PATTERNS FOR AMERICA

MODERNISM AND THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

Susan Hegeman
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Introduction

The Domestication of Culture

This is a book about the idea of culture as it was understood and deployed in early-twentieth-century United States, a moment when, as the anthropologists A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn put it, "the idea of culture, in the technical anthropological sense," had become "one of the key notions of contemporary American thought." Writing from mid-century, they also noted that, used ubiquitously, the term was in danger of losing whatever precision it might have possessed "in the technical sense": "Psychiatrists and psychologists, and, more recently, even some economists and lawyers, have come to tack on the qualifying phrase 'in our culture' to their generalizations, even though one suspects it is often done mechanically in the same way that medieval men added a precautionary 'God willing' to their utterances."

We should recognize the problem. "Culture" is still everywhere—still a "keyword" in our various conversations about ourselves and others, still somehow connected to what we understand to be a usage derived from anthropology, still a confusing tangle of connotations, and still perhaps so overused as to have become the stuff of slightly pious platitudes. On the other hand—precisely because of this interesting combination of ambiguity and discursive centrality—"culture" is also a word that has received an enormous quantity of philosophical and historical attention. Thus, we may be generally certain of a long and complex history of the term, most commonly (and plausibly) beginning with the Romantic nationalism of Johann Gottfried Herder and his contemporaries, or, in the British context, with the history of industrialism and the thought of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century figures such as Edmund Burke, Thomas Carlyle, and Matthew Arnold.

However, I will focus instead on a moment that I see as in effect recirculating the broader project of locating the origins and meanings of "culture." For, I would suggest that the very phenomenon that Kroeber and Kluckhohn described, and the context of current debates surrounding "culture" in the United States, is largely the product of a more recent moment, the first half of this century, when the term emerged and was elaborated upon in a diversity of interesting sites: in the social and aesthetic criticism of the modernist little magazines as well as in the work emerging from the newly academicized disciplines of anthropology and sociology. But perhaps most remarkably, what Kroeber and Kluckhohn saw as "culture, in the technical anthropological
sense" emerged in this period as an important presence in the wider, public discourse.

The new accessibility of, and interest in, the idea of "culture" in this period was noted over a decade ago in a brilliant essay by the historian Warren Susman. In "The Culture of the Thirties," Susman argued, "It is not too extreme to propose that it was during the Thirties that the idea of culture was domesticated, with important consequences. Americans then began thinking in terms of patterns of behavior and belief, values and life-styles, symbols and meanings. It was during this period that we find, for the first time, frequent reference to an "American Way of Life."" Alluding to Ralph Waldo Emerson's 1867 prediction of the "gradual domestication of the idea of Culture" in the United States, Susman described its achievement in the thirties as being a rather different thing than the national Riddle Emerson had imagined. Specifically, he saw this particular version of the concept as enabling a wide spectrum of Americans to do two new things: to understand themselves as participating in a distinctive "American" culture, and to see this culture as a set of patterns, values, and beliefs roughly comparable to those of other cultures. Crucially, this moment of culture's domestication was one of both national self-perception and critical estrangement; "culture" may have hit home to many Americans, but it left them thinking about themselves and their allegiances in a newly relational, contextual, and often critical way. It is this particular way of thinking culturally that interests me, in that it suggests the construction of group identities of a decidedly uneasy and reflexive kind.

I will suggest that the vision of "culture" that enabled this estranged perception of collective identity is a deeply modernist one, related to other estrangements of context and perception that so influenced the more experimental artistic movements of the period. I see this popular embrace of a spatial "culture" as answering a particular descriptive need in the modernist moment, when older conceptions of history and temporality had begun to seem, for various reasons, no longer adequate to explaining the specific experiences of alienation and difference Americans felt from others in their communities, their nation, the world. More specifically, "culture" offered an important conceptual framework for articulating the often uneasy and uneven experience of the achievement of modernity. Thus, the period of the thirties is the moment of "culture"'s domestication precisely because it is also when the problem of uneven modernity—a problem brought but not seriously addressed by the ambiguously titled infrastructural development programs of the New Deal—was a topic of such intense social and political concern.

But the period of the thirties is also central to key description of the meanings of "culture" in the United States because it is in this moment that we are best able to see the real complexity of this spatial rearticulation of culture. Though the term suggested the existence of a range of relatively equivalent, historically concurrent sites, it also suggested another spatial arrangement of difference, the domestication of hierarchies of taste. In Chapter 5, I will show how both of these axes of cultural difference—one horizontal, one vertical—converged in this period, in the concept of the "middlebrow," which was also strongly associated with a specific geographic location: the Midwest.

The "culture" I am interested in describing was, in other words, employed in the service of a complex mix of often overlapping impulses: the desire to locate the "truth" of a particular social reality; the desire to demarcate the good from the bad, the real from the false, insiders from outsiders. It also involved a revision of historical thinking, challenging telological models of human advancement by suggesting a range of possible sites, possible ways of doing things and being human. These impulses, in turn, were related to the significant social and political challenges of the moment. "Cultural" rhetoric was deployed to talk not only about what it meant to experience a uniquely "American" way of life, but to address such problems as immigration and assimilation; the personal experiences of group belonging and alienation; and questions of what constituted the best, or purest, expressions of a group of people, be they the "folk," the nation, or a region in the nation.

Because I see changes in the usage of "culture" as indicative of something more than a rhetorical phenomenon (and because I don't pretend to have exhaustively surveyed the field of instances of the word "culture" in this period), I will resist here and elsewhere the temptation to belabor specific usages of the term, in favor of addressing what I see as the larger "cultural" logics at work in the period. Nevertheless, there are a number of points of terminological confusion that may be addressed at the outset, the first involving the difficult relationship between "culture" and a related concept, "civilization." As Lewis Mumford put it in 1926, "civilization and culture... are not exclusive terms; for one is never found without at least a vestige of the other." A careful reader of the following pages will find ample evidence to suggest that there was a strong degree of interchangeability between the two words, as many of the writers I cite do seem to use these terms (along with "society," "national genius," and a few others) as near synonyms. Nevertheless, certain distinctions between the connotations of the two words also emerge. Perhaps most trivially, "civilization" implies something a bit more rhetorically grand than "culture," as, for example, when Randolph Bourne hyperbolically states, "The Middle West is the apotheosis of American civilization." For Mumford, the key distinction between "civilization" and "culture" was glossed as the difference between "the material fact and the spiritual form"—a distinction not dissimilar to that made by a number of social scientists of the early twentieth century (though it was also common to see "culture" described as the "material" and "civilization" as the "spiritual." Perhaps most significant for this study, however, is each term's connotation of a particular relationship of part to whole, and of a particular orientation toward history. Thus, Edward Sapir defines "culture" as "civilization in so far as it embodies the national genius."
showing that "civilization" connotes a general state, while "culture" refers to a particular (here, national) context. Frequently, "civilization" implies a level of human achievement, often in the context of a teleological view of human progress. Thus, to take a well-known example, the nineteenth-century American ethnologist Lewis Henry Morgan charted the "ethnical periods" of human development from stages of "savagery," to "barbarism," to "civilization." "Culture," on the other hand, often implies something both more specific and more universal than "civilization," in that it refers to the distinctive "genius" of a particular group of people, and yet also describes a common condition of all people, all of whom have their own form of a "culture." "Culture" and "civilization" thus imply different kinds of relationships between groups of people. Where "civilization" invites comparisons of advancement with the "savage" others, "culture" allows for the possibility of a comparative operation in which one's own group's particular "genius" may be understood in the context of those of other people, irrespective of levels of "advance." This broad distinction holds not only in the earlier moments of the articulation of the culture concept, when "culture" was occasionally deployed to counter teleological accounts of the achievement of "civilization," but in the latter years discussed in this study, those immediately preceding and following World War II, when "civilization" can be said to have made something of a comeback in American discourse, in phrases including "Western civilization" and "American civilization." In this moment of crisis, an impetuous "civilization" apparently professed a greater sense of urgency than did an imperturbed "culture." But in this choice of terminology, what was also being recaptured was something of this earlier teleological connotation of the term, in which America (or the West) was also viewed as having achieved a certain—advantaged—stage of development.

It should also be noted that I don't belabor another rhetorical distinction commonly made in discussions of the usage of the word "culture": the one that separates the aesthetic ideal of "high culture" (Bildung, "the best that has been thought and said," etc.) from "culture" as a purely descriptive term of social scientific discourse. This is precisely because I regard the "culture" of this period—particularly in its connotations as the "spirit" of a group of people, or the "national genius," or "the American way of life"—as often subsuming both of these ideas. In this sense, I see myself as participating in a tradition of thinking about "culture" and its contexts that explicitly challenges the still-common assumption that the gesture of "cultural" description and intercultural comparison is somehow distinct from the one of cultural evaluation and judgments of taste. This presumed separation between these two "cultural" operations is often articulated in terms of a species of unfortunate linguistic accident, in which two separate intellectual trajectories just happened to converge on the same word, "culture." One of these trajectories is seen as having emerged from a relativist, comparativist anthropology; the other, from aesthetics, which is seen as evaluative, discriminating, and therefore unrelativist. As we shall see, this characterization of "culture's" history, and its resulting paradox, can be dismantled in a number of ways. But for the purposes of introduction, it is especially important to point out that the idea of "relativism" upon which this account's contradiction stands, has, like "culture," its own historical baggage in need of unpacking. During the historical moment in which I am interested, anthropologists were not committed in any rigorous way to relativism in its common contemporary sense as an epistemological, antifoundational position. Rather, relativism in this moment often went hand in hand with a foundational belief in scientific rationality and the commonality of human-kind, and served, rather, as a largely ethical gesture, which refuted the validity of intercultural assessments of human worth. Given this more humanistic understanding of relativism (which I will specify as moral relativism), it is possible to imagine how it could have coexisted uncontradictorily with foundational theories of value, including aesthetic value.
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in other countries, where the term has been of less theoretical significance. Similarly, Brooks and his peers have long been recognized as having formed their own tradition, representing a distinctive cultural-nationalist strain in American criticism. However, my narrative will trouble both of these descriptions in a number of respects. Not only will I emphasize the complexly modernist contents of their projects, but I will show how both Brooks and Boas were important, but ultimately displaced, predecessors of the fully domesticated culture concept.

In my narrative, it will become clear that, while both Brooks and Boas instantiated different strands of the discourse of "culture," its permutations were often altogether different from what they had themselves envisioned. Thus, it is significant that Boas was an uneasy and contradictory supporter of the work of students such as Benedict and Mead, who represent the most important anthropological contributors to the culture concept in its popular form. Similarly, I think it highly unlikely that Brooks saw himself as the spokesman of a genial middlebrow cultural position that he was later taken to be. Thus, I take some pains in this narrative to show how it is that figures like Alfred Kroeber, Edward Sapir, Randolph Bourne, and Waldo Frank were crucial mediators in the elaboration of discourses founded elsewhere, under a diversity of historical and institutional imperatives.

Before addressing what I will insist is this groups' convergent project of elaborating on "culture," I should note some significant social and institutional differences between the figures who represent the two strands of my discussion. While the "cultural critic" represented an older model of the relatively autonomous literary intellectual, the anthropologists were on the vanguard of the present pattern of intellectual life in the United States in which "traditional intellectuals" depend on the credentialing and financial support of the academy. The academic institutionalization of anthropology, in which one was trained and credentialed as a professional within the academy, was part of a more general trend around the turn of the century which saw the consolidation of a wide variety of new professional statuses and a corresponding emergence of the "professional-managerial" strata of the dramatically expanding middle class. Professionalization had the important benefit of allowing for some upward mobility for those who had access to training and professional certification. This was especially evident in new fields like anthropology and the other emerging social science disciplines, which were far less affected by the social exclusivity which in that period pervaded the humanities. Thus, professional anthropology accommodated scholars from a remarkable diversity of backgrounds who were otherwise not well represented in the academy, including Jews, members of the working class, women, immigrants, and bohemian proponents of diverse radical opinions.

Situated in polyglot New York, Boas's department at Columbia was particularly diverse. Boas and Sapir were both Jewish immigrants from Germany (Boas as a young man, Sapir as a child), while Kroeber was a second-generation immigrant whose first language, and cultural allegiance, was German. Among others of Boas's students at Columbia University, Paul Radin was a Jewish immigrant from Poland, Robert Lowie emigrated as a child from Austria, and Alexander Goldenweiser was born in Russia. Many, including Sapir, Lowie, and Alexander Lesuer, grew up in the ethnically diverse, working-class neighborhoods of New York City. Boas was also remarkably open and encouraging of women students. According to Judith Moell, before World War II (and before the GI Bill, which encouraged the enrollment of veterans) almost half of Columbia's anthropology PhDs were granted to women. Among Boas's more pragmatic reasons for supporting women graduate students were that he felt that their fieldwork uncovered things to which men didn't have access, and that he perceived women to be less in need of economic support. Indeed, several eminent women anthropologists of this period, including Benedict, Mead, and Elsie Clews Parsons were from comfortably bourgeois families. However, it is also true that the presence of these strongly feminist anthropologists was to a great degree self-perpetuating. In the years around World War I, when (as we shall see in Chapter 2) Boas was most at odds with the Columbia administration for his public political statements, the wealthy Parsons provided the funds for Boas and his students to conduct their fieldwork, and paid the salary of Boas's secretary. This unique financial arrangement further encouraged the participation of women in the department, for the feminist Parsons—an extremely prominent and controversial writer on the family and sexual morality—was particularly interested in promoting women's careers. Two of the secretaries whom Boas hired with her support, Esther Schiff Goldfrank and Ruth Bunzel, were eventually sent into the field, and thence into careers as anthropologists.

The wider group of "Boasians" was a large and extremely diverse one, since Boas either directly trained, or strongly influenced, the careers of numerous anthropologists over a period of more than forty years of graduate instruction. There are, however, a number of ways in which a specific lineage and group identity could be created for the Boasians I discuss in these pages: Kroeber, Sapir, Benedict, Mead, and Boas himself. Most generally, we might follow Marshall Sahlins's taxonomy to see them as united by a common emphasis on culture as a system of meaning-making. In this respect, they are united with more recent figures in the field including Claude Lévi-Strauss and Clifford Geertz. More specifically, however, their commonality may be found in, first, their direct participation and intervention in broader cultural debates of their day, and second, in a specific intellectual trajectory, delineated both by an increasing interest in the relationship between culture and mentalité, and in the theories and methods of psychology. It is this strain of Boasian thinking about "culture" that had the greatest impact on the popular imagination.
The other group that emerges in these pages is, by contrast, that of the more fluidly allied one that Waldo Frank called the "culture critics." By this name, he designated the generally left-leaning and bohemian New York writers and editors of such journals as the New Republic, the Masses, the SoHo, and the Seven Arts, but I will here give special attention to Frank, Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Brooks's protégé Constance Roarke, and several of the artists they championed, including Sherwood Anderson, Hart Crane, and Jean Tooner. Their identity as a group was most coherent from around the First World War until the early thirties and the creation of the cultural organs of the Popular Front. Thereafter, my account of this bohemian literary world becomes somewhat more dispersed. In some respects adopting the "culture critic" mantle, but to new ideological ends, are the younger critics of the Partition Review, including Dwight Macdonald, Lionel Trilling, and Clement Greenberg; their work, and the work of James Agee, an artist they championed, is central to my discussion of the World War II period. I also address at some length two other figures who have only an indirect relationship to the "culture critics": writer Nathaniel West and painter Thomas Hart Benton. Both appearing in my discussion of the thirties, these two figures may be thought of as representing a certain antithesis, Benton offering a vehement populist polemic for American regionalism, while West engages in a kind of critical dismantling of all the various competing cultural rhetorics of his moment.

These writers and artists can be fairly called "culture critics" in two senses—both in terms of their investments in the arts and letters, and in terms of the larger critiques of American culture in which they engaged. In the earlier parts of the century, Brooks, Bourne, and Frank shared a critique of American life based on what they perceived to be the ugliness and moralism of the world of their Victorian parents. They argued that the Victorian world into which they were born (of which an almost religious worship of "Culture" was a significant feature) inhibited both the creation of a healthy American culture, and the personal fulfillment of the individuals who could comprise that culture.

Though separated by age, political beliefs, and the influence of different formative historical events, members of this larger group (excluding, perhaps, West, who was beholden to the Hollywood studio system) are all exemplars of what Russell Jacoby has called the "public intellectual." Largely based in New York, they made their living outside the confines of the academy, and worked within and for the relatively narrow audience of the educated urban elite. Though Jacoby hardly mentions Brooks, Bourne, and Frank, they were the mentors of a number of figures whom Jacoby calls the "classical American intellectuals," including Kenneth Burke, Lewis Mumford, and Edmund Wilson. The earlier figures could, in fact, be seen as the models for this nonacademic intellectual niche.

As we shall see, these different contexts were themselves significant in a number of respects for the way they influenced, and in some cases were
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thrilled an audience with a two-hour lecture on Shakespeare. In the basement restaurant of the Greenwich Village headquarters one might dine at the same table with Bill Haywood of the Industrial Workers of the World or with Jim Larkin, the Irish labor leader. Upstairs during the dance craze of the period members even learned the latest tango steps to the tune of "Maurice Irresistible."10

This rich interchange between uptown and downtown, the anthropological and the literary, is personified in the figure of Elsie Clews Parsons, a founder of the New Republic, and a friend to such notable figures as Boas, Walter Lippmann and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Parsons, a leading spokeswoman for women's suffrage, birth control, and other feminist causes, would become under Boas's tutelage a prominent anthropologist of the American Southwest. We may also cite as interesting examples of the fluid exchanges that occurred in this world Constance Roosevelt's acknowledgment of her friend Ruth Benedict's influence on her work, and Edward Sapir's memorial essay for Boas after his death in 1918. In fact, despite the eventual dispersal of many of the Columbia anthropologists to far-flung universities, many remained steady contributors of essays, opinion pieces, and (in the case of Sapir and Benedict) poetry to the important magazines for which Brooks and his colleagues also wrote.

I begin my story of these figures and of the domesticated culture concept in Chapter 2, with a reexamination of the heroic origin story of the anthropological idea of "culture." My account of Boas's legacy stresses that his contribution to "culture" was a product of both the internal development of anthropology as a profession and wider developments in the social discourse, especially the nationalism precipitated by the onset of World War I. I describe his specific achievement as residing within a critique of progressive visions of human difference, which would ultimately result in the new spatial articulation of the culture concept. However, Boas's largely critical gesture only hesitantly allowed for the attribution of positive content to "culture." I thus turn to the work of W. E. B. Du Bois, Horace Kallen, and Randolph Bourne to show how, in the same period, this spatial culture could then be deployed to address the issue of national and subnational group identity. It was the pressure of finding a strong ethical position against U.S. involvement in World War I that would finally encourage Boas also to use "culture" in this way.

A nagging problem presented by these national and subnational constructions of cultural identity was the question of the individual's position within the cultural context. What was one to make of the person who did not seem to fit neatly into his or her culture? By addressing the work of Van Wyck Brooks and Edward Sapir together in Chapter 3, I show how closely this theoretical question about individual agency in culture was related to the general concerns of the period over personal alienation in the context of an increasingly massified urban world. In trying to grapple with this question, however, both of these writers were forced to express deep doubts about the very idea of a national culture. Incapable of seeing an alternative to personal alienation, they also began to see "culture" of any form as impossible, since its existence requires the resolution of irreconcilable divisions—divisions that were, in turn, also endemic to the characters of individuals. Brooks's famous articulations of these splits, using the terms "Puritan" and "Pioneer," and "bright" and "low brow," inspired in subsequent writers not only an obsession with the failures of American culture, but new characterological and hierarchical vocabularies for thinking about the American context. Like Boas's deployment of "culture" as a descriptor of social spaces, Brooks and Sapir were also engaged in a revision of historical models into spatial, hierarchical conceptions of cultural difference.

After discussing Edward Sapir's fascinating, but failed, attempt to employ a dialectical structure to resolve this problem of splits and divisions between the individual and culture, I turn, in Chapter 4, to what is at issue in the imaginary resolution of this problem, found in the work of anthropologist Ruth Benedict and cultural critic Waldo Frank. I end both Frank (in Our America) and Benedict (in Patterns of Culture) as attempting to get around some of the problems of the limitations of culture that Brooks and Sapir had described, by appropriating their own versions of Brooks's characterological device and placing these characters into actually existing regional locales. For them, "culture" were understood as a spatial range of possibilities open to the cultural traveler (or armchair anthropologist) disappointed with his or her milieu. In their influential descriptions, a given culture could be conceived that was not only the individual's authentic, unadulterated homeland, but a resolution to the problems of fragmentation and unevenness that had made American culture seem like such an impossibility to Brooks and Sapir. This fully spatial "culture," deeply indebted to a modernist fascination with the estranging possibilities of the cultural other, becomes the version of culture that is, following Susan's description, domesticated in the 1930s.

Chapter 5 then addresses the context of this popular usage of culture, to offer some complications to Susan's vision. In this politically charged decade, "culture" indeed became an important term in American social criticism—often in conjunction, not coincidentally, with documentary, a kind of popularized ethnography.11 And yet, given the explicitly estranging quality of much "cultural" discourse, it also produced a controversial map of differences within the American political landscape. Concern with regional diversity and the development of class-based artistic movements led to a complex competition over the contours of "culture," in which "culture" eventually became associated with a static social fiction known as "Middle America." While those who identified with "Middle America" as a region used this concept as a positive descriptor of "real" America, the construct suggested to many members of the urban cultural elite a stratum of detached, or possibly even dangerous, cultural
Modernism, Anthropology, Culture

There are a number of ways that one might delineate a relationship between the concept of culture and the aesthetic and intellectual period we call modernism. Indeed, as it will become clear, I see this connection as multiply inflected. But, for the purposes of beginning, I will start by observing that the rhetoric of "culture" itself conforms neatly to certain modernist ideologies.

Critical accounts of "culture" as a term—of which there are sufficient examples to comprise something like a genre—almost always begin with vexation, and exclamations at the word's ambiguity. For Raymond Williams in Keywords, "Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language." More recently, the prominent anthropologist Eric R. Wolf singled out culture for a discussion of "perilous ideas," while Stephen Greenblatt's entry in Critical Terms for Literary Study begins by arguing that the traditional definition of culture by E. B. Tylor "is almost impossibly vague and encompassing, and the few things that seem excluded from it are almost immediately reincorporated in the actual use of the word." The rhetorical function of this encounter with ambiguity and even "peril" is to bring coherence out of confusion, to show how the terminological anxiety can be banished. To this end, culture's denizens often suggest its vexatiousness results from a kind of internal paradox, an uneasy cohabitation of opposed meanings. There are a number of versions of this paradox, the most common being the observation that culture has something to do with both "legitimate," or "high" culture and mass, everyday, or popular phenomena. The salient antithesis is then historicized, and frequently in such a way that one piece of the opposed set of ideas becomes a historical artifact, while the other, newer usage marks a kind of terminological revolution. Thus, Clifford Geertz defined the emergence of contemporary usages of "culture," whose salient feature for him is the emphasis on the particularity of human contexts, as a correction of the Enlightenment conception of the "uniformity" of human experience.

More frequently, however, the culture that is imaginatively swept away is defined as the "Arnoldian" view of culture as the attainment of social and aesthetic perfection. Like its related Victorian models of progress, this culture suggests a strict hierarchy of aesthetic, moral, and political value, which places the beloved objects and practices of the elite (and hence the elites themselves) in a position of superiority. This culture, in other words, is seen as part and parcel of the nineteenth-century legacy of racism, sexism, classism, and vulgar
Dry Salvages: Spatiality, Nationalism, and the Invention of an "Anthropological" Culture

Having, in the last chapter, discounted one modernist fable that would name anthropologist Franz Boas the creator of "culture," I must now reconstruct the case for a nearly indisputable point: that is a more complex way Boas was central to the creation of both the culture concept and the professional discipline of anthropology in America, and that he is an exemplary figure in the intellectual life of his moment. Moreover, I do see him as having instantiated a distinct conceptual break from previous views of human life, a break that enabled a wide variety of thinkers, including W. E. B. Du Bois, Horace Kallen, and Randolph Bourne (discussed at the end of this chapter) to reconceive racial, immigrant, national, and international identity in important new ways. However, I think it is something of a misreading to see Boas's contribution as being fundamentally anti-hierarchical or evaluatively relativist in nature; rather, his crucial intervention might be more properly described as a spatial reorganization of human differences.

To get at this point—and to stress the fundamentally modernist nature of this gesture—I will begin with what might seem to some like a detour, by invoking the idea of the "salvage," a concept that rhetorically links an anthropological practice of Boas's early career with modernist literature, via the work of T. S. Eliot. The connection of Eliot to Boas is intended to be provocative: though a famous cite of anthropological texts, Eliot's persona as modernism's "public face" was that of an often obscure elocute, whose own controversial contributions to the meaning of culture called for the (re)empowerment of a cultural aristocracy. Moreover, the anthropology he did champion was the very kind of work, evolutionary comparative, that Boas is most commonly seen as having delegitimized. Thus doubly antithetical to many conceptions of the Boasian "cultural" legacy—a spokesman for both "high culture" and orthodox ethnological thinking—Eliot's work is, I will argue, similar to Boas's in one basic respect: namely, the common experience of a shift characteristic of modernism generally from conceptions of human history based on a vision of linear, temporal advancement, to a more complex historical understanding that incorporates the possibility of spatial differences in humanity.

Dry Salvages

The Dry Salvages—presumably les trois sauvages—is a small group of rocks, with a beacon, off the N.E. coast of Cape Ann, Massachusetts. (T.S. Eliot, prefatory note to "The Dry Salvages," Four Quartets)

The pun in this title of the third poem of Four Quartets offers us an interesting way to think about the modernist obsession with the primitive and the regional, and about the connection between anthropology and modernist literature. After all, Eliot's islands, widely taken to be the best evidence of the poet's regional roots in New England, are also full of Indians. There are les trois sauvages who give them their name, but also the "salvages" marked in the poem as "haints of earlier and other creation." These latter "salvages" are both of the natural world of "The starfish, the hermit crab, the whale's backbone," and the human jettisons of "the torn scne / the shattered lobsterpot, the broken oar / And the gear of foreign dead men" (lines 18–24). In the pun, the natural (sea and island) is elided with the human (the "savage" Indians; humans (both Indian and immigrant), with the works of their hands.

In this intricate elision, Eliot's "salvages" are not unrelated to the confused conceptions of the Indian presence in North America that undergirded the nineteenth-century project of "salvage ethnography." As in Eliot's figure, this project also complexly elided the categories of the natural, the human, and the technological, to suggest a way to read human history through the evidence of collected objects. Curtis Hinsley has argued that the foremost ideological function of this officially sanctioned activity of "salvaging" artifacts was that of "dehistoricization": as the Indian Wars drew to a close, evidences of the Native American presence (often produced by living artists and craftsmen) at the behest of the collectors) were taken once and for all out of the drama of U.S. history and placed into the neatly organized glass cases of the ethnological museum. But while dehistoricizing the Indian, salvage ethnography also served to bolster another narrative that reinforced the historical centrality of European-Americans. A central premise of the salvage endeavor of this period was that objects of Native American manufacture were both anathema and progenitors of modern machinery and technology. Thus, Otis T. Mason, the first curator of ethnology for the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, found a theoretical use for the objects his institution collected in his view that "the people of the world have left their history most fully recorded in the works of their hands." Charting the progress of humanity from savagery to civilization through the concept of "invention," or the successful technological manipulation of the environment, Mason could assert that the salvaged
objects of Native American ways of life were windows into human history—specifically, into a triumphal American history of ever-increasing technological prowess. The theoretical basis for much of this "salvage" work was thus social-evolutionary: because they were "primitive," the "savage" Native Americans would inevitably succumb to civilization.

By the 1920s, the concept of the "classical" period of American ethnography, the evolutionary theories of museum-based thinkers such as Mason—or of evolutionary-compromisers such as Eliot's favorite anthropologist, Sir James G. Frazer—were displaced by new theories and practices, which focused on the local features of a group of people as revealed by the participant-observer ethnographer. But even after such teleological models of human history had come into disfavor among most anthropologists, and anthropological practice itself had undergone significant changes, a version of this salvage ethnography persisted. "Salvage" had become less a matter of collecting war trophies to take back to Washington than a nostalgic operation, recording ways of life that were seen to be dying out in the face of encroaching assimilation and modernization. As James Clifford has pointed out, the very structure of the classic ethnography is based on this newer idea of salvage, which both hampers the inevitable loss of the other's "culture," and then reconstructs it as text.

Though Eliot's own relationship to anthropology was completely anachronistic, we can nevertheless see some ways in which his "salvages" overlap with the ones that concerned anthropologists. Marc Manganaro has shown how The Waste Land enacts the kind of salvage operation of lamination and recuperation that Clifford described, on Eliot's own surprisingly decaying Europe. Similarly, in "The Dry Salvages" the island-salvages are borne fragments of civilization's ruins, the recovered tokens of the moment before "worshippers of the machine" forgot the "strong brown god." Also, like the anthropologists of his day, Eliot is explicit in this poem in his rejection of a progressive direction to human history. Just as Eliot discusses psychomancy by comparing it to fortune-telling, so he preaches, such models of historical "development" are "a partial failure." Encouraged by superficial notions of evolution, "Which becomes, in the popular mind, a means of distorting the past" (lines 87-89). Though perhaps only a criticism of ("superficial") manifestations of evolutionary theory, Eliot does insist upon a more complex experience of history, in which present and past are seen as thoroughly, intimately, interrelated. It is in this sense that his "salvages" take on a specific function: as existing emblems of the past's presence, they are confirmation of Eliot's suggestion that "the past has another pattern, and ceases to be a mere sequence."

Though we might look first to the terror of the London Blitz to explain Eliot's particular fascination in Four Quartets with time and history and the fate of Europe, there is also something both representatively Eliotian, and repre-
including Otis T. Mason, and to the evolutionary theory that formed their guiding principles, involved the rather technical issue of the proper method of displaying ethnological artifacts. In the 1890s, the collected objects of Indian "salvage" were organized and displayed in museum cases on the basis of apparent similarity of function or degree of technological sophistication, as Boas reported. Different species of throwing sticks, basketry, bows, etc., grouped together for the purpose of demonstrating hierarchies of technical mastery, the advance from the most primitive of implements to the most sophisticated, fish hooks and spear points were made to conform to a classification system that directly followed the schema of biological phylogeny. Just as the orders of a phylogeny are divided from each other by their presumed evolutionary distance (changes that were also seen to reflect stages of organizational development), the categories of material objects were thought to reflect the stages of the development of human civilization, as demonstrated by the complexity of the technical "invention" required to create each object.

Against this elaborate speciation of artifacts, Boas wrote a series of articles in the pages of Science, arguing that different types of objects should be displayed together, not according to function, but to their sites of origin. Under his organizational schema, a given object would be understood not in comparison with other objects used for the same purpose (a throwing stick compared to relatively more or less technologically sophisticated throwing sticks), but according to its relationship to other objects produced among the same group of people. In other words, for Boas, a given throwing stick should more properly be seen (and displayed) as part of a regionally-defined production of a diversity of objects that would also include, for example, basquets and fish hooks.

Boas's intervention—his parting of the cases, as it were—has been seen as both the rejection of the evolutionary biology that undergirded the older curatorial practices, and as the creation of a new ordering principle based on what would eventually be thought of as "culture"—for, it is assumed, this is the unamed concept which best makes sense of the whole that includes baskets, fish hooks, and spears from the same place. If this is indeed the founding gesture in the creation of the "anthropological" culture concept, then it is important to recognize that its central intervention was one of changing the axis of categorization and differentiation from the evolutionary-ideological terms of comparative levels of technical mastery to the geographical-spatial considerations of the location in which the items were produced.

Later in the chapter, I will flesh out the details of this important transformation, but for now it should be sufficient to note the similarities between Boas's reconception of the significance of artifacts and Eliot's use of "salvages." Not only do both Eliot and Boas reject the simple teleology of evolutionary models, but they can be read in their own very different terms to be efficacious the idea that it is primarily developmental distance that separates "us" from the other. In the logic of Eliot's pun, "a small group of rocks off the N.E. coast of Cape

Ann, Massachusetts" is one with "salvage" Indians and human debris: as such, they are both artifactual reminders of specific historical moments and as eternally present as the granite New England shore. However, they are also spatially distant, and indeed offer a navigational beacon for the seafaring traveler. In other words, it is their geographical location, rather than their place in some developmental history, that becomes the significant fact of these salvages' existence. Similarly, in Boas's conceptual reorganization of his own kind of salvages, it is now the physical site of origin of an artifact that gives it its significance, not its ability to comment the historical origins of modern technological achievements. In the context of the museum display, the physical distance of the other is now echoed in the physical separation of the cases—each, in effect, its own island, containing its own salvages.

With this in mind, we may now offer a more specific theoretical connection between the anthropological culture concept and modernism. Conveniently for the ethnographer or the modernist artist (living in an era of increasingly easy and efficient travel), such a spatial reconception of one's relationship to the past makes its objects, and its physical and human representatives, newly tangible, and finally appropriate. In this sense, Eliot's fragments and salvages were not unlike the exotica that drew Gauguin to Fiji, Picasso to African art, or, in the American context, that brought the colony of modernist painters and writers to the pueblos of northern New Mexico. This spatial relationship to the other—this "cultural" logic—is central, in other words, to the modernist primitivism and regionalisms I addressed in the previous chapter. In this context, we may also consider the geographical organization of a book like Jean Toomer's Cane, which takes us from South to North, and again to the South, in search of some kind of ideal space for African-American culture, and, of course, Eliot's transcontinental wanderings in Four Quartets from East Coker to the Dry Salvages, and back again.

The Parting of the Cases

We will thus provisionally hypothesize that the culture concept is modernist precisely in the way that it enables alterity of a number of different kinds to be reconceived in spatial terms, as part of a complex social geography. That said, however, a number of crucial qualifications must immediately be made. First, such a spatial reconsideration of difference in no way negates historical, or even evolutionary, thinking. Just as Eliot's thinking borrowed heavily from the work of evolutionary anthropology, so we shall see that Boas (especially in his early career) worked within an evolutionary paradigm. What the spatial turn may more properly be said to do is to question the teleological narrative of many evolutionary models, by insisting on the simultaneity of the "primitive" with (and within) the "civilized." Moreover, though this spatial turn upsticks the teleological thinking of evolutionary models, it does not imply
Cultural relativists, or in any way preclude the possibility of making inviolable comparisons between groups of people. Put another way: though I would contend that modernist primitivism is something very different from nineteenth-century teleological understandings of "the primitive" (as a stage on the way to civilization), it would be absurd to conclude from this that modernist primitivism was not racist and easily capable of accommodating views of the other as inferior. There is, in other words, nothing necessarily egalitarian, or antiarchival, about the gesture of imagining the other as spatially separate from oneself. Indeed, as we will discover, hierarchy itself can be a kind of spatial organization.

On a rather different point, it should be noted that although Boas's parting of the cases offers us an interestingly tangible origin story of the elusive concept of "culture," it only does so with a certain amount of retrospective reconstruction. For, as Iris Jacknis points out, it was not for a number of years that the implications of his challenge to the Smithsonian curators were realized in Boas's own work.  

Indeed, Boas's intervention represents a very early statement in an extremely long and diverse career that encompassed significant work in folklore as well as in linguistic, physical, and cultural anthropology. As a result, Boas's specific legacy is hard to specify, a problem compounded by the fact that he trained so many students, each possessing a view of Boas's "real" contribution, based on the moment when they happened to have encountered him. The work of Boas and his older students concentrated for many years on the necessity of "collecting" with as much detail as possible the objects, languages, kinship data, and so on, of native peoples. For this Boas and this generation of students, the emphasis would have been on elaborating cultural traits on the model of natural history. For a later generation of students, he would be remembered for his defense of the rationality of primitive systems of thought, and for still others Boas would concern an interest in exploring the psychological aspects of cultures. To further complicate the picture, Boas was widely remembered for waging, at some cost to his career, a polemical and life-long campaign against racism, national bigotry, and other forms of libel-based hatred.

Not surprisingly, then, locating Boas's unique contribution to the culture concept is an especially fraught business. In fact, the "culture" Boas most commonly invoked in his earlier work to refute the social-evolutionary categories of "nature" or "biology" was only distantly related to "culture" as it came to be widely understood by the end of Boas's career in the 1930s and 1940s, as a transhistorical social "configuration," or indeed as the "personality" of a collectivity of people. This subsequent understanding of "culture," often functionalist and stressing the integration of cultural elements into a unified whole, had a strong impact in both the academic humanities and social sciences, and, just as significantly, captured the popular imagination through works like Margaret Mead's Coming of Age in Samoa and Ruth Benedict's Patterns of
world together was based on a presumption of a single mode of historical change: as Mason saw it, different contextual circumstances gave rise to similar cultural phenomena. Boas, on the other hand, insisted that humanity was too complex to impose some underlying unity to its diverse actions and creations, and he presented the possibility that occasionally, "unlike causes produce like effects."

These "unlike causes" were the very stuff of history and the local specificities of human behavior, far more complex than Mason's mono-causal emphasis on "invention": "The rattle, for instance, is not merely the outcome of the idea of making noise, and of the technical methods applied to reach this end. It is, besides this, the outcome of religious conceptions, as any noise may be applied to invoke or drive away spirits; or it may be the outcome of the pleasure children have in noise of any kind, and its form may be characteristic of the art of the people." Technical innovation was thus for Boas not merely a sign of the successful solution to practical problems, but the product of a wide range of needs, impulses, and practices, including the religious and the aesthetic. Moreover, it was a historically contingent process, subject to the specific accidents and changes endured by a group of people. A better way to account for how different peoples might share traits or languages or technologies, Boas invoked diffusionism, the theory that features of human activity (implements, technologies, beliefs, and so forth) spread from one context to another, presumably via intergroup contact. Implicitly, then, historically locatable phenomena—the establishment of trade routes and trading partnerships, conflicts over resources and territories—became motors of change, and the regions in which such contact had influenced local practices became the organizing principle for understanding humanity.

While this diffusionist view inserted historical thinking into the study of human artifacts, it was not necessarily an assault on evolutionary theory. In fact, diffusionism had been useful to adherents of orthogenesis for explaining what seemed to be anomalies in the regular order of progress out of the darkness; and Boas himself quotes Mason as citing diffusion as an alternative explanation for new inventions. Even Boas's departure from the unitary model of humanity implicit in the orthogenetic view could be seen as an effort to patch up some of the holes in evolutionary thought. By limiting the scope of inquiry to discrete cultural contexts, the problem of "unlike causes producing like effects" could be resolved. His new emphasis could, in other words, be seen as simply redirecting evolutionism from humanity as a whole to many smaller, more local sites. Indeed, Boas justified his emphasis on the local unit by reference to evolutionary theory: "It is only since the development of evolutionary theory that it became clear that the object of study is the individual, not abstractions from the individual under observation."

If there was a challenge here to evolution, per se (as opposed to a particular teleological version of evolutionary thinking), then it was couched in some fairly conciliatory language—perhaps necessarily so, since this recent German immigrant was, after all, confronting some of the most influential men in the anthropological establishment of the moment—to suggest, indeed, that his views were hardly a radical departure from the theoretical bases of the ethnology of his day. He wrote, former events... leave their stamp on the present character of a people. I consider it one of the greatest achievements of Darwinism to have brought to light this fact... and thus to have made a physical treatment of biology and psychology possible. The fact may be expressed by the words, "the physiological and psychological state of an organism at a certain moment is a function of its whole history"; that is, the character and future development of a biological or ethnological phenomenon is not expressed by its appearance, by the state in which it is, but by its whole history.

By this argument, Boas conceded the importance of the general framework of evolutionary theory, and thereby justified his own revision of it. But he also, subtly, suggested something else: that "Darwinism" (properly understood) was, in effect, a version of his own brand of historicism. It is easy to see in some of Boas's paragraphs the outlines of an emergent culture concept. In his quick references to the "character of a people," we see the beginnings of the idea of "culture" as it would later be defined by Boas's students: as a complex set of life ways of a given group of people. Also implicit in his emerging view is another piece of what we have subsequently come to associate with the culture concept: cultural relativism and its corollary, the critique of celebrations of nineteenth-century "civilization." As Boas put it in another article on essential practices of the same year, "civilization is not something absolute, but... it is relative, and... our ideas and assertions are true only so far as our civilization goes." But it is worth remembering that Boas's critique of the curatorial practices at the Smithsonian might have gone another way. Just as Boas's historicism challenged a mono-causal, teleological view of human destiny, so might a rigorous emphasis on the accidents and contingencies of history—contact, exchange, migration, conquest—have worked against the development of an easily reducible and easily ahistorical conception of culture. Interestingly, for the full-blown, spatialized culture concept to emerge, it would be Boas's diffusionism, which emphasized contextual porosity and exchange, that would largely be abandoned. The next sections attempt to address why.

From Museum to University

Some of the significance of Boas's criticisms of the Smithsonian's ethnological displays is located outside of the theoretical issues it addressed, in its symbolic function as a direct critique of the practices of the anthropological establish-
ment of his day. The impetus for writing his criticism of the Smithsonian came from Boas's own visit to the museum's collections in 1885, and his resulting impression that his research was hampered by Mason's display methods. His challenge was, in other words, not only to the theory behind the method of display, but to the utility of the displays as tools for the kind of scholarship he wished to pursue. Though curatorial practices would change—indeed, at the time of Boas's critique Mason had already begun, of his own accord, to organize his displays according to "cultural areas"—Boas's challenge in this sense was more fundamentally to the museum as a site of serious anthropological research. In this respect, Boas's early essays foreshadowed an important institutional change in his career and in the history of anthropology: the museum would eventually be replaced by the university as the central site of anthropological work. Of course, this change is also related to the development of the culture concept, in that each institutional site in effect implied an object of study: for the museum-based anthropologist, it would be the ethnographic artifact; for the university-based anthropologist, it could be something as abstract as "culture."

The transition from museum to university, and from salvaged artifact to "culture," was gradual, and in fact a number of academic anthropology departments (including those at Harvard, Berkeley, Pennsylvania, and Boas's own Columbia) were formed around ethnological museums, which were important sources of both teaching materials and funding for fieldwork. Between 1895 and 1905, Boas himself held both an academic position at Columbia and a curatorial position at the nearby American Museum of Natural History. But, as Jacknis has argued, Boas's own rather troubled relationship with the American Museum was a portent of the separation between these institutions that was to become the norm. Though the museum funded much of Boas's fieldwork in the Pacific Northwest, Boas resigned his position as curator of the ethnographic displays because of basic conflicts with the museum directorship—again, over the question of the proper methods of displaying artifacts. Boas's displays, organized to illustrate technical points in ethnographic research, were regarded by the museum's directors as being overspecialized, confusing, and unattractive to the museum's patrons. As Boas himself would subsequently note, ethnological museums served the multiple functions of "entertainment, instruction, and research," but Boas was far more interested in stressing the last of these roles than were his successors in the museum hierarchy.

In this respect, Boas's disagreements with the administration of the American Museum were typical of the heated debates then brewing in curatorial circles that opposed populist goals of entertainment and education against more scholarly interests in collecting, studying, and preserving valued objects. In these battles, the evaluation and display of ethnologic artifacts was especially vexed. For the popularizers—a number of whom took the new department stores as their models for satisfying museum experiences—ethnologic specimens were both intrinsically interesting exotica and important elements in the pedagogy of consumers, demonstrating (as in Mason's views) the primitive origins of modern technology, and naturalizing the consumption of various objects as common to the desires of humanity as a whole.

For the scientists and antiquarians, however, this popular fascination with the primitive could seem debasingly close to such quasi-ethnological arrangements as those found in P. T. Barnum's polyglot exhibits or in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. This anxiety is tellingly revealed in Paul DiMaggio's account of the early years of Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, in which he notes that easy of the ethnologic objects donated to the museum—a Philippine chain, anass, Egyptian mummies, Mafia weapons—were simply discarded, not only because they seemed out of place the purview of "art," but because they evoked a lesser kind of museum-going experience than the museum's Brahmin sponsors had envisioned. In a moment obsessively concerned with establishing and maintaining hierarchies of taste and value (in the wake of the erosion of other traditional class standards), categories were in the process of being established that would eventually separate the art object from other types of displayable objects: the ethnologic specimen, the natural curiosity, the folk object, the trash.

In so classifying these types of objects, and in arranging them into displays, the Gilded Age producers and preservers of cultural capital were also defining the generic categories by which particular kinds of objects ought to be appreciated. Boas's critique of Mason's curatorial practices may, in other words, be seen as an intervention into the problem of defining the ethnologic object's proper function, as a sign of another culture's more or less profound alterity, rather than of humanity's common "primitive" past. However, Boas's conflict with the administrators of the American Museum of Natural History involved a still more immediate gesture in the struggle to name and preserve cultural value. It signified the rejection of the site of a relatively public pedagogy in favor of an institutional home more accommodating to the pursuit of independent scholarly inquiry.

Not surprisingly, this change had strong consequences for the practice of anthropology. Jacknis has persuasively argued that when the institutional site of ethology relocated from the museum to the university, the very terms and objects of study changed. The salvaged artifact, a trophy that could be put on display for the satisfaction of museum visitors and patrons, would eventually make way for less tangible objects of knowledge, including language-based data, complex rituals and performances, and eventually, that interesting conceptual object, "culture" itself. Of course, understanding these objects required highly specialized language skills, interpretive abilities, theoretical knowledge, and other kinds of laboriously acquired expertise. By comparison, the older practice of rounding up material artifacts seemed unskilled, the work of dilettantes. Boas himself was remembered as having said, "If a man finds a
pet, he is an archaeologist; if two, a great archaeologist; three, a renowned archaeologist.” Whatever this comment connotes in the way of Boas’s feelings about archaeologists in particular, it was, more generally, also a disparagement of those who saw the collection of artifacts as in itself a serious intellectual pursuit.

The institutional transition from the museum to the university also brought on other, more obvious changes. The university enabled the codification of professional credentialing in the granting of degrees and the development of rites of passage, such as fieldwork, associated with the inculcation of professional identity. Eventually, a doctorate based on fieldwork would become the professional norm for practicing anthropologists. The university would also, eventually, be the site of the development of the theoretical apparatuses that would define the difference between “professional” knowledge and what would soon be disparagingly dubbed the “amateur” work of anthropologists such as Mason. In this respect, Boas can be seen not only as a direct counterpart of his fellow German-trained philologists who were simultaneously producing a specialized academic literary scholarship, but as an exemplary agent in a social phenomenon typical of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: the creation and consolidation of professional identity.

The professionalization of the discipline had a number of interesting consequences, not the least of which I have already mentioned: the opening up of its ranks from the gentlemen explorers and military men who comprised the ethnologists of the nineteenth century to a much more socially diverse group, including women and men whose origins were in the working class, or who came from immigrant families. But it also had significant ideological consequences for the meaning and social import of the discipline. Professional anthropology’s emphasis on the specificities of cultures brought into question the moral basis of the nineteenth-century progressive project. For some “amateur” proponents of anthropology, the field was not only part of the project of human uplift and enlightenment, it was also particularly accessible. According to Mason, anthropology had “no priesthood and no lofty, no sacred language” because of the simple fact that the field’s object was humanity itself; everyone was already a potential investigator, informant, and object of study. We may now see the Boasians’ conceptual de-emphasis of the idea of one humanity with a common trajectory in favor of the idea of individual cultural contexts as both an intellectual intervention and a professional gesture, one that would resist the view that everyone had equal access to the object of study. Rather than sharing in a common experience of humankind, anthropology’s “amateurs” could now only be impressed by the facts of cultural distance and strangeness brought back to them from afar via the institution of professional anthropological fieldwork. On the other hand, the newly professionalized anthropologists were not necessarily immune from the experience of distance and estrangement. Their own critical position left them no more comfortable with the concept of “humanity,” and indeed, encouraged them to think in newly estranged ways about the condition of the so-called civilized world.

I would argue that it is on this multivalent ground—of the transition from museum to university, from “amateur” to “professional” identities and practices, from artifact collection to participant-observer fieldwork, from one “humanity” to multiple “cultures,” from progressivism to estrangement—where we may properly locate a separation between Boas and his students and their Gilded Age predecessors. But I will go further, and also suggest that these basic institutional evolutions of the move from the museum to the academy and the development of a professional identity are significant features of the turn-of-the-century experience of modernity—and hence, features of the historical conditions related to the emergence of modernism as a particular aesthetic and intellectual moment and practice. It is a point that parallels Raymond Williams’s observation that literary modernism represented the avant-garde of the metropolitan bourgeoisie, expressing the emergent aspirations, frustrations, and class prerogatives of this newly expanded group.

Significant among these changing interests of an expanding professional stratum of the middle class were those related to the Protestant, consolidation, and justification of professional prerogatives. This involved not only the political work of setting up what were in effect trusts of professional expertise in the form of self-regulating associations (the AMI, ABA, MLA, AAA, etc.) but several kinds of ideological work: the development of the idea of the professional as a disinterested expert to whom various interested parties could trust their affairs (be they medical, legal, administrative, pedagogical, etc.); the establishment of specific fields of professional expertise and the separation of them from each other and from lay practices; and the work of justifying the social, cultural, and moral value of specific kinds of professional labor. However, these ideological projects were not advanced simultaneously by all professionals, and they could very easily be at odds with one another. While some professional groups stressed disinterestedness and autonomy (especially those who consolidated their professional identities first and who tended to contract their services, such as doctors and lawyers), others (especially the employees of large private and public bureaucracies that were to emerge around the turn of the century) emphasized the wider social mission their labor helped to further. For some professionals, however, the ethos of the detached professional often directly contradicted the development of wider social justifications for a profession. This may have been especially true in the case of the professoriate, as academics tended to see themselves as autonomous intellectuals and yet were also workers within university bureaucracies. For example, in his discussion of professionalism and literary scholarship, Bruce Robbins has pointed out that the elaboration of special practices and theories of criticism has long been at cross-purposes with the wider social justification for
literary study as purporting to preserve and transmit the humanistic values of literary "culture." 18

In the years that saw the consolidation of anthropology as a profession, Boas and his students were similarly subject to the competing pulls of these divergent propositions about professionalism. Anthropological specialization and expertise was potentially in conflict with the older view of science as a basically moral, humanistic undertaking. Fascinatingly, however, Boasian anthropology eventually finessed this potential dilemma, to suggest that the supposedly moral and humanistic world of nineteenth-century science was both scientifically illegitimate and immoral. This may well have been one of the significant ideological effects of cultural relativism as a theory: it offered both an evaluatively neutral, professional, way to discuss "culture," the new "object" of the field, and it proposed a new moral position for anthropology that evoked a strongly ethical and humanistic respect for the complexity and integrity of cultural others. The professional and affective success of this gesture is perhaps best measured in the degree to which contemporary (professional) American anthropologists still strongly identify with this theoretical proposition as the core of their disciplinary identity. 19

Of course, given the complexities of locating the origins of the culture concept in Boas's work, it must be remembered that cultural relativism did not emerge overnight as a field-defining theory. But there was another gesture which preceded the development of cultural relativism, which also served to resolve some of the contradictions between expert knowledge and social justification. Released from the burden of representing a coherent "humanity" and possessing a specialized knowledge of cultural diversity, Boas and his students became experts in the manipulation of cultural estrangement for the purposes of social critique. Indeed, it is a distinctive feature of Boasian anthropology that it turned a great deal of critical attention on contemporary American life. We see this feature of the Boasian project in some of its better-known texts: in Mead's Coming of Age in Samoa; in Benedict's Patterns of Culture; and in Boas's own popularizing texts, The Mind of Primitive Man and Anthropology and Modern Life. 20 In texts such as these, the anthropologists in effect advertised their professional expertise to society in terms of their ability to offer contrastive examples of other societies.

While the gesture of intercultural comparison would become a familiar critical tool, thanks in part to Boas, it is significant that much of Boas's most significant polemic, against scientific racism, was engaged in the more traditional register of "professional" expertise versus "amateur" pseudoscience. This may well have had to do with Boas's early role in the professionalization of the discipline, and it is a point that I think may clarify some ambiguities in Boas's reputation as an important figure in antiracist battles of the early twentieth century. Moreover, to get at Boas's contribution to the creation of the culture concept (and to his role in subsequent elaborations such as cultural plural-

Anthropology's Public Face

From a contemporary perspective, Boas's interventions into the evolutionary-biological paradigms of his day can seem a bit arcane. Nowhere is this more true than in a study he conducted in 1911 at the behest of the United States Immigration Commission, on the assimilability of the children of various immigrant groups. The commission's mandate was to address social and economic factors influencing the assimilability of the children of immigrants. Doubtless aware of the enormous political charge of such an inquiry (the premise of the study being that members of some groups were more capable of assimilation than others), Boas did something surprising: ignoring the study's mandate, he focused the entire study on the children's anatomical measurements.

The children whose bodies and cranions he measured were categorized as belonging to one of four somewhat fantastically differentiated "races": "Hebrews" (Jews of Eastern European origin), "Central Europeans" (Bohemians, Hungarians, Poles, and Slavs), "Sicilians," and "Neapolitans." In the resulting paper, entitled "Changes in the Bodily Form of Descendants of Immigrants," he concluded, unsurprisingly, that the "racial" origin of the children was a less significant determinant of their head shape or stature than the length of time the children and their parents had resided in the United States. 21 Thus, the central question Boas asked in his study was not the "cultural" one of why people do or do not assimilate, or the social and economic ones of the conditions by which assimilation was facilitated, but the "racial" one of whether or not assimilation was biologically possible. The rediscovery of Gregor Mendel and the development of genetic theory would eventually delegitimate the scientific idea of distinct "racial" populations of humans. However, Boas's antiracist crusade was pregenetic, and thus relied on the same scientific principles and kinds of evidence as his theoretical opponents, the scientific racists. In other words, Boas's critique of racism was largely internal to that paradigm, showing how such factors as nutrition—or, later, "culture"—might influence otherwise self-evidently "racial" differences. 22 Working from within the paradigm of scientific racism—within which the very idea of distinct "Sicilians" and "Neapolitans" was actually deemed significant—Boas engaged in an exercise in negative critique, to show
the limits of such racial distinctions under the pressure of environmental fac-
tors. Moreover, by not considering social or economic issues in his report, Boas explicitly forestalled the temptation to speculate on the relationship be-
tween race and social or economic attainments.

Given the widespread current understanding of race as a social and cultural con-
struction (a view endorsed by both genetics and the work of Boas and his stu-
dents) Boas's insistence on this strict separation between "race" and "cul-
ture" may seem surprising. This separation is characteristic of much of his
work on race throughout the 1900s and 1910s. Even a 1909 article on "Race
Problems in America" avoids anything like a discussion of the various social
issues related to race and racism, offering instead a technical explication of
contemporary biological theories of race. Some commentators are tempted to
see Boas's avoidance of the cultural or social in these contexts as either an
inconsistency in his thinking or a flaw in his political vision. Hence, Leonard
B. Glick sees the emphasis on physical data in the study of immigrant children
as a significant departure for a scholar so interested in elaborating on the
cultural uniqueness of the Native Americans. He reads this emphasis as evidence
of a blindness to the cultural uniqueness of the eastern European Jews, and it
not-so-tactful call for assimilation.46 Glick then explains what he sees as Boas's
inconsistency as an artifact of Boas's personal history, arguing that Boas,
who was raised in a liberal, middle-class, German Jewish household, and who
himself identified strongly with German culture, simply did not regard
Jewishness itself as a cultural identity. He may have shared the prejudices of
many educated and relatively well assimilated Jews of his day that the
peaceful Jews fleeing the Russian pogroms into Germany and the United
States were at best uniboom and old fashioned, and at worst harmful to their
own chances for acceptance in the Gentile world. In line with German Jewish re-
formers of his day, Boas understood Judaism to be a faith, comparable to Pro-
estantism or Catholicism, and thus an aspect of social identity that did not
interfere with the primary allegiances of community or nation. In the United
States, Boas joined many liberal Jewish Americans in becoming a member of
Felix Adler's Ethical Culture Society, a secularized "religion" that emphasized
humanist values.47

In partial agreement with Glick, I would suggest there is a problem in dis-
cerning how Boas marks his cultural map; he may very well not have consid-
ered Jews or American blacks to possess a unique culture along the lines of
the Baffin Bay Eskimo or the Kwakiutl. And clearly, Boas was no opponent
of assimilation. But on a more abstract level, what may seem like an inconsis-
tency is in fact a conflict between Boas's historicism and a moral relativism
that would hold that every culture is equally deserving of respect. But rather
than seeing eastern European Jews as not having a culture worth preserving, Boas's
assimilationist views were quite consistent with a crucial theoretical point: that

There is no necessary relationship between the "race," the language, and the
culture of a people. Boas insisted that these were distinct features of a given
people's existence which converged accidentally through the historical contin-
genesis of migration, contact, and conquest. Assimilation too would have
counted as one of the accidents of history, no more to be lamented than the
Roman conquest of Gaul. Here, Boas's position as an assimilated German Jew
is also relevant. It seems that Boas refused to concede a "racial" difference
between Jewish and Gentile Germans, but even were he to assert to such an
idea, he would have refused to conceive of "culture" in such a way that Jews
as an apparently different physical "type" could not be accommodated within
a German culture.

In other words, Boas was advocating not so much assimilation as the antirac-
ist point that assimilation was possible within the context of racial diversity.
Nineteenth-century racist thought conflated race not only with the mental and
moral characteristics of individuals, but with the characteristics of whole
human societies. Boas's seemingly overtactical intervention thus got at the
heart of that view by attacking both these assumptions, the first by stressing
the individual's unstable relationship to racial typology, and the second, by
addressing race and culture as unrelated phenomena. Because Boas saw these
categories of race and culture as arbitrarily related to one another, he imagined
cultural traits traversing racial classifications, and racial groups crossing cul-
nal boundaries. In other words, his insistence on the possibility of assimila-
tion was not merely the outgrowth of an inconsistent liberalism, but a necessary
corollary to his thinking.

What this also shows us it that Boas's commitment to a certain antiracist
crime in some ways prevented his articulation of culture as much more than
a spatial construction that cut across the logic of race. In other words, he did
not (yet) have a conception of culture that was in any way describable in terms
of its positive content. This was also evident in Boas's stirring 1906 Atlanta
University commencement address, "The Outlook for the American Negro,"
which has been frequently cited for its paradigm-shifting effect on "racial"
thinking among African-American intellectuals, notably, W. E. B. Du Bois,
who was in attendance.

Speaking to the graduates of this all-black institution, Boas made his usual
point about the lack of scientific validity to the category of "race": "The physi-
ological inferiority of the Negro race, if it exists at all, is insignificant when com-
pared to the wide range of individual variability in each race." But he also
offered historical facts—heard by many for the first time—that would become
key pieces of evidence for much subsequent thought in African-American cul-
nal politics. In addition to detailing the "civilized" accomplishments of Afri-
cans—the political and military sophistication of African leaders, the existence
of vital economic and judicial systems, and the admirable artistic accomplish-
ishments.
ments of Africa—Boas also cited African "cultural inventions" in agriculture and iron-smelting technology as crucial contributions to "the advancement of the human race." However, this excelling gesture of historical recovery was offered in the service of a comparatively humble point about human potential:

If, therefore, it is claimed that your race is doomed to economic inferiority, you may confidently look to the house of your ancestors and say, that you have set out to recover for the colored people the strength that was their own before they set foot on the shores of this continent. You may say that you go to work, with bright hopes, and that you will not be discouraged by the slowness of your progress; for you have to recover not only what has been lost in transplanting the Negro race from its native soil to this continent, but you must reach higher levels than your ancestors had ever attained."

In these comments, we again see Boas's investment in assimilation: the destiny Boas has in mind for African-Americans is in no way separate from the wider American context. It is now clear that, in keeping with his usual logical strategy of argument by way of the negative instance, Boas had used the new cultural information about the achievements of Africans largely to show that African-Americans were fully capable of becoming valued members of American society, irrespective of their race. However, in others' hands, this vision of Africa would become a crucial concept in the efforts of black intellectuals to transform African-American identity from a teleological racial concept, into a spatially-conceived cultural one.

Du Bois, for one, was attentive to Boas's argument in both its modest and its bolder claims. Later, Du Bois would replicate the very structure of Boas's argument in the pages of the American Journal of Sociology to insist not only that African-Americans were capable of full participation in American life, but that racial separation was a geographic, economic, and social impossibility. But far more significantly for the direction of Du Bois's thinking on race and for the development of black political movements in the early decades of the century, Boas's comments about Africa inspired a transition in Du Bois's thought that would bring him from advocating a race-based "pan-Negritude," to a culturally based pan-Africanism. This transition is exemplified in the shift from his ideas in the 1897 paper "The Conservation of Races," which argues for a unique history and destiny for the "Negro" race, to his 1915 book, The Negro, which makes the Boasian point of refuting concrete "racial" identity on the grounds of the historical inter/influence and interaction of peoples from Europe, Asia, and Africa, while providing an affirmative history of African cultural accomplishments.

Arnold Rampersad points out the significance of this latter work to the political tradition of "Ethiopianism," best represented by Marcus Garvey's rise to power in the 1920s. But more generally, we must note the significance of this type of thinking to the development of the Harlem Renaissance, a movement of black intellectuals who took as a founding premise the idea that black Americans possessed a particular cultural heritage, identity, and destiny. As George Hutchinson points out, Boas was constantly cited in the pages of the Crisis, and alluded to in works by a number of important Harlem intellectuals, including Jessie Fauset, Wallace Thurman, George Schuyler, and Langston Hughes. It is useful for us to reflect on this phenomenon, though Boas saw his role to be the fairly narrow one of challenging the premises of others who held themselves out as experts on "race," the very scientific authority that he produced as a result was taken up and circulated (as, to a lesser degree, it still circulates) as an important feature of an anti-racist critique. Moreover, it gave credence to a significant de-emphasis on "race" as a biological category and a corresponding new interest in developing positive descriptions of what a specifically African-American "culture" might contain. While this incident offers us an example of one route by which Boas authored a certain kind of cultural politics even before he put pen to paper about "culture," it also exemplifies Boas's successful negotiation of competing ideologies of professionalism: by working strictly within the theoretically value-neutral terms of professional art, Boas was also able to engage in the socially valuable work of challenging racism. Unfortunately, Boas's careful negotiation of the roles of professional and public advocate was to be severely challenged by events surrounding the First World War.

Culture and Nationalism

It is only in the context of another challenge to his social and political views that Boas himself felt compelled to articulate a vision of "culture" that was somehow more than a counter-hypothesis to "race." While hints of the formulation of "culture" are certainly present in Boas's strictly disciplinary work, for example in his allusions to the "character of a people," the concept is especially evident in some of his most political public statements, which, in turn, belong to important social discourses of the period. Specifically, I believe it is on the grounds of public debate about questions of nationalism and national identity that we may best understand Boas's contribution to a fully spatial culture concept.

Just as social Darwinism had been subjected to serious scrutiny for decades by social reformers such as Henry George and Edward Bellamy, and many of the ideas broadly associated with cultural relativism (including the critique of objectivity and the cultural construction of knowledge) had already been elaborated by philosophical pragmatists such as William James and John Dewey, the idea of cultural wholes was also in the air when Boas was writing. However, cultural relativism really came into the popular consciousness
around the time of the United States entry into the First World War, when it fit into a constellation of questions, including the burning issue of nationalism, and the no-less-fraught issue of the apparently new and changing character of American society. Not surprisingly, this is also the moment when Boas felt compelled to invoke the idea of culture as a kind of synonym for the autonomous nation-state. In doing so, he joined the cultural criticism of other intellectuals of his time—not only that of Du Bois, but also the "cultural pluralism" of Horace Kallen and the "transnationalism" of Randolph Bourne.

Certain new types of social description were necessitated by the onset of the European war in 1914. Though the United States was technically neutral until April 1917, most Americans had long been exposed to a discourse on German national character. From the start of hostilities, both Allied propagandists and the anti-German American press provided lurid accounts of the sinking of the Lusitania and of German atrocities committed in the invasion of Belgium, to paint Germany as a nation of savages and murderers. Among the university-educated elite, feelings about German belligerence were somewhat more conflicted, given a widespread esteem for German artistic, philosophical, and scientific heritage, and for the German academic institutions in which so many Americans had studied. However, this estrangement was often countered by the fact that Germany had attacked England, felt by many to be America's true ancestral homeland. Because of this conflict of allegiances, German artistic and intellectual achievements themselves became subjects of the press war debate. Thus, John Dewey argued in 1915 that Kantian idealism was to blame for German militarism, and that high schools and colleges across the United States witnessed a backlash against German language instruction, therefore the most widely studied foreign language after Latin. Boas, who strongly identified with German culture (he helped to found the Germanic Society in New York), was particularly dismayed to find that orchestras could no longer play the works of his favorite German composers.

Of course, these kinds of descriptions of Germany's national character, power, and military prestige were also derived from German propaganda itself, in which the fiction of a unified "German" history and destiny was advanced via the Herderian idea of Kultur. In the American press, German Kultur, Volkstum, or das Deutschtum (the most extravagantly German-sounding of the word, it seems, the more negative the connotation) were then taken up as particularly nationalist applications of Nietzschean philosophy (then enjoying a tremendous vogue), with the effect of showing how individuals could be subsumed under the State's terrible will to power. Christian Gauss, a professor of modern languages at Princeton (Prosident Wilson's former institution) offered up a representative sample of this rhetoric in his 1918 book Why We Went to War: "We are fighting das Deutschtum. And what is das Deutschtum? It is the mystic conception of the mission, the power, and the privileges of the German people which is to be realized by the German state. It has no principles. It is above them." Boas vehemently opposed U.S. entry into the war. He spoke out early against American support of the Allies, describing U.S. material support to Great Britain and France as war profiteering, and arguing generally for tolerance and civil conduct between nations. However, characterizations such as Gauss's of the German national Kultur required a somewhat different rhetoric. A scant fifteen months before the United States entered the war, Boas wrote in a letter to the editor of the New York Times:

"To claim as we often do, that our solution is the only democratic and the ideal one is a one-sided exaggeration of Americanism. I see no reason why we should not allow the Germans, Austrians, and Russians, or whoever else it may be, to solve their problems in their own ways, instead of demanding that they bestow upon themselves the beneficences of our regime. The very standpoint that we are right and they are wrong is opposed to the fundamental idea that nations have distinctive individualities, which are expressed in their modes of life, thought, and feeling."

As an argument for U.S. neutrality, Boas's point had its limitations. Indeed, both his propositions, that states were autonomous wholes and that they worked by different standards and logics, seem to have been granted some credence on both sides of the debate about entry into the war. Instead, the debate turned on the question of whether or not there was something particularly vicious or disruptive of world order about the "distinctive individuality" of the German nation. However, Boas's argument is interesting as an uncharacteristically bold theoretical statement. Here, Boas applied to contemporary problems the fundamental tenet of his 1911 The Mind of Primitive Man, the morally relativist view that societies should not be judged by standards external to their own contexts. Moreover, he here alludes to something very like the "cultural and personality" conception of cultures as coherent, autonomous totalities with their own "modes of life, thought, and feeling." In effect, Boas's recognition that something like the culture concept had already crept into the public debate required him to intervene in his professional capacity.

Boas concluded his letter to the editor of the Times by insisting on his own dual allegiance to the United States and Germany: "I believe this is the attitude of many German-Americans: To conform to the dictates of our conscience, to our loyalty to America, and to our love for the ideals of our youth." As Boas and Gauss's presence in the American academia shows, German-Americans held positions of prominence in American society, and potentially represented a strong political bloc, as did the many Irish-Americans who, in the context of the Irish independence struggle, also opposed U.S. military support of Great Britain. In turn, pressur nationalistic feeling was not sympathetic to those who became known as "hyphenates," and their apparently divided allegiances. If the invocation of the concept of the "hyphenate" resembles that of the more
explicitly derogatory catchword of the day, "mongrel," it serves to show that much of the anti-German hysteria had roots far deeper than the war. Henry F. May cites the Saturday Evening Post's opinion that wartime vigilance might help clean out the "scum of the melting pot." 80

The pieces were thus in place for an American nationalism based on a notion of pure cultural types. If Germans had a national Kultur, then so could Americans. Indeed, even the New Republic, the voice of reluctant pro-war liberalism, used this idea of an American Kultur (critically) to denounce an act of fanatic anti-German violence in which a German-American was lynched in Illinois by a mob of five hundred, who suspected him of being "disloyal" to the United States. This editorial of April 13, 1918, entitled "Lynching: An American Kultur?" found. "Kultur, German or American, to be synonymous with racially justified, belligerent national chauvinism."

For many Americans, the war suggested the definitive end of (European) civilization, and a nationalist American Kultur along German lines hardly seemed like much of an alternative. Many on the anti-German Left were prophetic in seeing a resemblance between the horrors attributed to the German state and the American nationalism that had been mobilized for the war and perpetuated for the decade afterwards. The witch-hunts for German sympathizers, the massive bureaucratic mobilization of propaganda efforts to control wartime opinion, the passage of the Espionage and Sedition Acts of 1917 and 1918; all suggested a climate of government repression in the name of nationalism, only culminating in the Red Scare of the 1920s and the trial and execution of Sacco and Vanzetti. But ironically, it is also out of this context of bellicose nationalism that some would feel compelled to argue for a vision of "culture" with the very different connotations of a positively conceived, inclusive, anticolonialist national "community." Again, Boas is an interesting figure to consider in tracing this development from anticolonialism to "culture.

Boas was furious over the repeal of civil liberties caused by the war hysteria, and because of this issue publicly endorsed the Socialist ticket in the 1918 election. 81 Meanwhile, at Columbia, he was embroiled in a celebrated case of academic witch-hunting, when he supported James McKean Cattell, his distinguished colleague and the editor of Science, who was fired from Columbia for "sedition and treason" after issuing a public statement against military conscription. The incident led the (pro-war) historian Charles Beard to first join Boas and John Ryskamp in support of Cattell, then to resign suddenly and dramatically from Columbia for what he saw as a gross infringement of academic freedom. Boas was retained at Columbia—probably because he stopped making his antiwar views public after the United States officially entered the conflict—but he remained active in the effort to limit the Columbia administration's control over the speech of the faculty and students. It is clear, however, that his relationship with the administration was permanently damaged over the incident. Alexander Goldensweiger, Boas's only other colleague in the anthropology department and his former student, was fired for his antiwar sentiments and joined Bead and many other former Columbia faculty members at the newly created New School for Social Research. Boas, now a department unto himself, was forced to rely on the munificence of his wealthy student Elise Clews Parsons to pay his secretary's salary. 82

The consequences of Boas's wartime opinions also followed him into the 1920s. In 1919, he published an angry letter in the Nation claiming "incontrovertible proof" that several anthropologists working in Mexico were also spying for the U.S. government. He described this compromise to scientific objectivity, and warned against a general climate of distrust which this practice might foster against anthropologists in the field. This airing of professional dirty linen soon produced a resolution of condemnation by the American Anthropological Association. Thanks largely to the dissenting votes of his numerous former students, the resolution was only narrowly passed, but Boas was removed from the Council of the AAA and, tellingly, soon resigned as representative to the National Research Council, the government body formed in 1916 to sponsor scientific research. 83

In exposing these spites, it is likely that Boas was passing public comment on the wider wartime phenomenon of professional social scientists offering their services in Washington in aid of the war effort. But this very public letter to the community of anthropologists—his student Esther Goldfrank later called it an "anthropological bombshell"—should also be read as an indicator of the seriousness with which Boas took the concept of scholarly autonomy. Boas clearly saw the practice of scientists working for government as corrupting the appearance of professional impartiality he wished to maintain—an appearance which he saw as an enabling condition for the kinds of public stands he wished to take.

Meanwhile, as wartime IQ test data offered racists new pseudo-scientific evidence for theories of "white superiority," and as the xenophobia of the war period led to the strictest immigration laws ever passed in this country, Boas must have been shaken in his faith that the dissemination of scientific facts had any effect on the irrational prejudices of a racist and nobly nationalist world. Under the various pressures of this moment, Boas must have felt compelled to reconsider his agenda both as a professional and as a public figure. Thus, in the pages of the Dial, he issued some extremely interesting public statements on the position of the intellectual in modern society that not only gave an account of why reason had seemed to him to have failed in the war debates, but that also implied a new agenda for intellectuals based on a more positive construction of national identity. In "The Mental Attitude of the Educated Classes," Boas modified his position on the importance of "scientific objectivity," rejecting outright the very idea of "true thought." In the essay, he asserted not only that all ways of thinking were embedded in a cultural context, but that, as a "privileged class," intellec-
tuals were bound to a thought-limiting “tradition” vis-à-vis the educational process, and naturally invested in advancing their class interests. In “Nationalism,” he argued that this class interest was furthered by nationalist feeling, which was the ideological construction of intellectuals in the service of the state. In other words, rather than blaming intellectuals for participating in the war effort—an argument made more famously by Boas’s French contemporaries Romain Rolland and Julien Benda, severe critics of their peers’ wartime abandonment of the principle of intellectual autonomy—Boas viewed intellectuals’ service to the state as an inevitable outcome of their own social inculcation as members of a professional class stratum. More clearly than his French contemporaries, Boas registered the central paradox of the ethos of professionalism, brought into particular crisis by the Great War: professionals were impartial purveyors of expertise, and yet they were also (in ways they might often wish to conceal) invested in consolidating and furthering professional power and prestige. Boas’s solution to this problem was (inevitably) unsatisfying, but interesting nonetheless. After acknowledging that his own social group behaved in accordance with its own investments and interests, Boas identified another group—the thoroughly modern “masses”—as existing outside of class, and thus outside of the problem of both nationalist fervor and even interestessness. He argued that the “desires of the masses are in a wider sense [more] human than those of the classes”; their thinking is “free” in that it is less traditional, and their inclination is to the “group solidarity” of “nationality,” rather than to the predatory imperialism of nationalism. As a remedy to the shortcomings of intellectuals, Boas suggested in effect that they take a sympathetic cue from these masses, whose impulses were not only decent, but fundamentally humanist. Intellectuals’ work should not only be an interrogation of the “traditions” that made their thought so unfree, but comprise “an intelligent understanding of our own life, of its merits, and of its defects.” Balanced by an appreciative understanding of the reasons why other nations are equally devoted to their countries and to their ideals.

Though this proposed program of what we might today call reflexive critique largely transfers the conflict between class interests and professional detachment, we may nonetheless see it as indicative both of the direction Lousian anthropology was to take in its “classical” moment in the 1920s and of another (I would say, central) feature of Boas’s basic modernism. As the twenties progressed, Boas became less invested in the natural-history approach to ethnographic data, and more interested in the psychological aspects of the study of culture. This change both conformed to and enabled the work of students such as Mead and Benedict, who would in turn influence the ethnographic work something like the approach Boas suggested here: a relativist appreciation of other cultures, combined with a critical eye toward the prejudices of their own social context. (However, as we shall see in Chapter 6, both significantly departed from their mentor’s example in one major respect, in enthusiastically agreeing to work for the government during the next world war.) Moreover, in that we can see a similarity between Boas’s usage of “nationality” and the culture concept, it becomes possible to imagine how, even for Boas, “culture” could imply something like “national character,” at least insofar as it represented a bounded and relatively stable space of human thought, action, and fellow-feeling.

As various public intellectuals, including the Bolsheviks, became interested in imagining national “cultures,” other kinds of questions would come to the fore. For example, during the war period, it was widely recognized (by Gauns, among others) that the idea of distinct cultures largely implied that all cultures are equally attractive, equally “good,” equally worthy of toleration. This argument against the moral equivalency of cultures looked outward, of course, to German Kultur, but it also implied an interrogation of the particular culture of the United States, and, further inward, an evaluation of the “hyphenate” populations that seemed to present such a problem for the pro-war propagandists.

Given these tensions, it is unsurprising that the years surrounding the Great War represented an enormously fertile moment for reconceiving American identity: interrogrations, largely, of the question of whether or not it was a good thing for immigrants to assimilate into an American version of Kultur. Specifically, the period spawned several important reiterations of the “melting-pot” ideology which very clearly employed a spatial model of culture to reinscribe national and community belonging. However, as we shall see in the interventions of both Horace Kallen and Randolph Bourne, these spatial re-articulations in no way precluded the formation of new kinds of hierarchies, this time opposing certain kinds of “genuine” identity to that of the deracinated—and cultureless—masses.

Culture and Community

Many of those dedicated to joining hostilities in support of Great Britain had defined the American Kultur as the product of the English colonial heritage; for them, it was the (failed) responsibility of the “hyphenates” to conform to this Anglo-American cultural model in all its aspects. In some ways, this view conformed with the common “melting-pot” rhetoric of assimilation, which had been championed by such notables as Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Ford, and exemplified in the work of immigrant writers such as Mary Antin, Jacob Riis, Israel Zangwill, and Edward Bok. Rather than portraying assimilation as a process of acceding to the ways of a dominant ethnicity, the melting-pot metaphor is alchemical, or perhaps (as in Emerson’s “melting pot”) metallurgical: the United States is the crucible in which all the immigrant groups will be transformed into the new alloy of the nation (presumably stronger,
sharper, less prone to corrosion than its European counterparts). Of course, both Anglocentric and melting-pot models of assimilation are fundamentally progressive, emphasizing a process leading toward a common goal of national cohesion.

But with the onset of the European war and, I would argue, the concomitant changes in the discourse of "culture," significant challenges to these models began to appear. One of the more influential revisions of this rhetoric was Horace Kallen's two-part essay, "Democracy Versus the Melting-Pot." A broad-ranging critique of both the Anglocentric and the melting-pot models of assimilation, Kallen's essay boldly argued that immigrant groups be allowed, and even encouraged, to maintain their linguistic, religious, and institutional autonomy. But rather than arguing for this position on the grounds of maintaining "racial" purity (as did so many segregationists and antimiscegenists) Kallen saw the ethnic enclaves, and specifically their cultural nationalisms, as bright spots of resistance to an encroaching threat: massification. Using language that (as we shall see in Chapter 5) became widespread among literary and social critics of the 1930s, Kallen saw the "standardization" brought about by the spread of mass entertainment, yellow journalism, and public schooling to be the enemy of democracy itself.

Kallen's argument, anticipating subsequent elaborations such as Constance Rocke's plea for realist feeling, was as much directed against the idea of class struggle as it was against assimilationsm and xenophobia. Arguing that ethnic bonds superseded those of class, Kallen hinted that if the people become "standardized" through the loss of these bonds of ethnic kinship, they would start behaving like the proletarianized masses of Marxist rhetoric (194). It was only through "cultural pluralism," he argued, that Americans as a whole could avoid this threat to democracy. In the place of the melting pot, Kallen offered two models of this "cultural pluralism": that of the "federal republic," in which each ethnic enclave represents an internal nation within the larger body of the nation-state; and (more poetically) that of the orchestra, in which "each ethnic group is the natural instrument, its spirit and culture are its theme and melody, and the harmony and dissonance and discord of them all make the symphony of civilization" (220). Crucially, both models refused the developmental core of assimilationism, and posited a view of these plural cultures as spatially arranged, as a federation of nations are arranged on a map, or as the instruments in the orchestra are divided into sections.

Among the admirers of Kallen's essay was Randolph Bourne, whose famous statement "Trans-National America" drafted many of Kallen's ideas onto a strangely argued antiaxic position, and offered yet another spatial metaphor for the place of the "hyphenate" in American society. Bourne is perhaps best remembered for breaking sharply and publicly with his mentor John Dewey and his editors at the New Republic, when they decided to support U.S. involvement in the war. He subsequently joined the editorial staff of the lively little magazine Seven Arts, in the pages of which he not only chided his fellow intellectuals' cowardice for supporting Wilson's changed position on the European conflict, but held out for the necessity of an adversarial intellectual position:

Is there no place left, then, for the intellectual who cannot yet crystallize, who does not dread response, and is not yet drugged with fatigue? ... There must be some irremnisencies left who will not even accept the war with waltzs tears. There must be some to call unconsciously for peace, and some to insist that the terms of settlement shall be not only liberal but democratic. There must be some intellectuals who are not willing to use the old discredited counters again and support a peace which would leave all the old inhumanities of armament lying about the world. This essay places Bourne along with Boas, in the midst of an impassioned international debate provoked by the war about the position of intellectuals in society. Like Boas, Bourne acknowledged the possibility of a specific "intellectual class," but while Boas (a university professor, not a largely freelance writer) addressed intellectuals' already compromised and conflicted position as interested parties in the state bureaucracy, Bourne attempted to imagine a group identity based upon the principle of opposition to mainstream American opinion and policy.

It was this position that made Bourne such an important figure to subsequent generations of intellectuals searching for a committed position from which to oppose U.S. involvement in Vietnam. But as these later generations would also discover, Bourne's specific formulas of a community of intellectuals based on the common commitment to principled critique was often a difficult one to enact. This was even true, it seems, in Bourne's personal life. An avid correspondent and a brilliant conversationalist, Bourne's critical edge may have deeply complicated his quest for a community of intellectual peers. Though his fellow members of the Greenwich Village literary clubs joined him in opposing the pieties and hypocrités of genteel America, he found no real community there— and described the clubs as intellectually disappointing and even with trivial squabbles. In a letter to Elise Clews Parsons, the prominent feminist and anthropologist, and a fellow member of a club called the Heretics, he expressed his frustration over the literary clubs' unfilled ideal: "Wouldn't it be an important thing to do to get a dozen very serious people and deliberately set about learning how to discuss, agreeing on a vocabulary, on categories, practicing faithfully until the group was welded together into a real thinking nucleus?"

Though realizing an intellectual community seems to have bedeviled Bourne, he had already found a conceptual model for such a community while on a traveling scholarship after his graduation from Columbia in 1913. He was deeply affected by France's new cultural nationalism, which seemed to him to have united intellectuals in a common purpose and a common identity. In 1915,
he translated this vision to an American context, to argue in the pages of the *New Republic* that nationalism was natural and even desirable, as long as "political nationality" coincided with "cultural unity." 109 In the light of the Euro-


CHAPTER 2

"Trans-National America." "The Anglo-Saxon was merely the first immigrant, the first to found a colony. He has never really ceased to be the descendant of immigrants, nor has he ever succeeded in transforming that colony into a real nation, with a tenacious, richly woven fabric of native culture" (252).

This statement no longer slights Anglophilia, but also the kind of ethnic Anglocentrism that Kaiden had attacked in his earlier essay. Bourne here accused Anglo-Americans of being precisely what they criticized the "hyphenates" for being, an insular ethnic enclave. But more importantly, Bourne took from Kaiden the makings of a more positive vision of what a complex "native culture" might look like, writing, "America is already the world-federation in miniature, the continent where for the first time in history has been achieved that miracle of hope, the peaceful living side by side, with character substantially preserved, of the most heterogeneous peoples under the sun" (258). But Bourne added a cosmopolitan twist to Kaiden's vision of peacefully coexisting ethnic enclaves: they were not subsets of America, but "threads" in a global tapestry. Recognizing the fact that immigration was often a two-way movement of people and resources between the United States and their countries of origin (it was especially common then for Greeks and Italians to repatriate either permanently or temporarily), Bourne offered an interesting dynamism to the usual descriptions of the United States and its "hyphenate" population: "America is coming to be, not a nationality but a trans-nationality, a weaving back and forth, with the other lands, of many threads of all sizes and colors" (262). In this vision, the immigrant "threads" not only produced the unique national pattern of the American "cloth," but also reached outward, cords of attachment from the shores of this country to their homelands.

This spatialized construction of identity offered Bourne a way to explain the complex allegiances of the "hyphenate" populations, and indeed, to see them as models for the proper position of a "transnational America" in the arena of world affairs. In his view, the apparently insular ethnic feeling of the "hyphenates" was rather the sign of their being simultaneously tied to the United States and to Germany or Ireland. This made the hyphenates themselves the representatives of a mediating position between the "beloved community" of America, and a wider internationalism. Moreover, these representatives of transnational America offered a dialectical model for the resolution of the European conflict:

The war has shown America to be unbeatable, though isotoped geographically and politically from a European world-situation, to remain aloof and irreplaceable. She is a wading star in a sky dominated by two colossal condensations of states. Can she not work out some position of her own, some life of being in, yet not quite of, this seething and embroiled European world? This is her only hope and promise. A transnationality of all the nations, it is spiritually impossible for her to pass into the orbit of any one (262).
Both a "wandering star" and subdue bound to other nations by "threads" of "hypeenate" loyalty, the United States could, therefore, neither retreat from world affairs nor engage in an impassioned and falsely filial military defense of one group of belligerents against the other. America's proper role in the conflict, he suggested, would be that of exemplifying global citizenship, based on the model of its already global citrinity.

Clearly, this attractive vision has brought us an enormous distance from Boas' early attempts to wrest a new model of human difference from the artifact displays at the Smithsonian. Under the pressure of war and its aggressive chauvinisms, Bourne offers us a flexible model of human identity that both gives consent to a positive American nationalism and conceptually links the individual to other nations and allegiances, including the totality of humankind. In this sense, it conforms closely to the central precepts of a fully articulated Boasian anthropology, which stressed both a morally relativist appreciation of the uniquely valuable contribution of every culture and every human being, and a humanist emphasis on the commonalities that unite people irrespective of context. Indeed, given Bourne's dynamic vision of cosmopolitanism and his sophisticated understanding of the actual circulation of populations through national borders, it is unsurprising that the idea of "transnationalism" is currently interesting to postmodern theorists of identity.9

But as I have already suggested about Matthew Arnold, for whom "culture" offered a resolution to class struggle via the idea of "perfection," there is a strong quality of wish fulfillment in Bourne's essay. This rests not simply in the fact that "transnationalism" seems to slide from being an alternative model for understanding America into being a description of American society as it actually exists, but in the fact that the very resolution to the European conflict seems to emerge as the result of this imaginative construction. Despite its thrilling optimism and rosy rhetoric, Bourne's vastly influential essay is perhaps best looked at in reverse, so that its wish-fulfilling vision reveals a countervision—at reformation, which is the threat of what will happen if the other hopeful possibility does not come to pass. We need, in other words, to ask, what is the opposite of Bourne's "culture"; what does it not contain?

Most immediately for Bourne, the opposite of the fulfillment of "transnational America" was something rather like Matthew Arnold's "anarchy," the terrifying state of war itself, and the domestic hatreds it would so doubt produce. But Bourne's other fear, representing another kind of anarchy, was related to his own private struggle to find a community: that perhaps the "richly woven fabric of native culture" that he hoped was produced by the coalescing of different national groups was also a chimera, and that, therefore, the multicultural nation did not cohere. In this respect too, Bourne's account built on Kallen, who worried about the particular threat to democracy that resulted from the loss of ethnic community. For Bourne, the fear was less articulated in political terms, than in the terms of a cultural, or even a spiritual alienation:

"Each national colony in this country seems to retain in its foreign press, its vernacular literature, its schools, its intellectual and patriotic leaders, a central cultural nucleus. From this nucleus the colony extends out by imperceptible gradations to a fringe where national characteristics are all but lost. Our cities are filled with these half-breeds who retain their foreign names but have lost the foreign savor" (254). In one sense, Bourne is here simply reversing the customary opinion that would value the assimilated immigrant over the immigrant who stays close to the "cultural nucleus." But—remembering that Bourne talked about his own frustrated quest for intellectual community as a search for a "real thinking nucleus"—it is clear that he possesses a real antipathy to those who remain on the "fringe" of their "colonies." In this light, it is less surprising that in addressing these fringes, Bourne winds up digressing the otherwise repressed rhetoric of race (in which a cultural version of miscegenation produces cultural "half-breeds").

Indeed, he goes on in this vein, evoking animality and devolution among those relegated to the "fringes" of their cultures:

A true cultural sense would have told us that it is not the self-conscious cultural nuclei that up at our American life, but these fringes. It is not the Jew who sticks proudly to the faith of his fathers and boasts of that venerable culture of his who is dangerous to America, but the Jew who has lost the Jewish fire and become a mere elementary, grasping animal. It is not the Bohemian who supports the Bohemian schools in Chicago whose influence is sinister, but the Bohemian who has made money and has got into ward politics. Just as surely as we tend to disintegrate these nuclei of nationalistic culture do we tend to create heroes of men and women without a spiritual core, cultural outlaws, without taste, without standards but those of the mob. We sentence them to live on the most rudimentary planes of American life. (254)

Here, we may begin to see the limitations, indeed, the inconsistencies, of Bourne's vision for America, a vision which also, once again, demonstrates the pervasiveness of hierarchal thinking in even strongly "anthropological" visions of culture. While Bourne is ready to see culture as existing in the multiple contexts of his many "nuclei," he here shows that community membership is a prerequisite for the possession of culture, meaning that multiple memberships (in "hyphenate" identity) exist logically endowed one with still more of it. Having a culture in this way is indeed so much like "being cultured" that Bourne compares transnationalism at one point to the broadening experience of attending a college with what has come to be stereotypically described in the catalogues as the "diverse" student body (259). In producing his elaborate model of cultural allegiances, Bourne thus verges on the very conception of culture that elsewhere he claims to spurn: the view of culture as an accumulation of knowledge and correct opinion.
While it would be easy to dismiss Bourne’s thinking as a failure to theorize a tolerant and inclusive American identity, we can also see it as exemplifying a larger “cultural” dialectic that goes back to Boas’s antiracist polemics. The critique of progressive, cumulative models of culture necessitated the elaboration of a spatial model of plural contexts. For these contexts to be understood as evasively equivalent, however, they had to be understood as whole, definable entities. But as the specter of World War I nationalism proved, the idea of cultures as conceptual wholes would not always imply cultural equivalence. Germany—or America—could both represent an autonomous cultural realm and claim cultural superiority over other such wholes. Bourne’s solution, as elegant as any, was to argue that these autonomous cultures could overlap, both within and beyond national boundaries. While this solved two crucial problems—the theoretical one of how to envision a national culture that was not provincial, isolated, or chauvinistic, and the more concrete question of why some people could feel an emotional allegiance to two countries at once—it did not suggest anything very helpful to those who (caught between cultural wholes) did not seem, or even feel themselves to be, one thing or the other. Indeed, it brought the “cultural outlaws” right back to where they began in the racist thinking of an earlier day, in which the alien masses represented the uncivilized, the precolonial. It is thus tempting to speculate that Bourne’s earlier emphasis on history—and hence on change, influence, instability, and permeability—in these otherwise rigid cultural contexts might have broken down the culture concept into some more nuanced model. But the larger pressures, both of developing a concrete metadiscourse and of dealing with the pressing contemporary issue of nationalism, would shake Bourne and anthropology from this cautious and pedantic course. Instead, this moment in the culture debate set firmly in place a view of cultures as occupiable places, as conceptual homelands, which contained within them specific, “authentic” attributes. This, in turn, set into play another regime of value, hinted at by Bourne, of the culturally real. This too was part of the spatialization of culture, in that new hierarchies of value were articulated in terms of insiders and outsiders, rather than in terms of the more or less civilized. Indeed, it is in this Bourne who writes about the cultureless America of the “nob” and the “hordes” whom Dwight Macdonald would later approvingly quote in his elaboration of that phenomenon of alienated taste, the “masses.”

And in this sense, Bourne also reveals a conceptual connection between his “cultural nuclei” and a vision of the unalientated, integrated Gemeinschaft. Indeed, for Macdonald, “high culture” is to the two degraded subcultural “cult” (“masscult” and “midecult?”) what “community” is to the “masses.” This investment in the saving possibilities of community not only connects Bourne to Macdonald, but also to a range of other thinkers, including various “anti-modernists”; the Agrarians and other romantic regionalists; and, more recently, communitarian thinkers like Christopher Lasch and Robert N. Bellah. Indeed,
As we shall see in the following two chapters, Sapir here predicts the direction of the cultural criticism of subsequent decades, much of which was engaged in just such a search for "genuine" cultures through the reconstruction of folk memory and regional "autonomous cultures." For many of his contemporaries, such locally distinct cultures would come to be seen as alternatives to the homogenizing influence of what Sapir described as the "canned culture" of consumer society, and thus a way out of modern alienation. But, as we will see in the next chapter, this search was predicated on ignoring the complex dynamic relationship of individual and collective suggested by Sapir, in favor of a more basic view that the individual psyche is a storehouse of cultural memory, and (reciprocally) that cultures are "personalities writ large."

Terrains of Culture: Ruth Benedict, Waldo Frank, and the Spatialization of the Culture Concept

You know I like [primitive cultures to be] scandalous, and the possibilities you touch on are endless, aren't they?

(Ruth Benedict to Reo Fortune, February 10, 1933)

In trying to overcome the problem of the relationship between the individual and society, Brooks and Sapir could both be said to have succumbed to an updated version of the paradox that also haunted Matthew Arnold's vision of culture. The problem they both recognized, the alienation of the individual in modern society, couldn't, in their view, be tackled by the alienated individual alone. Recognizing on some level that the problem was part of the wider structural changes of industrial capitalism in the early twentieth century, they saw that the separation of the individual from the social could only be addressed socially, or at least by the smaller "nuclei" of community that Bourne had in mind. In other words, it took some kind of collective to change society, but of course, the absence of that kind of integrated collective was the problem to begin with. The only way out of this bind was either a "faith" that was deeply pessimistic at its core, or a search for some collective outside of modern alienation itself: a search for what Waldo Frank would call "buried cultures."

It is nearly a truism of American intellectual history that the period after World War I is characterized by cultural despair, a deep frustration, especially among urban intellectuals, over the seemingly unstoppable encroachments of such abominations as the Klan, the Red Scare, and the bad taste of the Bubblity and the "booboisie." And certainly, everything I have said about Brooks and Sapir can be read as exemplifying this attitude. But, as a number of others have shown, this protest pessimism was only part of the story. For those sympathetic to the production of indigenous culture, there was also something exhilarating about Europe's catastrophic state. Americans, many thought, were finally freed of European culture to build something new on native grounds. Indeed, it was thought that the New World might even be in a position to save the Old from its own decadence. Thus, in direct response to critiques of American life such as Brook's influential characterization of the divided American soul, some would find in "buried cultures" a highly optimistic, and even mystical, vision for America's future.
Using the very formulae—at highbrow/lowbrow, Puritan/Pioneer, genuine/spurious—that Sapir and Brooks devised to talk about the problem of alienation, some of their closest associates worked out a resolution to this lack of an integrated organic culture by hypothesizing a diversity of cultures, each with its own "personality." Rejecting Brooks's historical turn, in which the Euro-American past served as a "usable" area outside of modernity and its problems, these others, including writers Waldo Frank, Jean Toomer, Kurt Crane, Sherwood Anderson, and the anthropologist Ruth Benedict, imagined the different cultures as spatially diverse, as if arrayed on a map of cultural possibilities. In a manner again reminiscent of Bourne's "transnational America," these different, autonomous cultural sites would then form a kind of loose federalism, creating a homeland for every cultural—and personality—type. Like so much cultural theory, this resolution of the problem of alienation in "culture" was on the one hand utopian, and on the other, nostalgic. The spaces of the "barred cultures" were geographically remote from urban America, and thus, their recovery could also be characterized as an opting out of the very sites associated with a troublesome modernity. In this respect, this search for the authentic cultural space was in effect a search for a "usable past" without reference to history. We will see in the next chapter how these disparate sites are refitted into a full-blown political and aesthetic theory of regionalism. Meanwhile, however, by way of introducing Ruth Benedict's important theorization of a spatial "culture and personality in Patterns of Culture," I will turn to her relationship with Sapir and their very different struggles to come to terms with the changing roles of women in modern society.

The Individual and Society

Nowhere is Sapir's basic conservatism—his final reliance on cultural forms and norms for their own sake—more evident than in his attitudes towards women's changing social roles. A prominent figure in a discipline that was remarkably open to women, Sapir is notable for publicly describing women's suffrage (in 1916) as "deplorably inevitable." In some ways, however, Sapir's conservatism regarding gender issues and his own relationships with women were typical of the Greenwich Village milieu around which his life revolved. Like many of his peers within and on the periphery of bohemia, Sapir simultaneously resisted the demands of the New Woman and craved the intellectual and emotional satisfaction of companionsate relationships with women who were his equals. Hence, during the time of his first wife's long illness and after her death, Sapir developed important relationships with two—feminist—women colleagues: Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict. Though Benedict was of Sapir's generation (Mead was seventeen years younger than Sapir), both women were his junior professionally, and they regarded him as something of a mentor in anthropology. However, Benedict was clearly the most gifted of the three in their other shared endeavor of writing poetry. Together, they cultivated their mutual creative interests in poetry, and their scientific interests in psychology and in cultural configurations. Mead would later single out Sapir and Benedict, along with Boas, as comprising her most significant formative intellectual relationships.

In her biography of Benedict, Margaret M. Caffrey has suggested that Benedict and Mead were for a short time lovers. It is clear, however, that their bond of lifelong mutual devotion, outlasting other partnerships, involved a great deal more than physical attraction. It was Benedict, who clearly thought of the younger woman as both a student and a daughter, who kindled Mead's interest in anthropology. Mead, in turn, introduced Benedict to Greenwich Village feminism, and to her friends Lottie Adams and Louise Bogart, two young lyricist poets who would strongly influence Benedict's development as an artist. After Benedict's death in 1946, it was Mead more than any other who kept Benedict's work before the public. Sapir and Benedict, in turn, carried out a long and vivid correspondence in which, in addition to discussing their mutual interest in poetry, they saw each other through Sapir's difficult years in Canada, the death of Sapir's wife, and the slow dissolution of Benedict's marriage.

By contrast, Mead's brief relationship with Sapir had deeply divisive effects on this complex little community, alienating not only Sapir and Mead, but Sapir and Benedict as well. Mead was preparing to begin her fieldwork in Samoa when Sapir asked her to leave her husband and marry him. Though Mead refused his offer of marriage, Sapir attempted to intervene with Boas to prevent Mead from leaving the country. "Papa Franz" could be an autocrat with his students (it was he who directed Mead to study feminine adolescence in Samoa) but he apparently saw himself as too enlightened to forbid her plans at Sapir's behest. Nonetheless, Mead deeply resented Sapir's interference, later suggesting that his professed concern for her well-being was exaggerated, and indeed simply a ruse to keep her in his place, as a replacement mother for his children. Sapir was also embittered by the failure of their romance, which he seems to have attributed to Mead's selfishness, and probably unwarranted ambition. In 1928, the same year as the publication of Coming of Age in Samoa, Sapir published a paper in the American Journal of Psychiatry called "Observations on the Sex Problem in America," in which he criticized the idea, popularly supported by Mead's account of Samoa, that "primitives" were less sexually repressed than "moderns." He argued that, like eating, sexuality was a culturally defined and controlled act, and that sexual "freedom," generally regarded in psychiatric circles as a "healthy" lack of inhibition, might in fact be a cultural maladjustment. Rejecting the dialectical model of culture in "Culture, Genuine and Spurious," in which individuals acted both within and against their culture, Sapir argued that culturally determined inhibitions related to sex were transcultural and above all "normal"; that romantic love (as opposed to
more erotic attraction) was a universal human truth derived from the universally applicable Freudian concept of sublimation; and that sexual jealousy was this love's most supreme expression. Along the way, he castigated the "modern woman" who engaged in "free love" as "a safe, and therefore a dishonest, prostitute," and described her (contradictorily) as both sexually frigid and narcissistically invested in her own pleasure. He argued, moreover, that homosexuality was the inevitable—"unnatural"—outcome of the new anarchies of feminism and "free love." Though it seems clear that these comments were directed at Maud or at anyone, it was Ruth Benedict—soon to separate from her estranged husband and to begin the first of several long-term relationships with women—who took his words to heart.

Benedict's Patterns of Culture, her most popular and probably most enduring work, may thus be multiply indebted to Edward Sapir. There is little doubt that his description of formal cultural configurations, derived from an analogy to language, helped form Benedict's thoughts on culture. And yet, some of Benedict's major departures from earlier articulations of the cultural configurations idea seem to have been motivated by opinions such as Sapir's on homosexuality and the New Woman. Moreover, her version of the cultural configurations idea as it emerged in Patterns of Culture would directly refute some of the basic themes of Sapir's "Culture—Genuine and Spurious."

In answer to Sapir's intervention into psychiatric practice in "Observations on the Sex Problem in America," Benedict wrote a thoroughly critical critique of normative views of sexuality entitled "Anthropology and Abnormality," and published it, as had Sapir his "Observations," in a professional journal of psychology. There, she argued that the cultural acceptance of homosexuality is comparable to different cultural reactions to people who fall into trances or have fits of catalepsy: in some cultures it is revered; in others, it is regarded as unexceptional; and in still others it is given special regard as socially or spiritually meaningful behavior. For her audience of psychologists she concluded, "In this matter of mental ailments, we must face the fact that even our normality is man-made, and is of our own seeking:"

Though intended for a much broader audience than "Anthropology and Abnormality," Patterns of Culture concludes with a similar discussion of the social construction of normality. In what Clifford Geertz describes as one of Benedict's typical "forward and upward sermon" on cultural relativism, she addresses the existential crisis that relativism seems to produce, and offers good cheer. "As soon as the new opinion is embraced as customary belief, it will be another trusted bulwark of the good life." Implicitly, this new opinion—that about homosexuality or catalepsy—will be embraced through the discursive mechanism of books such as hers, which show that if it is in the range of the humane, culturally possible, it cannot, in the absolute sense, be considered "abnormal."
On the other hand, in her portrayal of the Doba, they are not only malicious and paranoid, but the absolute inverse of the stereotype of the conflict South Sea islander, as described in a study like Coming of Age in Samoa. Benedict makes the incredible seem matter-of-fact, stating of these "hostile," "suspicion-ridden" people, "the social forms which obtain in Doba put a premium upon ill-will and treachery and make them the recognized virtues of their society." (131,135,138). Alfred Kroeber, noting that Benedict derived her account of the Doba solely from an ethnography by Reo Fortune (then Mead's husband), suggested that as a people they came off far worse in Patterns of Culture than they did in the original study; indeed, that here they were "pathological to the point of repellence." 91

Clearly, Benedict's characterization of the Doba departs from the protocols of social-scientific "objectivity." But to what end? First, following Geertz, I think we may see a strong parodic, iconoclastic revealed in Benedict's portrayal of the Doba. In this reading, her description of the Doba (and of the Kwakiutl and Zutli) is less a bold, reductive summary of others' ethnographic work, than a pointed caricature, directed, as many commentators upon Patterns of Culture have noted, at her own cultural context. Indeed, perhaps she is working more in the tradition of Thorstein Veblen than in that of Boss.

But there is another way to read Benedict's weird ethnographies. The example of the Doba, as she presents it, provides evidence for one of the central theoretical points of the book, a point that she states and restates in the final chapter, that "society and the individual are not antagonists"—or, to put it another way, there is no such thing as Sapir's proposed "spurious" culture (251). This proposition, applied to the Doba, suggests that their behavior is organically related to their society as a whole, despite appearances, they are not antisocial, or abnormal, but very much integrated into their cultural configuration. But somewhat more radically, I also think her example of the Doba is conceived with an eye toward those hostile paranoidas among her own milieu who would seem to be exemplars of the antagonism between the individual and the community; in effect she is suggesting that they too have a homeland out there, where their behavior, "abnormal" as it is, may in fact be a "bolwark of the good life."

It may now seem that we have moved from anthropology to fantasy; and indeed, in a sense we have. In my reading of Benedict, I will suggest that her project contains a strongly utopian element, showing not only that "society and the individual are not antagonists" (this despite her own plausible alienation as a lesbian in a sexist and homophobic world), but that for everyone there is a "genuine" culture, an imaginary homeland, of perfect integration beyond alienation. In this sense, her book moves beyond critical parody of American society, and into something rather more radical.
in their daily life. They are self-effacing, and seek consensus in all things. Their unique configuration, to which she applies the Nietzschean label “Apollonian,” as she claims, in strong contradistinction to most of the rest of the North American Indians, whose cultural patterns tend to be “Dionysian.” Exemplary of this latter configuration are the Kwakwàktì, who, Benedict tells us, are given not only to ecstatic rituals, but to the profligate destruction of private property in the potlatch—all for the sake of social glorification.

This language of the Apollonian-Dionysian distinction is probably the best known, and most thoroughly critiqued, of the theoretical points of the book. Benedict’s Nietzschean dichotomy first appeared in a 1932 article, largely on the Zuñi, entitled “Configurations of Culture in North America.”” Because her chapter on the Zuñi in Patterns of Culture retained much of this language, and because the Zuñi were the best studied of the three groups she discussed in the book, Benedict’s description of them as an “Apollonian” society has come under special scrutiny. Over the years numerous anthropologists have nibbled away at her claim (yet again enacting the Boasian strategy of refutation by the negative instance) by citing copious instances of arrogance, disharmony, and violence among the group Benedict described as “incorrigibly mild.”

Caffrey suggests that many anthropologists objected to the Nietzschean opposition as an unscientific importation into the field. She argues further, “disproving the Apollonian-Dionysian contrast became the key symbolic activity for disputing or disputing the historical approach and reaffirming the primacy of science in anthropology.”

While Benedict’s Nietzschean taxonomy is evidently problematic on several grounds, there is some textual evidence that Benedict herself was not especially interested in its elaboration by the time of the writing of Patterns of Culture. Excepting the chapter on Zuñi, which was partially based on her 1932 article and other material she had already written, the Apollonian-Dionysian opposition is far less prominent as a structuring principle of the book than her critics’ preoccupations would suggest. The chapter on the Kwakwàktì, which begins with an account of their “Dionysian” religious practices,switches midway from discussing this feature that Benedict says unites them with most North American Indians, to focus on “the pattern of culture which was peculiar to them”; namely, the Kwakwàktì “megalomaniac,” expressed particularly in the profligacy of the potlatch.

In fact, if one brackets the Apollonian-Dionysian contrast, it becomes clear that the ethnographies distinguish the Zuñi from the Kwakwàktì not so much on the grounds that one culture is sober and the other is ecstatic, but that one is communal and the other is individualistic. This difference is evident in the way Benedict explains the two cultures’ approaches to death. The Kwakwàktì, Benedict tells us, saw the death of a loved one as a personal affront, and as a potential source of shame for the survivor—often mortified only through the violent taking of another life. The Zuñi, by contrast, confront death with a minimum of grief and loss. In general, compared to the “megalomaniac” Kwakwàktì, “the Zuñi people . . . devote themselves to the constrained forms of their society. They seek individuality in them. They do not think of office, and possession of priesthood duties, as steps in the upward path of ambition” (104). On the other hand, Benedict’s description of the Kwakwàktì, who build potlatch bonfires of canoes and other valued objects for their social glorification, is explicitly parodic of American conspicuous consumption, to the extent that their customs are compared to the behavior of the residents of the American city “Middletown,” the subject of Robert Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd’s famous 1929 community study of that name (discussed at greater length in Chapter 5).

It is an unattractive picture. In Kwakwàktì life the rivalry is carried out in such a way that all success must be built upon the ruin of rivals, in Middletown in such a way that individual choices and direct satisfactions are reduced to a minimum and conformity is sought beyond all other human gratifications. In both cases it is clear that wealth is not sought and valued for its direct satisfaction of human needs but as a series of counters in the game of rivalry. If the will to victory were eliminated from the economic life, as it is in Zuñi, distribution and consumption of wealth would follow quite different “laws.” (347–48).

From this last sentence, we might be ready to see the Zuñi as exemplifying a cultural pattern in some significant respects “better” than that of the Kwakwàktì. But Benedict is careful to stress that the Kwakwàktì’s opposite, the communal Zuñi, do not enjoy their individual humanity to its fullest, and thus, Zuñi culture is “far from atypical.”

It has no place, for instance, for dispositions we are accustomed to value highly, such as force of will or personal initiative or the disposition to take up arms against a sea of troubles. It is incorrigibly mild. The group activity that fills existence in Zuñi is out of touch with human life—with both, love, death, success, failure, and prestige. A ritual potlatch serves its purpose and minimizes more human interests. The freedom from any forms of social exploitation or of social suction appears on the other side of the coin as endless ceremonialism not designed to serve major ends of human existence. It is the old inescapable fact that every upper has its lower, every right side its left. (240).

Rather than offering a better alternative to the Kwakwàktì configuration, the Zuñi are shown to exemplify a pattern that takes the opposite tendency, communalism, to extremes. By now, Benedict’s distinction between the Zuñi and the Kwakwàktì should sound like a familiar one in the context of this narrative. It is, in fact, similar to Brooks’s distinction between the Puritan and Pioneer tendencies in American culture, in which the Kwakwàktì play the part of the grasping, mercenary Pioneers, and the Zuñi are the bloodless, “highbrow” Puritans. There is, however, one crucial distinction between Brooks’s social crit-
cism and Benedict's new construction of the dichotomy. Brooks—and Sapir—envisioned the different tendencies in American life as rooted in specific historical contexts, and handed down to contemporary Americans despite the fact that they were no longer relevant to present conditions. This was Sapir's "spurious" culture, the product of what the social science of this period so often referred to as "cultural lag." For Brookes, the new American society that might emerge out of the fragmented present would be built on the appropriation of a "usable past" to contemporary ends. Though Benedict's cultures clearly serve as object lessons of a sort for her contemporary American society, they are not part of some historical narrative of a larger American culture which must be healed or restored. Indeed, if anything, it is the individual cultures that are endangered and subject to the depredations of historical change—hence, her use of the slightly elegiac past tense throughout her chapter on the Kwakiutl. Rather, the connection between an American culture and these other cultural sites of the Kwakiutl and the Zulus is an essentially analogical one, in which each of the cultures she describes is a distinctive space of belief and behavior. This spatial conception of cultural possibilities seems to me also to be the central significance of Benedict's famous allegory of culture, which also serves as the book's invocation. Of Ramon, her "Digger" Indian informant, she writes: "One day, without transition, Ramon broke into upon his descriptions of grinding mesquite and preparing acorn soup. 'In the beginning,' he said, 'God gave to every people a cup, a cup of clay, and from this cup they drank their life. . . . They all dipped into the water,' he continued, 'but their cups were different.' Our cup is broken now. It has passed away." (21–22).

But then where do the "paranoidic" Dobs fit into her story? They could of course simply be a third "cup of clay," and a startling example of her point about the cultural contextuality of normality and deviance. But I think there is something more at work here, that makes the Dobs a third example, less of an "odd culture out," as Boon puts it, than a negative synthesis of the cultural traits of the Zulu and the Kwakiutl. (2) The Dobs are, after all, both communal and individualistic, after a fashion: communal to the extent that they look to their village as a safe haven from the harmful magic of other villages, and individualistic to the extent that they constantly assume that they are the objects of malicious intent. Dobs culture acknowledges the terrible power of both the community and the individual, and organizes social life in such a way as to balance out the menacing force of one with the other. In this sense, Dobs culture suggests the worst of communal constraint and self-aggrandizement, expressing this "paranoidic" combination in its unusual social arrangements. If such a synthesis of the worst possible features of a society exists (albeit, safely offshore in Melanesia), then surely a better one may also be possible. In making the Dobs into a negative synthesis of Zulu and Kwakiutl patterns, I see Benedict as also figuratively opening up the space for a "good" society, constructed as a melding of the best of her two polar opposite contexts: a new combination of the social and economic generosity of the Zulu combined with the self-gratification that the Kwakiutl pattern affords. However, this combination would not result in a rearrangement of familiar social forms but in some altogether different arrangement, which is therefore unnameable and interpretable. In this sense, one detects the presence of a fourth ethnohistory in her text—the last one unwritten.

In this reading, Benedict can be seen as less interested in cultural relativism for the purposes of social reform (indeed, we will see in Chapter 6 that her commitment to cultural relativism is historically limited), than in holding out the possibility of a radically new, other place, as accepting and tolerant of human individuality as the Dobs were hostile and paranoid. And, of course, because every individual is different, the individual is also offered the opus of a choice of cups of clay, of cultural possibilities. This hopeful vision of an end to social alienation stands in stark contrast with Sapir, who—to extend the conceit—saw the individual as an entity swimming in the "water of life," within the cultural cup, or indeed (to use Benedict's phrase), "submerged in an overpowering ocean" of custom (251). Benedict's construction offers a dramatically different possibility. Standing before a map of cultures, a terrain of potential configurations, it is for the individual who sees herself as working outside of the conventions of her current context to imagine a perfect space that is wholly hers.

"Buried Cultures"

Benedict's arguments about race, heredity, homosexuality, and cultural relativism all had significant, and remarkably long-lived, popular impact. More than a decade after its original publication, a paperback twenty-five cent edition of Patterns of Culture sold ten thousand copies in one year. Works in the same "culture and personality" vein—by Mead, Benedict, and Erik Erikson in particular—captured the popular imagination just as another social-scientific books have before or since, enabling general readers to think about national and social identity in a basically new way, in which citizens of the United States imagined that they thought and behaved and lived in the context of a distantly "American" cultural pattern. And yet, as Alfred Kroeber noted in his "official" review of Patterns of Culture in American Anthropologist, many of the issues that Benedict addressed were by 1935 "somewhat threadbare" to her colleagues in anthropology. Indeed, what may have been most influential about Benedict's work (besides the vividness and accessibility of her prose) was the social scientific impetus it gave to ideas that already had some currency in the wider social discourse.

In literary circles of the postwar period, Brooks and his colleagues encouraged a strain of modernist writing that was both formally experimental and
Notes

The Domestication of Culture


2. See Raymond Williams, Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society (London: Croom Helm, 1973).

3. The most influential treatment of this earlier history of "culture" in the British context is Williams, Culture and Society: 1780–1950 (1958; reprint, New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); see also Kroeber and Kluckhohn, Culture.

4. Christopher Herberg's important work on the Victorian context of the culture concept supports my point about the significance of this period for the development of the discourse of "culture." Though Herberg's study focuses on authors and issues of this later, earlier, context, he nevertheless views figures central to my study—especially Ralph Barton—whom he describes as "possibly the most influential of all writers in crystallizing the discourse of culture"—as expressing the concept of culture in its most complete form. In other words, his study to some degree locates traces of their "culture" in its Victorian precedents. Christopher Herberg, Culture and Immense: Ethnographic Imagination in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 23–24.


7. Lewis Mumford, The Golden Day: A Study in American Experience and Culture (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926). Historians Charles and Mary Beard showed that "civilization" also comprised an important keyword of this same moment, particularly in the early years of the twentieth century, and in those surrounding World War II. The Beard's usage of "civilization" both overlaps and differs from typical conceptions of "culture" in the period, at times suggesting something more technological or more ideologically than "culture," at times meaning something only perhaps a little grander than "culture." Some of this complexity is reflected in their statement in the preface of The American Spirit: "Out of our studies extending over many years we have reached the conviction that no idea, such as democracy, liberty, or the American way of life, expresses the American spirit so coherently, comprehensively, and systematically as does the idea of civilization." Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, The American Spirit (1942; reprint, New York: Collier, 1971), 19, 99. See also their popularly influential history, The Rise of American Civilization (New York: Macmillan, 1930).


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11. The complexity of the relationship between "culture" and "civilization" is, however, also revealed in Morgan's work, where he also speculates that each of his "ethical periods" has a distinct culture and exhibits a mode of life more or less special and peculiar to itself. In other words, the road to civilization accommodates myriad cultures. This relationship between the two concepts would be reversed in Oswald Spengler's extremely influential The Decline of the West translated into English in 1925, where "civilization" represented the final, decadent stage of the development of "culture." Lewis Henry Morgan, Ancient Society, ed. Leslie A. White (1877; reprint, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964); H. Kroeber and Kluckhohn, Culture, 28, 48–49.

12. Raymond Williams's widely influential work on the idea of culture challenged the theoretical separability of these two stages of the definition of the word (see, for example, Williams, Culture and Society; and "Culture," in Keywords. Nevertheless, the assumption of two discrete traditions of "cultural" thought continues. For recent examples of this view of the history of culture, see Russell Jacoby, "The Myth of Multiculturalism," New Left Review, no. 208 (November–December 1994): 121–26; and Virginia Dominguez, "The Messy Side of Cultural Politics," South Atlantic Quarterly 91, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 19–42. Dominguez's article is discussed at length in Chapter 7.

13. Franz Boas's work is a good example of this: not only was Boas committed to the empirical project of science, and to an understanding of a universal humanity, but he had little trouble making distinctions between the "primitive" and the "civilized" in matters of, for example, technological superiority. What he adamantly refused to consider was the possibility that "primitive" was in any broader, human sense "inferior." See Boas, "Modern Life and Primitive Culture," in Anthropology and Modern Life (1928; reprint, New York: Norton, 1962), 202–46. See also Melville E. Spaul, who offers a useful taxonomy of cultural relations in anthropology and methodically points out that epistemological relativism—the kind we may attribute to B. L. Whorf, Clifford Geertz, and the symbolic anthropologists generally—was a comparatively recent theoretical development in the field. Speas, "Cultural Behaviorism and the Future of Anthropology," in Rethinking Cultural Anthropology, ed. George E. Marcus (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992), 124–51; and, for an extended philosophical critique of mental relativism, see Michele M. Moodie-Adams, Fieldwork in Familiar Places: Mobility, Culture, and Philosophy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).


15. Margaret Mead would be the exception who proves the rule here: though her primary source of institutional support was as a curator at the American Museum of Natural History, she did nonetheless obtain the academic credentials of a PhD, and maintained strong ties to Columbia's anthropology department throughout her career. See Jane Howard, Margaret Mead: A Life (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984).

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16. This "professional-managerial" designation is, I am aware, historically vexed. In 1977 Barbara Ehrenreich and John Dittmer proposed the existence of the "professional-managerial class" (PMC), to designate the doctors, lawyers, teachers, social workers, and professional managers who emerged as a coherent social group at the turn of the century in the United States. The designation has drawn debate in Marxist circles largely over the question of where this group's class allegiances lie, and thus whether or not it is properly a class separate from that of the capitalists, the workers, or the traditional petit bourgeois. Though I defer to these criticisms, and with Stanley Aronowitz describes the PMC as a "state" of the middle class, I think it is worth noting that at the turn of the century this group does seem to have acted very like a class, in its promotion and protection of interests related to the central issue of professionalization—namely, the production and protection of monopolies of information and expertise. Barbara Ehrenreich and John Dittmer, "The Professional-Managerial Class," in Between Labor and Capital, ed. Pat Waller (Montreal: Black Rose, 1978), 5–48; and Stanley Aronowitz, "The Professional-Managerial Class or Middle States," in Between Labor and Capital, 213–42; see also Robert H. Wiebe, The Search for Order 1877–1920: The Making of America Series, ed. David Donald (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 111–37.

17. Though important work was done on African-American culture by Boasian anthropologists (notably Melville Herskovits), it would not be fair to say that anthropologists as a field offered exceptional opportunities for blacks. Zora Neale Hurston's widely discussed relationship with the Columbia anthropology department is a case in point. Not only was Hurston's academic career so plagued by financial troubles that she left Columbia without ever taking an advanced degree, but she occupied a strange status in anthropology (similar to that of the several Native American anthropologists of this period, including the Boas-trained Ella Cara Deloria), as both anthropologist and a species of native informant. Vanessa J. Williams Jr., Rebuilding Race: Front Boas and His Contemporaries (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 48–51; Ruth Behar, "Introduction: Out of Exile," Janet L. Fino, "Ella Cara Deloria and Mooning Dove: Writing for Cultures, Writing Against the Grain," and Graziela Hernández, "Multiple Subjectivities and Strategic Positionality: Zora Neale Hurston's Experimental Ethnographies," in Women Writing Culture, ed. Ruth Behar and Deborah A. Gordon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 18, 131–47, 148–65.


20. Marshall Sahlins, Culture and Practical Reason (Chicago: University of Chi- cago Press, 1976); and see Murphy, "Anthropology at Columbia." Another name of the
Boasian tradition, invested primarily in analyzing social behavior (Sahlins's 'practical reason'), would include the work of Robert Lowie, Paul Radin, and Julian Steward.


22. Russell Jacoby, The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe (New York: Noonday, 1987), 17. For an extended discussion of the connections between Mannfrodt and Brooks, Frank, and Bourke, see Casey Nelson Blake, Beloved Community: The Cultural Criticism of Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank, and Lewis Manfrodt (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). The relationship between Burke and these men was more fraught, but nevertheless fruitful. Shortly after the twenty-five-year-old Burke published an extremely negative review of Brook's The Ordeal of Mark Twain which also savaged the work of Waldo Frank. Burke wrote to Malcolm Cowley to express his delight at meeting Brooks and Frank, who were not only friendly but supportive of his career. "I have felt the solidest station of my life when I think that I could go at the very basis of these men's work, could muster every argument against it that I could invent, could convince them that my objections were of validity, and could retain their respect.... I have gotten closer to two people also share my own religion, the desire to decent." Kenneth Burke, "Art and the Hope Chest," Vanity Fair, December 1922, 59, 102; Paul Jay, ed., The Selected Correspondence of Kenneth Burke and Malcolm Cowley (New York: Viking, 1988), 133-34.


Chapter 1

Modernism, Anthropology, Culture


3. Indeed, one might say that there is a rather modernist desire on the part of anthropology's historians to find vanguard and dramatic breaks with the past in its disciplinary foundations. Edward Shils goes so far as to describe Boas's British counterpart, Malinowski, as an anthropological Biron or Maxweiller, whose avant-garde movement was British Functionism and whose manifesto was Argonauts of the Western Pacific. Against this heroic account, Malinowski rightly points out that Malinowski's technical innovations of functionalist theory and participant observation were not really so much "masterminded" as heavily promulgated by Ian Auldmer, "Social Anthropology and the Decline of Modernism," in Essays in Modernity, ed. Joans Overby (London: Tavistock Publications, 1985), 47-70; Shils, "Out of Context: The Persuasive Fictions of Anthropology," in Modernist Anthropology: From Fieldwork to Text, ed. Marc Manganaro (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 96.


15. For example, Arnold's characterization of social classes in Culture and Anomry as "Barbarians." "Philistines," and "Populists" is an interestingly disguised version
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22. The central discussion of modernity in this context is Marshall Berman, All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity (New York: Penguin, 1982); see also Anderson, "Modernity and Revolution."

23. Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991), 307. This point is central not only to Jameson's characterization of modernism, but to his differentiation between modernism and postmodernism, which he sees as expressing a much more completely realized modernity.

24. Marquis, Hopes and Ashes, 27. For example, Marquis notes that the film The Search for Everything (1988) delivers a pessimistic vision of the world, highlighting the failure of modernism and the search for a new form of hope and meaning.

25. Unlike western Europe, New Zealand, and even Canada, where rural electrification was a matter of government policy, the United States left it to the initiative of the corporate sector until the institution of the New Deal. Even after the significant impact of the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Rural Electrification Administration, by 1946 only half of the farms in the United States were electrified—compared to France and Germany, which had both achieved rates of 90 percent rural electrification decades earlier. David E. Nye, Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology, 1880–1940 (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 287, 299, 320.

26. Of course, the development of infrastructure was just one part of the rural modernization process. Crucially, farmers also had to be taught that electricity, electrical appliances, and indoor plumbing were worth the significant expense. For a fascinating account of the pedagogy of rural modernization, and the particular role of women as recipients of this teaching, see Marilyn Lee Holt, Luminous, Better Babies, and the Modern Farm Woman, 1890–1930 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995).
50. "Cultural lag," a fairly common term of the social sciences in the earlier decades of this century, refers to manifestations of the experience of surer development. It was first offered as a concept in William Ficking Ogden, Social Change with Respect to Culture and Original Nature (New York: Macmillan, 1922).

Chapter 2

Dry Salvages


8. Eliot's word for the embrace of evolutionary theory in "the popular mind" is even clearer in various drafts of the poem, in which he rendered "development" with specific descriptions such as "evolution" with a capital E, and "a partial fallacy" as "a cheerful fallacy." Helen Gardner, The Composition of the Four Quarters (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 132-33.


11. For a classic example of the elaboration of this point, see Edward Sapir, Language (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1921).


15. The conception I am making here of spatiality and modernism should be distinguished from an earlier argument made by Joseph Frank. For Frank, the spatiality of modernism was rather more a formal, and negative, concept, related to what he described as the modernists' 'attempt to deny the temporality of language.' See Frank, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," in *The Whaling Grove: Crisis and Mastery in Modern Literature* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1963), 3-62.

16. Alexander Lesuer aptly qualifies Boas's reputation as an "antievolutionary" thinker by explaining that what he really objected to was the element of ideology in most social appropriations of Darwinian theory. Lesuer, "Franz Boas," 65; cf. Stocking, "Franz Boas and the Culture Concept," 205; Frayer, "Principles," 61.

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20. Benedict apparently saw Boas's endeavor to be especially important since (as she wrote her husband), "most anthropologists will be amazed at his approval of my theme." Quoted in Margaret M. Callan, *Ruth Benedict: Stranger in this Land* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), 207; Boas, letter to Coming of Age in Samoa, by Margaret Mead (New York: Mentor Quill Paperback, 1961), intro. introduction to Patterns of Culture, by Ruth Benedict, with a preface by Margaret Mead and a new foreword by Mary Catherine Ratte (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), x-xii.

sional practices within the study of folklore and in wresting control of its major organs, including the Journal of American Folklife, from scholars with a more "literary" ap-
proach to the field. According to Zasowski, Boas's coating over this journal was also
related to his disassociation from the Washington establishment; he saw it as a publish-
ing venue that would make him and his students that much less dependent on the publi-
cations of the Bureau of American Ethnology. Boas was editor of the journal for sixteen
years, Rosemary Lévy Zasowski, American Folklife Scholarship: A Dialogue in Dis-


43. See Virginia Dolan-Gage, "The Mason Side of "Cultural Politics," South Atlant-
ic Quarterly 91, no. 1 (Winter 1992) 19-42; and Chapter 7 of the present book.


47. On Boas's propensity for argument by the negative instance, see Lesses, "Franz
Boas," 4; and see Marvin Harris, The Rise of Anthropological Theory, 258-60.

48. Gleick, "Types Distinct From Our Own." 


50. As I suggested in the introduction, "cultural relativism" can be so slippery a concept as "culture" itself. Here, Gleick's understanding of the term might be considered an example of what Melford E. Spiro has conceptualized as "cultural relativism," which serves to refute the validity of intercultural judgments of worth, value, taste, and so on. As Richard Rorty has shown from the perspective of a more strictly epistemological relativism, it is hard to imagine how one might actually enact this kind of moral cultural relativism. In short, what is cultural relativism precludes considering years as worthy of respect? See Spiro, "Cultural Relativism and the Future of Anthropology," in Revisiting Cul-

51. Gleick points out, from his careful observation of the prominent Boas used in a talk he gave, entitled, "Race Problems in America," that Boas considered himself part of the "physical type of northeast European," while the new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe were "types distinct from our own," Gleick, "Types Distinct From Our Own," 545.


74. Cuss was willing to concede that it is none of Americans’ business if the Germans “worship Thor under a new name, or even the Grand Llama, or their Emperor’s great toe…. But when their masters tell us that God has changed his mind and has decided that henceforth the Pariscans and not the peacekeepers shall inherit the earth… it has become our most serious business.” Guaxus, Why We Went To War, 28.

75. See Werner Sollers, Beyond Ethnicity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 66–100.


79. Roman Rolland, the 1915 Nobel Laureate in Literature, was an important figure to Buren, and it is likely that he read Rolland’s controversial statement “Au-dessous de la mèlée,” either in the original (first published in the Journal de Genève, 15 September 1914), or in translation, “Above the Battle,” in Above the Battle, trans. C. K. Ogden (Chicago: Open Court, 1916), 57–55.


82. Benedict Anderson has argued that while critics of the United States were relatively quick to create for themselves a national identity, the United States has also experienced significant moments of “failure” in its cohesion as a cultural, linguistic, and bureaucratic unit—including its failure to absorb English-speaking Canada, the short-lived Texan independence, and, of course, the Civil War. Following Anderson’s argument that bureaucratic centralization is a vital component in the creation of national identity, it might be noted further that the United States has never—by design—had one political, economic, military, and cultural center comparable to France’s Paris or England’s London. Its nationalities thus, arguably, always been complicated by various versions of regionalism, including the recurrent struggles related to “states’ rights.” Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (New York: Verso, 1983), 59–65.


87. If there is any irony at all in Macdonald’s quotation of Bourne, it is that in tracing “masscult’s” origins to these “bowels of Europe,” Macdonald recuperates the category of the “Puritan,” to locate the immigrants’ social fabric (besides their persistent animosity) in the fact that they weren’t sufficiently Puritan. Dwight Macdonald, “Masscult and Midcult,” in Against the American Grain: Essays on the Effects of Mass Culture (New York: Da Capo, 1962), 35–36.


Chapter 3
The National Genius


3. In his account of the folding of the Seven Arts, Waldo Frank insists that circulation actually improved when it made its own vehement antwerp statements. Instead, he poisons to a less heroic story, in which the war caused the magazine’s decline by precipitating fighting among the staff members and the publication of political pieces that compromised their literary standards. No doubt aiding in its demise was the suicide of its primary financial supporter, Mrs. A. E. Rankine, prompted. Frank hints, by her inability to cope with the social ostracism resulting from the magazine’s antwerp position. Frank, Memoirs, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973), 92–95.


11. See Warren I. Teitelman, "Uses of the Puritan Past," in Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 39–49. Though Teitelman’s history of the uses of the Puritan past is invaluable, I disagree with his assertion, "During the nineteenth century, the Puritans generally enjoyed a good press." To argue this, he had to ignore the fact that American Calvinism (and Puritans as its representatives) had come under siege by what was arguably one of the most important cultural events of the century, the rise of evangelical religion. See James Turner, Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1985).

12. For example, Ann Douglas identifies a confluence of the sixteenth-century historical novel, set in Puritan New England, in which an innocent young girl comes into conflict with a strict Puritan father or doctrinaire minister. She suffers severe punishment for disobeying some point of Calvinist dogma, to follow her heart’s guidance instead. Douglas, The Feminization of American Culture (New York: Knopf, 1979), 230.


19. Richard Chase, The American Novel and Its Tradition (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1957), 9–10. Leslie Fiedler may have had some similar notion of the "middlebrow" as a resolution to the positions of high and low when he described as "shabby, middlebrow" Hirschman’s The House of the Seven Gables—a tale full of skeletal, historically cursed Puritans and irresistibly technical Prouers, joined together by the sunny intimations of Phoebe, the social housekeeper. Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel (New York: Meridian, 1964), 229.


22. This difference in social and economic background between the writers of the Seven Arts did produce its conflicts. According to Bourne, Brooks occasionally felt alienated by his fellow Seven Arts editors, explaining that the magazine was somewhat too "Jewish" and "Puritan" in character (this last description being especially ironic, since he was himself later castigated for being a vulgar "Puritan" critic). Blake, Beloved Community, 138–19.


27. Brooks, "Wine," 34-40. Brooks rightly connected rationalism with the imperialist of the period, but he also suggested that its popularity was the result of Americans' poor literacy education, which, because of its emphasis on models related to the Puritan past, made readers inadequate judges of the literature of their moment.

28. Blaise, "The Young Intellectuals and the Culture of Personality," American Literary History 1, no. 3 (Fall 1989): 310-34.


34. Brooks, "Opinions of Oliver Alienon," American Literary History 1, no. 3 (Fall 1989): 310-34. Several of the most infamous chapters of Oliver Alienon were first delivered as speeches at the First and Second Annual Conferences on Science, Philosophy, and Religion in New York City. These were, respectively, "On Literature Today" (10 October 1949) and "Primary Literature and Concrete Literature" (10 September 1941).


38. While Sapir was, by all accounts, one of the most gifted anthropological linguists of the early years of the professional discipline, Kroebber's initiation to anthropology was also via linguistics and his lifetime contributions in that area were prodigious; for


42. Ibid., 40.

43. Ibid., 43-45.

44. Ibid., 22.

45. Alexander Goldenweiser, for example, saw Kroebber as offering a theory of "cultural determinism," in which "events occur when they must occur" according to a kind of cultural necessity. Similarly, Edward Sapir noted both a "social determinism" in Kroebber's theory and a certain conceptual vagueness in his understanding of how the superorganic force "related to the organic sphere: it was autonomous of the organic, and yet it still seemed to mysteriously act upon organic human entities. A. A. Goldenweiser, "The Antimony of the Social," American Anthropologist 19, no. 3 (July-September 1917): 448; Sapir, "Do We Need a 'Superorganic'?" American Anthropologist 19, no. 3 (July-September 1917): 442-43.

46. Sapir, "Do We Need a 'Superorganic'?," 441.

47. Ibid., 443.

48. Ibid., 45.


57. Robert Lowie, for example, expressed to Ruth Benedict his irritation at being labeled as "extrovert." See Darnell, Edward Sapir: Linguist, Anthropologist, Humanist, 139-43; and see Moeb, An Anthropologist at Work, 72-73.
Chapter 4
Terrains of Culture

1. See Waldo Frank, Our America (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919), 222-32. The "pessimism" model of the twenties is propagated by the influence of such important works as Henry F. May, The End of American Innocence (New York: Knopf, 1909); and Alfred Kazin, On Native Grounds (1942; reprint, New York: Harcourt Brace Jova-


5. The Lyricists—described by Amy Lowell as the heirs to the American poetic vanguard after her own ingenuity—were particularly well represented in the 1920s in the pages of Poetry. Though their work has to a large extent been removed from the modernist canon (see Suspects because many of their best practitioners were widely popu-


6. Caffrey, Ruth Benedict, 188. Clifford Geertz has recently argued that Mead’s proprietary relationship to Benedict’s work has contributed to Benedict’s subsequent devaluation as an important theorist of her period. Whether or not this is true, it is clear that interpretations of Benedict’s work have tended to be filtered through Mead’s interpretations of them, and through analyses of Mead’s place in anthropological history. Geertz, Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1988), 103–6; Mead, Blackberry Winter, 122–25; Jane Howard, Margaret Mead: A Life (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 77; see also Gail Dummie, “Guiding Spirits: An Inquiry into the Nature of the Bond between Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead” (PhD diss., United States International University, 1983).


8. Sapir, “Observations on the Sex Problem in America,” American Journal of Psychiatry 8 (November 1930): 519–34. Helen Swick Perry, Biographer of the psycholinguist Harry Stack Sullivan, considers Sapir’s “Observations” a direct reflection of Sullivan’s opinions on sexuality in America, and indeed suggests that it was written at Sullivan’s urging—though Sapir “somewhat resented the assignment.” This suggestion, if it is true, may have a tragic element, considering the article’s disengagement of homophobia, and the widespread assumption that Sullivan was himself involved in a long-term homosexual relationship during the time of his acquaintance with Sapir. Perry is uncharacteristically discrete on the point of her subject’s sexual orientation, an issue not irrelevant in light of Sullivan’s professional statements concerning homosexuality. Helen Swick Perry, Psychiatric of America: The Life of Harry Stack Sullivan (Cambridge, Mass.: Beltz&P, 1982), 209–11, 339–40; Darnell, Edward Sapir, 291–92.


13. Handler, “Reading,” 105–8. For a thoroughgoing contemporary critique of the “culture and personality” approach, see Alfred R.


37. D. H. Lawrence, "America, Listen to Your Own," New Republic, 15 December 1920, 70. See also Walter Lippmann, "Approaches of Mr. Lawrence: The Cruel Barbarian and the Noble Savage," New Republic, 15 December 1920, 70–71. In his reply to Lawrence, Lippmann argued that the Aztec emperor was more culturally remote to Americans than the ancient cultures of Europe, and somewhat tautly suggested that a country such as the United States, where Lawrence's own novels could not be carried through the mails in their unexpurgated form, was hardly in danger of becoming overwhelmed by an excessive reverence for European culture.

38. Besides Frank and Lawrence, residents of Mexico City in these decades included Langston Hughes, John Dos Passos, Katherine Anne Porter, and Marden Hartley. Henry Carter-Bresson, Sergei Eisenstein, Graham Greene, Aldous Huxley, Archibald MacLeish, and Frank's protege, Hart Crane, who died while returning to the United States from Mexico. These artists were attracted not only to the work of the important Mexican artists of the period—notably, Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco—but also, as with the New Mexican colonists, to the ancient and contemporary Indian presence in Mexico. Daniel Cooper Alarcon, The Aztec Palimpsest: Mexico in the Modern Imagination (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997), 60–68; Dewey Wayne Omm, American and British Writers in Mexico, 1556–1973 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974), 76–103; Frank, America Hispana: A Portrait and a Prospect (New York: Scribner's, 1931).

39. Frank seems to have regretted his secular upbringing. In the decades following the publication of Our America, Frank would explore his connection to a specifically Jewish religious tradition, becoming passionately interested in Spain and visiting both Palestine and the Israelites of eastern Europe. Frank, Memoirs, 32, 37–39, 173–76.


42. Ibid., 136–48, 201–11, 243–60.

43. Though "The Intellectuals" were a third category in Haggard's sociology of the ghetto, he dismisses them as largely unimportant today and therefore outside of the opposition of old and new. Haggard tended to refer to these people (who were, of course, writing the plays and painting the pictures he spent the better part of the book enthusiastically describing) as the more explicitly foreign "Russian" element of the ghetto. The fact that this label was accurate to the extent that many of these intellectuals strongly identified with Russian culture, it may also be reflective of Haggard's ambivalence about some of the "foreign" political views held by this group, particularly anarchism. Ibid., 3–52.

44. Ibid., 46.

45. See Theodore Roosevelt, "Americanism," Collected Works (New York: Scribner's, 1956), 18:388–405. Interest in preserving folk customs was also evident in Jane Addams's settlement house movement. There, efforts at assimilating immigrants as speedily as possible went hand in hand with a rather melancholy effort to maintain the followways which she felt the immigrants would inevitably lose. Hence, her plan, for example, to set up a museum of handicraft. For a fascinating account of the occasionally misguided preservationist impulses of settlement workers in Appalachia, see David Whisman, All That Is Native and True: The Politics of Culture in an American Region (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983).


47. See May, End of American Innocence, 298.


52. Just one example of this still current use of Whitman should suffice: in "A Nation of Nations," a semipermanent exhibit installed at the Smithsonian Museum for the U.S. Bicentennial, the phrase "I contain multitudes" is used as a caption for a series of portraits of (mostly famous) Americans of a conspicuous variety of races and ethnicities. The effect of this display, which juxtaposes portraits of Billy Holiday, Grace Kelly, Anthony Quinn, and Benny Goodman, is, like the ideology of multiculturalism in general, to simultaneously celebrate difference, and to imply a basic, transcultural similarity between the social conditions and privileges of people regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, or social class. See Susan Hekman, "Shopping for Identity: A Nation of Nations" and the Weak Ethnicity of Objects," Public Culture, 3, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 71–92.


56. Though Toomer's work was undeniably influential to this movement, it is one of the central themes of his career that at the height of his prestige and influence after the publication of Cane, Toomer had already distanced himself from Harlem intellectual circles, turning instead to the teachings of the mystical teacher, George Ivanovich Gurdjieff, Jeff David Levering Lewis, When Harlem Was in Vogue (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 70–71.


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60. Toomer and Frank's relationship was disrupted shortly after the publication of Cane, when Toomer had a marriage-ending affair with Frank's wife, the radical educator Margaret Neumemberg. See McKay, Jean Toomer; Artic, Lewis; When Harlem Was in Vogue, 71-72; and Charles R. Larson, Invisible Darkness: Jean Toomer and Nella Larsen (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993).


66. It has been suggested by several critics that this reference to blackmail is an autobiographical allusion to Crane's experience of being blackmailed over his homosexuality. This reading is not out of keeping with mine, in that Crane is suggesting that "a new destiny" must come from sources that are viewed in the present as impure, taboo, or debased. See Giles, 164; and see Thomas F. Yongling, Hart Crane and the Homosexual Text (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).


Chapter 5

The Culture of the Middle

1. Stuart Chase, quoted in "From the Bill of Fare," Nation, 18 May 1940, 624.

2. Chase, Mexican: A Study of Two Americas (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 216. Chase's comparisons of Teopizlan and Middletown were based upon the findings of two classic community studies of the period, Robert Redfield, Teopizlan, A Mexican Village: A Study of Folk Life (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930), and Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, Middletown (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927).


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7. On this point, Stout goes so far as to turn "the primitivity of telling" into a feature of the thirties documentary as a genre. Documentary Expression, 8-17.


14. Mangione, The Dream and the Deal, 49. Frank was clearly the most vainglorious and the most politically leftist of the older group, although his politics (like his vaingloriousness) tended to run toward the romantic and religious.

15. For a discussion of radicals' fascination with popular culture, see Paul Buhle, Marxism in the United States (New York: Verso, 1991), 177-83. I take my history of the emergence of these terms from James Radway, who places the emergence of the term "middlebrow" in the late 1920s, Radway, "The Scandal of the Middlebrow: The Book of the Month Club, Class Fracture, and Cultural Authority," South Atlantic Quarterly 89, no. 4 (Fall 1990): 707.


19. Hart, American Writers' Congress, 87-88. For other discussions of "Revolutionary Symbolism in America," see Frank Lentricchia, Criticism and Social Change (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 21-38; and Denning, Cultural Front, 102-3 and 440-44.