their sense of pride in themselves and in their long proprietorship over fertile farmlands that the Mexicans coveted . . . Such a term marks a part of the boundary between two peoples; here, a domain of meaning begins for one of the two peoples and here it also ends, because it has no meaning for their neighbors. To trace the boundaries of peoples, it is necessary to discover the symbols and domains of meaning for each.

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