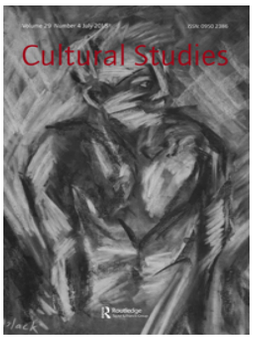

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Tony Bennett

CULTURAL STUDIES AND THE CULTURE CONCEPT

My purpose in this paper is to complicate the genealogies of the concept of culture as a way of life that have held sway within cultural studies. I do so by reviewing key aspects in the development of this concept within the 'Americanist' tradition of anthropology pioneered by Franz Boas in the opening decades of the twentieth century and continued by a generation of Boas's students including Ruth Benedict, Alfred Kroeber and Margaret Mead. I focus on three issues: the respects in which the 'culture concept' was shaped by aesthetic conceptions of form; its spatial registers; and its functioning as a new surface of government, partially displacing that of race, in the development of American multicultural policies in the 1920s and 1930s. In relating these concerns to Graeme Turner's enduring interest in the processes through which culture is 'made national', I indicate how the spatial registers of the culture concept anticipate contemporary approaches to these questions. I also outline what Australian cultural studies has to learn from the American evolution of the culture concept in view of the respects in which the latter was shaped by the racial dynamics of a 'settler' society during a period of heightened immigration from new sources. In concluding, I review the broader implications of the fusion of aesthetic and anthropological forms of expertise that informed the development of the culture concept.

Keywords nation; culture area; race; aesthetics; anthropology; way of life

There is little doubt that the concept of culture as a way of life initially provided the key authorizing concept for cultural studies as a distinctive intellectual and political practice. In endorsing Williams's definition, in *The Long Revolution*, of 'the theory of culture as the study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life' (Williams cit. CCCS 2013, p. 884), the authors of the Fifth Report of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies identify three distinctive aspects of culture so defined: first, it interprets culture as 'the whole pattern or configuration of values and meanings in a society'; second, it includes all forms of culture, whether 'high', 'popular' or 'low'; and third, it views these expressive forms as an integral part of social life (CCCS 2013, p. 883). Yet the cultural studies literature has paid scant attention to either the distinctive intellectual qualities this concept acquired or the uses to which it was put in the ongoing process of refashioning that characterized its anthropological

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interpretation in America during the second, third and fourth decades of the twentieth century. Instead, following Williams's discussion in *Keywords* (Williams 1976) and elsewhere,[1] it has rarely gone any further than to reference Edward Burnett Tylor's conception of culture as 'taken in its wide ethnographic sense … that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society' (Tylor 1871, p. 1). This has also typically been evoked as an alternative to the evaluative hierarchies of aesthetic conceptions of culture. Considered assessments of the subsequent development of the concept within what is, for good reasons,[2] pointedly referred to as 'Americanist' anthropology have been notably lacking.[3]

This is both surprising and regrettable. It is surprising in that many of the early formulations of cultural studies owe a good deal more to the intellectual legacy of the post-Boasian trajectories of the culture concept than they do to Tylor. The reference in the Birmingham Centre annual report to 'the whole pattern of configuration of values and meanings' thus reflects the principles of the 'configurational anthropology' that Benedict introduced in her *Patterns of Culture*.[4] Williams also picks up on this aspect of Benedict's discussion when, in *The Long Revolution*, he says that 'it is with the discovery of patterns of a characteristic kind that any useful cultural analysis begins' (Williams 1965, p. 63). These perspectives formed a part of the intellectual milieu from which cultural studies emerged owing to the impact that American anthropology had on British debates about, and practical engagements with, culture in the 1930s and 1940s, particularly through Mass Observation.[5] The culture concept also shaped early American engagements with the analysis of mainstream American culture and its various subcultures – the R. Lynd and H. M. Lynd (1929) study of Middletown, William Whyte's study of street-corner gang life (Whyte 1993) and John Dollard's study of the relations between caste and class (Dollard 1957), for example, which, in turn, significantly influenced CCCS's early work on subcultures (see Hall and Jefferson 1975).

The neglect is regrettable for a number of reasons. Overlooking the twentieth-century history of the concept to claim, in Tylor, the conceptual foundations for a radical intellectual project is scarcely credible. Critical examinations of Tylor's concept have made clear its connections with Eurocentric cultural hierarchies, evolutionary conceptions of racial difference and genocidal colonial projects (Stocking 1968, Bennett 1998, Wolfe 1999). The failure to disentangle the Boasian and post-Boasian development of the culture concept from Tylor's version has also meant that the more instructive lessons that this tradition has to offer cultural studies have not been articulated. Fortunately, though, in the process of abandoning it, American anthropologists have conducted a prolonged critical engagement with the American history of the culture concept, sometimes reflecting on its relations to the currency of culture as a way of life in British cultural studies.[6] The concept has been

similarly probed by post-structuralist tendencies in American literary studies.[7] My purpose, in drawing on these literatures, though, is not to propose the culture concept as a model for cultural studies. There are, as we will see, good reasons why the concept fell out of favour within American anthropology, and no point is served by proposing its rehabilitation. I want rather to qualify and complicate how cultural studies has viewed its relations to its conceptual 'pre-history' and to identify some of the implications of this for its work in the present.

There will be three main aspects to my argument. First, I shall show that, far from offering an alternative to aesthetic conceptions of culture, the American culture concept was inherently aesthetic in its constitution. There is now a considerable literature exploring how Williams, in connecting the concept of culture as a way of life to the analysis of class relations, translated post-Kantian aesthetic conceptions into the politico-aesthetic project of the creation of a common culture – some of it favourable (Eagleton 2000) and some more critical (Hunter 1988). The aesthetic registers of the Boasian culture concept are different, focused more on the relations between race, nation and culture, but equally consequential. Second, I shall review Boasian accounts of the relationships between processes of diffusion and the organization of culture areas for the light they throw on the relations between space and cultural flows in ways that anticipated some the contemporary debates concerning the relations between culture, nation, globalization and processes of hybridization. Third, I shall argue that it was precisely the relations between the concept's aesthetic and spatial qualities that informed the concept's governmental deployment, in 1920s and 1930s America, as a resource for managing the relations between America's white 'nativist' stock and new generations of immigrants. This registered a departure from, while still remaining in the slipstream of, the earlier functioning of racial categories as the key means of managing the relations between different generations of immigrants and both Native Americans and African-Americans.

I shall, in addressing these concerns, relate them to Graeme Turner's ongoing engagement with the dynamics of Australian national cultural formation as perhaps the most enduring signature of his work. This is signalled by the titles of many of the books that he has written, co-authored or edited – *Making it National: Nationalism and Australian Popular Culture* (1994); *National Fictions: Literature, Film and the Construction of Australian Narrative* (1986); *Myths of Oz: Reading Australian Popular Culture* (1987); *Nation, Culture, Text: Australian Cultural and Media Studies* (1993) – but is also present in other work: his recent studies of television, for example (Turner and Pertierra 2013). Taken as a whole, his oeuvre offers a sustained intervention into debates concerning the distinguishing qualities of a national culture which, in its scope and depth, has no parallel in the cultural studies literature. Ranging widely across music, painting, film, television, literature, museums, exhibitions and everyday practices, Turner's historical

canvass has stretched over the period from the occupation of Australia to the nationing projects of the post-Federation period, while also offering a closer examination of the changes that have characterized the 'postcolonial' projects of the post-war period.[8] Breaker Morant, Yothu Yindi, Marcus Clarke, the bicentennial celebrations of 1988, the Australian pub, Crocodile Dundee, the Heidelberg school, Tom Roberts, Jack Thompson, Peter Carey, *Strictly Ballroom*, John Laws and talkback radio, Alan Bond and the business sector, Malcolm Turnbull and republicanism: these are just some of the key figures, moments, texts and genres that Turner has discussed, placing them in the context of the changing coordinates of gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality and indigeneity that have shaped, and been shaped by, the dynamics of Australian culture.

Turner has also probed the distinctive qualities of Australian cultural studies by placing its approach to the relations between culture and nation in a comparative perspective. In his introduction to *Nation*, *Culture*, *Text*, he argues that 'living in a new country' involves 'constant encounters with, and definite possibilities for intervening in, an especially explicit, mutable but insistent, process of nation formation'. This is contrasted to British cultural studies in which '"Britain" is exnominated; it is the unquestioned category which needs never to be spoken', and to American cultural studies which Turner sees as steering clear of such questions given the tendency for 'the American nation [to be] ritually spoken of in order to universalise itself – to, as it were, normatively Americanise the world' (Turner 1993, pp. 8–9). He also suggests that Australian cultural studies exhibits a greater degree of hybridity than these more hegemonic national traditions, melding a wide range of theoretical traditions into a distinctive national theoretical formation shaped by the locally specific challenges of Australian conditions.[9] However, he sees these challenges as being more akin to American nation-culture formations than to British ones. Whereas Australia 'has obsessively defined itself in opposition to Britain', Turner argues, 'its relation to America has largely been constructed in terms of similarity' (Turner 1994, p. 95).

What he has in mind here largely concerns the repertoires of the Australian film and television industries. Yet, at least initially, the dynamics of Australian cultural studies were shaped more by Australian inflections of the class registers that typified British interpretations of the concept of culture as a way of life than by any direct engagement with the American tradition.[10] I want, then, to bend the stick in the other direction by exploring the processes involved in adjusting an imported concept of culture to the task of shaping a national culture that was to be defined against the elitist credentials of European humanist culture. From its initial application in studying the ways of life of Native Americans, the culture concept was subsequently applied in a search for a set of defining values that would distinguish American culture by finding these amidst the ordinary, everyday lives of regular Americans. Moreover, as a concept that was forged by a settler society to negotiate a new set of historical relations between a white

north European 'nativist' stock, a radically depleted Native American population, an emancipated African-American population, and new immigrant populations from southern Europe, the American history of the culture concept also speaks directly to the roles that culture has played in Australia's post-war trajectories.

The aesthetic ordering of culture and the authorization of anthropological expertise

Let me go back to Williams who, in his *Keywords* entry on Culture, relies a good deal on *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* written by two Boasian anthropologists, Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn. The purpose of this survey was to disconnect the anthropological concept of culture from earlier European and humanistic traditions in order to place the study of culture on a purely scientific and American footing. Kroeber and Kluckhohn see this tendency as having had to struggle in face of the more established power of aesthetically evaluative European traditions. They thus note that although Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* was published only two years before Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, Arnold's definition of culture as the source of all sweetness and light was recognized by the Oxford English Dictionary in 1893 whereas Tylor's usage had to wait until 1933 for its lexical validation. Their comments on T.S. Eliot have a similar edge to them. Eliot is congratulated for speaking of culture 'in the quite concrete denotation of certain anthropologists' (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952, p. 32) as exemplified by his famous characterization of the activities that go together to make up the English way of life. But Kroeber and Kluckhohn take issue with Eliot's elitism – nicely satirized by Williams's characterization of Eliot's list as 'sport, food, a little art' (cit. Eagleton 2000, p. 113) in which the orchestrating principles of English culture (Derby Day, Henley Regatta, Cowes, the 12th of August) had clear ruling-class associations. Eliot is also taken to task for attempting to reconcile 'the humanistic and social science views' (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952, p. 33) of culture as a misuse of the American anthropological tradition on which he drew.

Williams is critical of this aspect of Kroeber and Kluckhohn's discussion, insisting that the aesthetic and anthropological uses of the concept cannot be so easily disentangled. This bears crucially on their contention that Tyler's 1871 definition of culture and Boas's culture concept constituted the two key milestones on the royal road to the science they wished to establish. For in clasping Tylor and Boas together, they neglected the differences between them. These particularly concern the Boasian sense of culture as a creatively ordered whole in which the elements which comprise it are configured into a distinctively patterned way of life. Adam Kuper has succinctly summarized the difference between the two in noting that Tylor's definition amounted to no

more than 'a list of traits, with the consequence that culture might be inventoried but never analysed' (Kuper 2000, p. 57). Boas also noted the difference. 'Even Tylor,' he once said, 'thought that scraps of data from here, there, and everywhere were enough for ethnology' (Boas cit. Benedict 1943, p. 3).

A number of issues coalesce here. The first concerns the transition from the style of armchair anthropology practiced by Tylor and the evolutionary assumptions underlying the typological method of museum displays which informed his collecting practices. Objects culled from diverse locations – by missionaries, traders, policemen or looters – were brought together in evolutionary sequences in testimony to a universal path of human development (Bennett 2004). Although Boas cut his anthropological teeth in projects directed by Tylor, the problem space that he went on to develop was, George Stocking (1968) contends, a quite different one in which the interpretation of fieldwork evidence made the specific patterns produced by the intermixing of the traits comprising any specific culture a particular historical problem that was not susceptible to any general laws of an evolutionary kind. Susan Hegeman develops this line of argument further seeing the Boasian fieldwork problematic as a key moment in the development of a new form of anthropological authority based on the anthropologist's unique ability to decipher the distinguishing qualities of other cultures. In place of a commitment to the collection of objects that could be put on display for all to see as evidence of a universal narrative of humanity, the Boasian paradigm substituted the more abstract object of 'cultures' which required special methods of collection alert to the interrelations between objects, myths, rituals, language, etc., within a specific way of life accessible only to the trained anthropologist immersed in the culture in question (Hegeman 1999). Each culture, as Boas put it, 'can be understood only as an historical growth determined by the social and geographical environment in which each people is placed and by the way in which it develops the cultural material that comes into its possession from the outside or through its own creativeness' (Boas 2010, p. 4).

It is in the manner in which this creative capacity is conceived that aesthetic conceptions entered into the organization of this new form of anthropological expertise. This is, however, a matter that was subject to different formulations at different moments in the development of the culture concept. Boas was notably reticent on the subject, implicitly drawing on the Germanic tradition to impute the creativity of a people to their unique genius, a capacity which he sometime interpreted in terms of Herder's categories, sometimes in terms of those provided by Humboldt and sometimes in Kantian terms (Stocking 1968, Bunzl 1996). As subsequently developed by his various students, however, the distinctive shape of a culture was re-interpreted in modernist terms as the result of a form-giving activity modelled on the work of art which, whether performed by individual or collective social agents, broke through inherited

patterns of thought and behaviour to crystallize new social tendencies. The key intervention here was Edward Sapir's (1924) paper 'Culture, genuine and spurious'. Richard Handler summarizes the definition of culture proposed in this as consisting in: (1) 'the idea that a culture is a patterning of values that gives significance to the lives of those who hold them', (2) 'that people's participation in the pattern is "instinctive" – in other words, unconscious', (3) that in the case of genuine culture 'the patterning of values is aesthetically harmonious', and (4) that this harmony is expressive of 'a richly varied and yet somehow unified and consistent attitude toward life' (Handler 2005, p. 68).

It was this conception of a configurational order arising out of the form-giving principles that expressed the inner necessities of group life – of culture as 'an integrated spiritual totality which somehow conditioned the form of its elements' (Stocking 1968, p. 21) – that differentiated the Boasian culture concept from Malinowski's functional conception of the social whole as an amalgamation of the pragmatic functions performed by different traits. As such it played two distinctive roles in the organization of new forms of anthropological authority. 'Released from the burden of representing a coherent "humanity" and possessing a specialised knowledge of cultural *diversity*, Boas and his students became experts in the manipulation of cultural estrangement for the purposes of social critique' (Hegeman 1999, 46). Their fieldwork amongst others – most notably the Native Americans of the western seaboard and the Plains Indians – provided the anthropologist with privileged access to principles of alterity which, echoing modernist conceptions of the work of art as a defamiliarizing device, could then be used to make the distinctive properties of American culture and society perceptible in new ways. Anthropology, as Robert Lynd put it, had a 'priceless advantage over the other social sciences' (Lynd 1967, p. 156) derived from 'tilling the overlooked field of primitive cultures in the backward corners of the world' (p. 157) to give it a monopoly on the 'indispensable raw material of the social sciences'. The primitive other constituted an experimental test tube in which, 'boiled free of all the accompaniments of a capitalist economy', he provided 'for all the rest of us exact data on the range of human tolerance for institutional ways different from our own' (p. 157) which could then be used in order 'better understand and control our own culture' (p. 158).

The second role was implicit in this first one: the claim to have found in culture an object of study that would establish anthropology's claims to the status of an autonomous science with a distinct object of its own. This struggle for scientific autonomy was waged on a number of fronts: against biology and psychology; sometimes in alliance with, and sometimes against, sociology.[11] Alfred Kroeber's (1917) conception of culture as the superorganic was crucial to the first of these struggles, disputing post-Darwinian accounts of mechanisms of hereditary accumulation in the name of culture as a level of realities over and above those grounded in or arising out of the sequencing of organic life. While

Sapir and others explored possible synergies between anthropology and psychoanalysis, behaviourist psychology was similarly disposed of. For Robert Lowie, the culture concept established that:

> in so far as knowledge, emotion, and will are neither the result of natural endowment shared with other members of the species nor rest on an individual organic basis, we have a thing *sui generis* that demands for its investigation a distinct science. (Lowie 1996, p. 17)

This meant, he continued, that it must be considered 'autonomous with reference to psychology' (p. 26).

These different aspects of the culture concept were economically brought together by Ruth Benedict when she wrote that 'culture is more than a collection of mere isolated bits of behaviour. It is the integrated sum total of learned behaviour traits which are manifest by the members of a society' (Benedict 1947, p. 1). As such, its dependency on educative methods of acquisition and transmission disqualified biologically based mechanisms for the inheritance of acquired characteristics: 'It is essential to the concept of culture that instincts, innate reflexes, and any other biologically inherited forms of behaviour be ruled out' (p. 1). The undue focus on the collection of material culture by the earlier generation of armchair anthropologists was similarly chastised as misplaced:

> Strictly speaking, material culture is not really culture at all. … Behind every artefact are the patterns of culture that give form to the idea for the artefact and the techniques of shaping and using it. … The use and meaning of any object depends almost wholly on non-material behaviour patterns, and the objects derive their true significance from such patterns. (p. 1)

The unity of a culture derived from the aesthetic form-like properties that give a distinctive shape to ways of life is, though, Benedict contends, always a fractured one. Why? Because most of the traits that comprise the building blocks of a culture come from sources that 'are diverse and unlike' (p. 1), thus constituting contradictory elements which either cancel each other out or are brought together in a new form of synthesis. It is in the processes through which such new syntheses are produced that the aesthetic and the spatial aspects of the culture concept are brought together.

Mutable spatializations of cultures in movement

Let me go back to Williams again. In opening his essay 'Culture is ordinary', it is the connections between place and way of life that Williams first looks to in order to convey a sense of culture's ordinariness. 'To grow up in that country',

he says, 'was to see the shape of a culture, and its modes of change' (Williams 1989, p. 4). The country in question – the Border Country between England and Wales – is richly evoked by recounting a bus journey from Hereford to the Black Mountains. Orchards, meadows, hillside bracken, early iron works, Norman castles, steel mills, pitheads, the railway, scattered farms, town terraces – this is the regional scene that Williams starts with before populating it by describing his own working-class affiliations to it through his father and grandfather. But it is the sense of a wider spatially defined culture that comes first, and class second. The complex interplay between these regional and class coordinates also spills over into questions of Englishness as, with T.S. Eliot in his sights, he insists that it is working-class culture – and not the petty niceties of the English ruling class – that gives English culture, understood as a way of life, its distinctive coherence. Welsh culture too, of course; however, in this essay, it is Englishness that most concerns Williams in pinning his colours to the principles of 'a distinct working-class way of life … with its emphases of neighbourhood, mutual obligation, and common betterment as … the best basis for any future English society' (p. 8). Ways of life are thus defined spatially as well socially; they are regionally embedded; and the relations between them are nationally defining.

In highlighting the relations between place and way of life, Williams followed in the footsteps of T.S. Eliot who included among the three main conditions for culture 'the necessity that a culture should be analysable, geographically, into local cultures' (Eliot 1962, Kindle loc. 70). And he acknowledges his debt to anthropologists in this regard: 'By "culture", then, I mean first of all what the anthropologists mean: the way of life of a particular people living together in one place' (loc. 1687).[12] Although these connections between culture and place were, in the Boasian tradition, fluid and mutable, they have often been read as binding different ways of life, people and territories into essentialist relations to one another. There are a number of reasons for this. Some have to do with the interpretation of the culture concept in the context of American assimilationist policies in the late 1920s and 1930s in which the conception of America as a melting pot defined an emerging American national self-consciousness that was differentiated from European nationalisms (Gilkeson 2010, Mandler 2013). Others derive from the territorialization of the culture concept during the 1939–1945 war and the post-war period when it was revised to refer to a field of national differences that were to be made commensurable with one another through the new geopolitical-diplomatic order of the United Nations (Orta 2004, Price 2008).

Some of Boas's early work also echoed Herder's conception of culture as the expression of a geographically delimited people. Later, however, he rejected any sense that regional environments might be regarded as having a determining influence on cultures. 'It is sufficient', he wrote in 1932, 'to see the fundamental differences of culture that thrive one after the other in the

same environment, to make us understand the limitations of environmental influence', adding, as a pointed contrast, that the 'aborigines of Australia live in the same environment in which the White invaders live' (Boas 1982a, p. 256). The key questions here bear on Boasian conceptions of the relations between processes of cultural diffusion and the organization of cultural areas. These questions have been revisited in a substantial body of recent work which argues that the Boasian construction of these relations anticipates contemporary accounts of the relations between trans-border cultural flows and migration in breaking with the modernist order of nation states. It was, Ira Bashkow argues, 'axiomatic to the Boasians that cultural boundaries were porous and permeable', citing Robert Lowie's contention that any given culture is 'a "planless hodgepodge", a "thing of shreds and patches"' as economically summarizing the view that any particular culture 'develops not according to a fixed law or design but out of a vast set of contingent external influences' (Bashkow 2004, p. 445). These are brought into historically contingent, impermanent and unstable fusions with one another in particularly territorially marked culture areas, only to be later disaggregated in the context of different relations of cross-cultural contact and population migrations. Brad Evans similarly interprets Boas's significance as consisting not in his pluralization of the culture concept – something that Herder had already done – but in his conception of the 'detachability' of the texts and objects that comprise the elements of a culture from any organic association with any particular spatial or historical culture so that they might serve as 'vehicles for the articulation and disarticulation of meaning across discontinuous geographies and temporalities' (Evans 2005, p. 15). Recounting Boas's role in the reconceptualization of folklore studies under the influence of turn-of-the-century developments in philology, Evans argues that these undermined earlier romantic and nationalist conceptions of an inherent connection between a particular people and a particular culture by reconceptualizing cultures as being, like languages, 'public objects' formed by processes of historical interaction and migration beyond the control of individual speakers or speech communities.

The pattern of a culture, then, is not expressive of an essential set of relations between a people, place and way life but is a conjunctural and pliable articulation of those relations that derives its distinctive qualities from the creative, form-giving capacity of the people concerned. In turning now to consider how these spatial and aesthetic aspects of the culture concept informed the governmental rationalities that characterized the development of the relations between earlier 'settlers' and more recent immigrants, and between both of these and Native Americans and African-Americans, I engage with recent re-evaluations of the relations between the culture concept and racial categories.

The culture concept, race and assimilation

While the reappraisals of the Boasian tradition that I have drawn on above accentuate those aspects of the culture concept that resonate with contemporary accounts of processes of cultural hybridization, they are also careful to stress the differences. Moreover, many of the other qualities conventionally attributed to the culture concept – its rebuttal of hierarchical orderings of the relations between different cultures; its democratization of culture; and its critique of racial categories – do not withstand scrutiny. Although Boas contested the conception of 'primitive cultures' as having had no history ['even a primitive people has a long history behind it' (Boas 1974, p. 68)] the distinction between primitive and civilized peoples was never entirely jettisoned. It informs Boas's account of the difference between 'modern aesthetic feeling' (Boas 2010, p. 356) and that of the primitive and, more forthrightly, it shapes Clark Wissler's characterization of primitives as 'slackers in culture' who, while they 'have not stood still in so far as the content of their culture goes' are 'in the manner of rationalisation … on the chronological level of past ages' (Wissler 1923, pp. 326–327).[13]

The democratic register of the concept was also limited. To be sure, it was more democratic in class terms than its adaptation by Eliot. Contrast Robert Lowie's list of the elements of American culture with Eliot's subordination of the English way of life to a repertoire of ruling-class practices:

> The fact that your boy plays "button, button, who has the button?" is just as much an element of our culture as the fact that a room is lighted by electricity. So is the baseball enthusiasm of our grown-up populations, so are moving picture shows, *thésdansants*, Thanksgiving Day masquerades, bar-rooms, Ziegfeld Midnight Follies, evening schools, the Hearst papers, woman suffrage clubs, the single-tax movement, Riker drug stores, touring-sedans, and Tammany Hall. (Lowie 1966, pp. 6–7)

But what is missing here is any reference to the cultural practices of African-Americans, the new post-1890s cohorts of immigrants from southern Europe, or Native Americans. These exclusions were constitutive of the culture concept during this period. When Boas wrote about the 'creative genius' of Africans, it was always only with reference to traditional African culture in Africa. He took no account of the consequences of the Middle Passage or the contemporary cultural creativity of African-Americans even though he produced his most important work at the University of Columbia at the time of the Harlem Renaissance (Lamothe 2008, Zumwait 2008). And while, courtesy of the anthropological fieldworker, the cultures of Native Americans provide a defamiliarizing device that highlighted the distinctive qualities of American culture, there was never any sense – in Boas, in Benedict, or in Mead – that they might be counted a part of that culture. As Steven Conn (2004) has

shown, Boasian anthropology played a key role in detaching Native Americans from the realms of American history and painting and assigning them to a timeless anthropological present that was in America, but not of it.

This bears on the third limitation of the culture concept: its relations to a set of biological race categories which excluded African-Americans and Native Americans from the machineries of assimilation that the concept established. This is not to discount the significance of Boas's persistent probing of racial accounts of human difference. 'It has not been possible', he wrote in 1920, 'to discover in the races of man any kind of fundamental biological differences that would outweigh the influence of culture' (Boas 1920, p. 35). This was, however, never a matter that he entirely put to rest. Throughout his career, and paralleling his 'fieldwork' among the Kwakiutal, the public school provided Boas with another context for collecting – not, though, stories, myths or languages, but anthropometric data relating to changes in the body types of second, relative to first, generation immigrants (Baker 2010, pp. 137–146). Boas conceived this work as a critical engagement with the problem space of anthropometry: 'we have to consider the investigation of the instability of the body under varying environmental conditions as one of the most fundamental subjects to be considered in an anthropometric study of our population' (Boas 1982b, p. 59). However, while demonstrating the plasticity of bodily types in ways that suggested that immigrants might be just as malleable in their physiognomies as in their ways of life, Boas – and his followers – retained a distinction between 'Caucasoid', 'Mongoloid' and 'Negroid' as biologically differentiated stocks of humanity. Although not organizing the relations between these in hierarchical terms, these categorizations led Boas to place the Negro in a different position from the immigrant with regard to processes of assimilation. He interpreted this as not just a cultural process but as a physio-anatomical one that would likely depend on the disappearance of the Negro as a distinct physical type through miscegenation. Arguing that this would lead to a progressive whitening of the black population, he concluded that the continued persistence of 'the pure negro type is practically impossible' (Boas 1974, p. 330).[14] The situation with regard to Native Americans was different but scarcely more auspicious. On the one hand, in racial terms, they hardly mattered. The degree of intermarriage between Indians and settlers, Boas argued, had not been sufficient in 'any populous part of the United States to be considered as an important element in our population' (Boas 1974, p. 319). Nicely distanced from the urban centres of metropolitan America, Native Americans were not a part of the mix from which the future of America's population stock or its culture was to be forged. The 'skeleton in the closet' of Boasian anthropology, William Willis has argued, consists in the fact that, when applied across the colour line separating Caucasian from other populations, its lessons regarding the plasticity and conjunctural mutability of inherited cultures was translated into the enculturation of coloured people into white culture.

'The transmission of culture from coloured peoples to white people was largely ignored', he argued, 'especially when studying North American Indians' (Willis 1999, p. 139). Either that or, in Ruth Benedict's conception, the cultures of the Indian and of white Americans had – after an initial period of interaction – come to face each other as two impermeable wholes, each unable to find any space for the values of the other within its own. 'The Indians of the United States', as she put it, 'have most of them become simply men without a cultural country. They are unable to locate anything in the white man's way of life which is sufficiently congenial to their old culture' (Benedict 1947, p. 1) and were thus located outside the melting point of an emerging American culture.

My account here draws on the work of Mark Anderson (2014), Kamala Visweswaran (2010) and, more particularly, Matthew Jacobson (1998) who interprets the significance of the culture concept in terms of the role it played, alongside changing conceptions of whiteness, in adjudicating capacities for citizenship against the backdrop of the longer history of American republicanism. Jacobson focuses particularly on the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act as prompting a pivotal revision of the category of whiteness. Whereas whiteness and citizenship were linked in a 1790 Act of Congress according to a 'nativist' concept limiting citizenship to free white persons with rights of residence, the period from 1840 to 1924 witnessed a strategic redefinition of whiteness designed to address the dilemmas of American white nativism faced with new waves of immigration from diverse sources. This produced new racialized divisions within the earlier undifferentiated category of whiteness, disbarring some 'white' groups from the liberal criteria defining fitness for self-government by producing new shades of darkness that differentiated groups like the Poles and the Irish from Anglo-Saxons, the privileged representatives of white nativism.[15] The 1924 Act constituted a new articulation of this tendency in differentiating desirable European migrants (defined as 'Nordic', a wider category than Anglo-Saxon in that it also included German and Scandinavian migrants) from 'Alpines' and 'Mediterraneans' (who had been the main sources of new immigrants since the 1880s, and whose numbers were curtailed by this measure). The logic governing the revision of the category of whiteness after 1924, when the tensions around immigration from southern Europe lessened somewhat as a consequence of the reduction in their numbers, was, Jacobson argues one in which:

> the civic story of assimilation (the process by which the Irish, Russian Jews, Poles, and Greeks became Americans) is inseparable from the cultural story of racial alchemy (the process by which Celts, Hebrews, Slavs, and Mediterraneans became Caucasians. (Jacobson 1998, p. 8)

It was this conception of a project of assimilation organized around a newly homogenized category of the Caucasian defined against the categories of the Mongolian and the Negro that provided the political rationality informing the

governmental mobilization of the culture concept. I have argued elsewhere the need to attend to the relations between the processes of 'making culture' and 'changing society', arguing that the cultural disciplines have played a key role in organizing distinctive 'working surfaces on the social' through which governmental practices are brought to bear on the conduct of conduct (Bennett 2013). The trajectory of the Boasian culture concept is a case in point. From the late 1920s through the 1930s and into the 1940s, the relations between the aesthetic conception of the pattern of culture, its spatial coordinates and its malleability came to inform a programme in which cultural planners, guided by anthropologists, were to regulate the conditions in which American society would creatively transform itself by absorbing immigrant cultures in an assimilationist logic which focused exclusively on the relations between different periods of European migration. The culture concept was, Anderson argues, integral to 'the larger processes whereby stigmatized European immigrant populations were "whitened" and rendered assimilable into the "American" mainstream' (Anderson 2014, p. 5). The key reference point for this governmental rationality was that of the 'third generation'. In applying the culture concept to ask what were the uniquely defining characteristics of the American character, Mead argued that Americans established their ties with one another by finding common points on the road that they were all expected to travel 'after their forebears came from Europe one or two or three generations ago' (Mead 1942, p. 28). It was a road defined by the forging of new ties and by a dialectic of 'remembrance and purposeful forgetting of European ancestry'; and an initial clinging to European ways of life in Little Italies followed by a scattering 'to the suburbs and the small towns, to an "American" way of life' (p. 29). It was in this sense, she argued, that 'however many generations we may actually boast of in this country, however real our lack of ties in the old world may be, we are all third generation' (p. 31). Negroes, Native Americans and, in some formulations, Jews were special cases to be dealt with differently.

Anthropology, Willis argued, was the discipline which, in one way or another, made non-white people into different human beings from white people. Whereas this had earlier been done by explicit racist ideologies, the Boasians achieved the same end through the concepts of culture and cultural relativism – sleights of hand, he suggests, which avoided black outrage at white dominance while retaining the status of non-whites as objects to be manipulated in a 'laboratory' setting, be it that of the field, the Indian reserve, or the public school. These were, however, more than just sleights of hand. They constituted, albeit partially and problematically, a displacement of not only race but also, as John Dewey recognized,[16] the primacy hitherto accorded individuals in liberal forms of rule as cultures, and the relations between them, were conceived as providing the working surfaces on the social – or, in Foucault's terms, the 'transactional realities' (Foucault 2008, p. 297) – through which the relations

between the populations constituting a multicultural polity were to be managed. This was, however, a polity with its own constitutive exclusions.

Genealogical work on the archive

We can see, then, how the culture concept came to be aligned – in Turner's terms – with a project of 'making culture national' which American anthropology largely turned its back on during the critical fermentations of the 1960s. We can also understand the attractions of British cultural studies when, in the 1980s, its introduction to the American intellectual scene provided a critical alternative to this tradition.[17] If this owed a good deal to the influence of Williams's concept of culture as a way of life which, as we have seen, was defined primarily in terms of spatial and class coordinates, it owed more, over the longer term, to the work of Stuart Hall. For it was Hall who constituted the defining figure of cultural studies at its most critical point of entry into the USA and whose radical rethinking of the relations between race and ethnicity provided a productive alternative to the formulations of identity politics.[18]

The entry of cultural studies into Australia differed in a number of ways. It took place earlier; it was significantly mediated through literary studies; and it was, initially, more responsive to the distinctive articulation of the relations between class, aesthetics and the concept of culture as a way of life that characterized Williams's project of a common culture. This is not, though, the perspective from which, in his key text of the 1990s, Turner engages with the making and remaking of Australian culture. It is rather Hall he looks to in order to understand hybridity as a process of cultural fusion of diverse elements into distinctive and mobile configurations that disrupt and contest the logic of assimilation while also providing an account of how identities are made and remade on the part of mobile forces that avoids 'the trendy voyaging of the postmodern or simplistic versions of global homogenisation' (Hall cit Turner 1994, p. 124). Turner does, so moreover, without defining national cultures as singular, bound in an essentialist way to a particular territory. It is rather a set of cultures in contentious dialogues and negotiations with one another that has to be reckoned with in the expectation that these will generate inherent contradictions which reflect Australia's 'dual history as colonized and coloniser' (p. 123) and as an immigrant country and in which immigrant cultures serve as a source of its future cultural dynamism.

If these represent the positive directions in which Turner urges that Australian culture should be remade, he is equally well aware of the forces arrayed against it. Some of these were identified by Ghassan Hage's account of the changing governmental articulations of the field of whiteness during successive phases in the post-1970s development of Australian multicultural policies, practices and discourses (Hage 1998). There are strong parallels between this account and the governmental rationale that characterized the

post-1924 deployment of the culture concept in America. They are, indeed, stronger than Hage recognizes. For Hage's focus on whiteness is restricted to its operation on and in the relations between different waves of Australia's migrant populations and their different degrees of whiteness. It accordingly pays little if any attention to the process through which Aborigines have been placed outside these frameworks. These issues come into sharper relief today when the political logics of Australia's multicultural programmes have become increasingly assimilationist while, at the same time, its immigration and Indigenous policies have introduced new forms of sequestration along racial lines with regard to refugees (through its border protection policies) while perpetuating long-standing forms of racial sequestration with regard to Indigenous Australians (through the Northern Territory Intervention and its successor programmes; see Macoun 2011). A part of my concern, then, has been to suggest that the longer history of the culture concept in its Boasian and post-Boasian American formations affords a means of effecting a closer dialogue between the intellectual and governmental deployments of the concept of culture in Australia and America in terms of their shared properties as settler colonial societies with similar histories of immigration.

There is, however, a further value to be derived from a more critical and extended engagement with the conceptual prehistories of cultural studies. The concepts of culture with which we work always come to us wagging their histories behind them. But sometimes those histories are too foreshortened and partial. Hall recognized this when urging the need for 'genealogical and archaeological work on the archive' to counter the tendency to assume that cultural studies emerged 'somewhere at that moment when I first met Raymond Williams or in the glance I exchanged with Richard Hoggart' (Hall 1992, p. 277). I have therefore sought to draw a longer bow and to shift the angle of vision by looking at the history of the culture concept within American anthropology. I have, however, done no more than scratch the surface of a history that has had a long reach. It was a history in which culture was first conceived as an object of knowledge that was detached from those of psychology, biology and the environmental disciplines and affiliated to the emerging objects of sociological knowledge; it was a history in which earlier aesthetic conceptions of culture were refashioned to provide a new stratum of intellectuals with a means of acting on the social by guiding the relations between different ways of life; and it was a history in which this capacity came to be connected to the distinctive values of America's liberal and democratic ways of life to the extent that such adjustments of the relations between cultures were to arise out of the activities of their members rather than from coercive state edicts (Dewey 1939).

It was also a history that helped to shape the roles that the culture as a way of life played in the early development of both British and Australian cultural studies.[19] Richard Handler, to recall an earlier aspect of my discussion, has

commented on how Sapir's and Benedict's modernist concept of form helped to shape Williams' conception of the ordinariness of culture as something that is reshaped by the dynamic between the inherited repertoires of tradition and the creativity of a people. Handler also suggests that it is the notion of unconscious form that informs Richard Hoggart's account of working-class resistance to commercial mass culture. The 'pattern of working-class culture', he argues, 'is alive – adaptive, resistant, persistent – precisely because its "bearers", the "natives", hold to it unconsciously' (Handler 2005, pp. 163–164) albeit that this also accounts for, in Hoggart's estimation, its chief limitation: its inability to attain the forms of critical self-consciousness that are the hallmark of modernist literature. If this is one route, the literary route, through which the culture concept shaped the early formations of British cultural studies, its career, alongside a much wider set of initiatives that moved back and forth across the Atlantic during the 1939–1945 war and its immediate aftermath,[20] in pressing a case for culture as the most effective medium for the management of morale and the transformation of everyday habits, is another such route. We need to know more about both of these routes and, more crucially, their interactions to get a better sense of how cultural studies was initially shaped by projects aimed at the governance of conduct and the development of counter-conducts.

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Notes

1 Evans (2005, p. 5) offers an especially pertinent discussion of the limitations of Williams' discussion with regard to the American development of the culture concept over the closing decades of the nineteenth century and the opening decade of the twentieth century.

2 See, for example, Darnel (1998). The good reasons I refer to concern the role the concept played in shaping a distinctive American sense of culture. However, having made the point, I shall henceforth use the more user-friendly 'American' in referring to this tradition.

3 The only source I have come across that affiliates its concerns specifically to those of cultural studies is Molloy (2008), but this is to a rather loose sense of cultural studies as an interdisciplinary project. A search of the *Cultural Studies* website for 'Boas' turned up only five references, two of which were to earlier papers of mine, where the Boasian tradition is addressed only incidentally. Searches of *Continuum*, the *International Journal of Cultural Studies* and *Communication and Critical Cultural Studies* turned up similar results.

4 In her correspondence with her publisher, Benedict notes that 'Integrations of Culture' or 'Configurations of Culture' were her preferred titles from the point of view of exactness, but she felt they were too 'clumsy and Latinized' compared to 'Patterns' – 'a pleasant English word'. Ruth Fulton Benedict Papers, Vassar College Libraries, Archives and Special Collections, Series XVI, Margaret Mead, Folder 120.27 Patterns of Culture. See also Modell (2004).

5 Hubble (2006) engages with Mass Observation as a prelude to aspects of cultural studies; Mandler (2013) provides a detailed account of the role of anthropology in American and British approaches to the conception and management of morale in the 1939–1945 War; Groth and Lusty (2013, pp. 158–159) show the influence of the concept of 'culture patterns' on Mass Observation approaches to the analysis of dreams.

6 The final chapter of Gilkeson (2010) offers a detailed discussion of the reactions of American anthropologists to the importation of cultural studies.

7 See, for example, Brown (2003), Hegeman (1999) and Manganaro (2002).

8 I place 'postcolonial' in quotes since – as Turner recognizes – Australia remains a settler colony so far it relations to Indigenous Australians are concerned.

9 Larry Grossberg has taken issue with this aspect of Turner's work, arguing that such processes of theoretical hybridization are a generally shared characteristic of the conjunctural, context specificity that he imputes to cultural studies as a practice. He has also lodged a wider objection to any attempt to articulate cultural studies to geography by seeking to define nationally specific traditions urging, instead, the need to 'displace' cultural studies. [I refer to the essay 'Where is the "America" in American cultural studies?' in Grossberg (1997)].

10 And, of course, Turner's own account of British cultural studies (Turner 1996) played a key role here.

11 There was a good deal of overlap between the anthropological concept of culture and the concept of society developed by Parsonian sociology. See Kroeber and Parsons (1958) for an attempt to legislate an agreed division of conceptual territory between the two disciplines.

12 See Manganaro (2002) for a detailed discussion of the influence of American anthropology on Eliot.

13 While there are partial overlaps between Boas's and Wissler's work on culture areas, Wissler affiliated to the eugenic camp in opposition to Boas's

position on the racial questions that divided early twentieth century anthropology. See Spiro (2002).

14 Boas position here echoed the formulations of John Wesley Powell, the head of the Bureau of American Ethnology, and the key figure in late-nineteenth-century American anthropology. However, it has a longer history. It was a commonly held belief of slave owners in the mid-nineteenth century; Frederick Douglas (2000, p. 55) refers to it in his famous narrative of slave life. These aspects of the Boasian tradition help to explain why, although they had some personal and political connections, W.E.B. Du Bois never embraced Boas's culture concept (Evans 2005)

15 While there is not space to go fully into the matter, Julien Carter (2007) builds on Jacobson's discussion to illuminate the sexual dynamics that accompanied these developments as new norms of heterosexuality reinforced racialized divisions between Caucasian and other groups through the unequal distribution of the capacity for governing the passions that they attested to.

16 Dewey's *Freedom and Culture* (Dewey 1939) offers an eloquent discussion of the significance of the anthropological concept of culture in offering the potential to entirely transform the problematics of liberal government in these regards. I have discussed this elsewhere (Bennett 2014).

17 See especially on this the final chapter of Gilkeson (2010). Handler (2004) also alludes to the perturbations occasioned among anthropologists by this intrusion of an interloper into what they had regarded as their key conceptual terrain at precisely the moment they were abandoning it.

18 Grossberg (1997) refers particularly to the work of Hall and Paul Gilroy in this regard.

19 The Boasian culture concept also impacted on post-war French anthropology in varied ways. It contributed to Claude Levi-Strauss's conversion to pluralist and relativist understanding of cultures (Descola 2013, p. 75) and to the development of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital. Bourdieu's familiarity with the work of Melville Herskovits, a Boas protégé, provided a model of distinctly cultural mechanisms of inheritance as an alternative to biological ones (Robbins 2005, pp. 16–20).

20 See, for an account of such projects more closely related to the social sciences, Rose (1999).

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