FRANZ BOAS

Kultur, Sprache, Rasse

Wege einer antirassistischen Anthropologie

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Friedrich Pöhl | Bernhard Tilg (Hg.)

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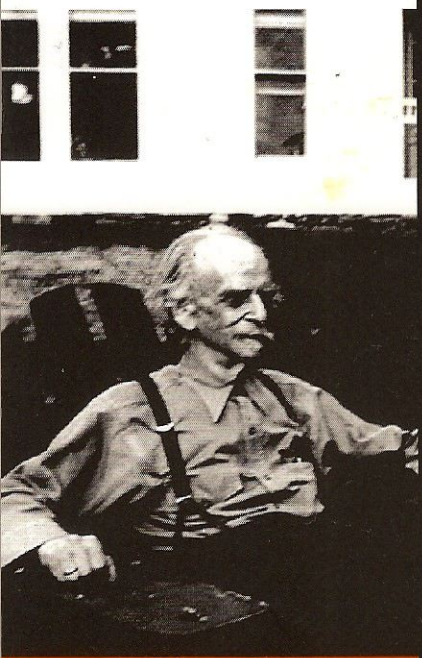

Franz Boas (1858–1942), eine der bedeutendsten Persönlichkeiten der „Wissenschaft vom Menschen“ im frühen 20. Jahrhundert, begründete die *Cultural Anthropology* in Amerika und etablierte mithin die Anthropologie in den USA als eine akademische Disziplin. Geboren und aufgewachsen in einer jüdischen Kaufmannsfamilie in Minden, Westfalen, studierte Boas in Heidelberg, Kiel und Bonn Physik, Mathematik und Geographie. 1883/84 begab er sich auf eine geographische Arktisexpedition nach Baffin-Land, welche sein genuines Interesse an Ethnologie und Anthropologie erneut entfachte. Boas emigrierte schließlich in die USA und bekleidete von 1899 bis zu seiner Emeritierung im Jahre 1936 als ordentlicher Professor einen Lehrstuhl für Anthropologie an der Columbia Universität von New York.

Die liberal-demokratischen und pazifistischen Ideale seines Elternhauses werden Boas sein Leben lang begleiten und ihn dazu veranlassen, gegen jegliche damalige Rassendiskriminierung wissenschaftlich aufzubegehren. Auch als gesellschaftlich und politisch engagierter Wissenschafter führte er einen oftmals einsamen Kampf für die Rechte der Indianer, der Afroamerikaner und nicht zuletzt für die Rechte der europäischen Immigranten. Beeinflusst von den Ideen Humboldts und der Aufklärung im Allgemeinen, entwickelte Boas seine wissenschaftlichen und philosophischen Perspektiven und Methoden. Als einer der ersten sprach Boas von Kultur(en) im Plural und verabschiedete sich somit von einem essentialistischen Kulturkonzept.

Vor allem aber antizipierte Boas die Affinität von (wissenschaftlichem) Rassismus und Evolutionismus, weshalb er die Vorstellung einer universalistischen und linearen kulturellen Evolution zurückwies; insbesondere, wenn das evolutionäre Fortschrittsparadigma auf der allgemeinen und wissenschaftlich nicht fassbaren Idee der Rasse basierte und damit Individualität verneinte. Noch im hohen Alter verwehrte sich Boas gegen den wissenschaftlichen Rassismus und den damit einhergehenden Rassenwahn der Nationalsozialisten in Deutschland und schämte sich dafür, ein „Deutscher“ zu sein.

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Boas, Chinook Jargon, *Q'ilti* and the Chinookan Poetic Legacy

George Lang

* * *

Ideally, we would read Franz Boas as he would have read himself. We would seek out the 'inner and outer forces' which explain his life and work, in particular, in this context, with respect to Chinook Jargon, Chinookans and Chinookan, the people and their cultures as well as the abstraction which gathers their languages into one entity, and, crucially, the singular Chinookan to whom Boas owed his collection of narratives in Shoalwater and Kathlamet Chinook, *Q'ilti* (a.k.a. Charles Cultee). We would also bear in mind the epistemological principle Boas himself described in his address as President of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1932, 'For each individual case we can arrive at an understanding of its determination by inner and outer forces, but we cannot explain its individuality in the form of laws'.[1]

Boas did not consider this precept to be restricted to the humanities and social sciences; he applied it as well to astronomy and biology, but 'the more complex the phenomena, the more special will be the laws expressed by them'. That cultural phenomena may be of such complexity that 'valid cultural laws' may never be found was, he allowed, probable. 'Cultural happenings' nonetheless have the 'same source, namely, the interaction between individual and society'. While those interactions are amenable to, indeed exigent of empirical verification, there will be infinitely more fine print than general law, reams of the former, at best a few bullet points of the latter.

'Cultural happenings' are particularly complex in a contact zone, wherein societies overlap and individuals must relate to more than one society at a time. Mary Louise Pratt characterized such a zone as one wherein 'peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict'.[2]

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[1] Boas 1940: 257.
[2] Pratt 1992: 6.

Pratt's point nonetheless is that all parties in a contact zone learn from each other and continue to exchange. It is no paronomastic accident that contact languages like Chinook Jargon are often the media of contact zones, conduits of reciprocal learning.

Contact zones are, morever, particularly privileged sites in which to detect *heteroglossia*, as defined by Mikhail Bakhtin:

> The base condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance. It is that which insures the primacy of context over text. At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions – social, historical, meteorological, physiological – that will insure that a word uttered in that place and that time will have a different meaning than it would have under any other conditions. All utterances are heteroglot in that they are functions of a matrix of forces practically impossible to recoup, and therefore impossible to resolve. Heteroglossia is as close a conceptualization as is possible of that locus where centripetal and centrifugal forces collide; as such, it is that which a systematic linguistics must always suppress.[3]

There is no evidence that Bakhtin read Boas. In fact, his orientation was more akin to that of Boas's associate Edward Sapir, who wrote in 1932 that the dwelling place of culture 'is not in a theoretical community of human beings known as society... The true locus of culture is in the interactions of specific individuals and, on the subjective side, in the world of meanings which each one of the individuals may unconsciously abstract'.[4] As for Pratt, she certainly was aware of Boas's work, but she had her own approach to the Humboldtian traditions to which both could be said to belong.[5]

Pratt and Bakhtin can nonetheless be thought of as sharing Boas's respect for the often indecipherable nuance of (trans)cultural happenings. Their thoughts are helpful adjuncts to study of the contact zone in which Boas and *Q'ilti* met. Although the thrust of what follows will be to tease out the ethnopoetic consequences of Boas's Chinookan legacy, for which Hymes is my principal interlocuter,[6] both Pratt's sense of transculturation in contact zones and the 'dialogic' dimensions of Boas's encounters with *Q'ilti* provide additional tools to understanding. Nor should we forget that the texts 'co-authored' by *Q'ilti* and Boas were in an older sense *dialogues*, etymologically διαα (diá, through) plus λογος (logos, word, speech). It is commonly believed that the prefix δι (di-, two) underlays the term, and hence that two parties need be, per the Platonic model, embroiled in argument. Instead, etymology reminds us that the kinds of dialogical knowledge Boas obtained and art *Q'ilti* produced were indeed purveyed *through speech*.

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[3] Bakhtin 1981: 426, 428.
[4] Sapir 1932 in Bringhurst 1999: 66.
[5] See Pratt 1992: 111–143.
[6] Hymes 1981 and 2003.

Boas and Chinook Jargon

Chinook Jargon was the lingua franca for interethnic communication on the Northwest Coast throughout the nineteenth century. *Q'ilti* spoke very little English. Chinook Jargon was accordingly the sine qua non through which we know what we do know about Shoalwater and Kathlamet Chinook and about *Q'ilti*'s cultural world and imagination. It is not irrelevant to recall here that in those early years of his American career, Boas's English was, by his own account, less than fluent, at moments excruciatingly so.[7] At that point in time he was thus more drawn to Chinook Jargon than someone in his position might otherwise have been, since he shared the practice of clumsy English with many of his interlocuters and probably most who used this lingua franca by default. A half century before, lack of fluent French would have been equally significant.[8]

The question of Boas's command of Northwest Coast languages is vexed. According to Rohner, he 'learned the Chinook Jargon and used this lingua franca in his research along the coast, but he did not become fluent in any indigenous Northwest Coast language'.[9] Dell Hymes, who wrote the principle grammar of Kathlamet,[10] has a different take, referring to the Northwest Coast 'languages that [Boas] himself wrote down and that he *knew intimately*, such as Kathlamet Chinook and Kwak'wala (Kwakiutl)'.[11] At stake here is what 'fluent' and 'to know intimately' ultimately mean. It would be hard to qualify the transcriber and translator of *Chinook Texts* and *Kathlamet Texts* as someone lacking control of the phonology, grammar and basic vocabulary of these two languages. Ought we not then simply agree that Boas knew them intimately without speaking them fluently. As for his knowledge of Chinook Jargon, we have as evidence the finely articulated texts delivered through it which he obtained from *Q'ilti*, as well as the small body of comments he published on the topic.[12] By 1886 Boas had stated that 'I am gradually learning to understand this language [Chinook Jargon] quite well'.[13] From thereon in the documents there are many indications that Chinook Jargon was his primary means of communication with Indians, until English became possible. A fascinating dissertation remains to be written by the scholar who takes the time to parse Boas's fieldnotes, available at the American Philosophical Society archives in Philadelphia, with an eye to the role of Chinook Jargon.

An essential tool of interethnic communication throughout the nineteenth century on the Northwest Coast, Chinook Jargon remains largely invisible in the scholarship. This omission might well be traced back to the preference early ethnolo-

[7] Cole 1985: 138.
[8] Lang 2008: 88–93.
[9] Rohner 1969: xxiv.
[10] Hymes 1955.
[11] Hymes 2003: 21; my emphasis.
[12] Boas 1888, 1932.
[13] Rohner 1969: 28.

gists had for 'uncontaminated' artefacts as opposed to 'articles of the acculturated arts'[14] – a category to which a contact language like Chinook Jargon would presumably belong. In any event and for whatever reason, there is a palpable scarity of reference to Chinook Jargon in indices, and a frustrating brevity in allusions to it. Taught today as the heritage language on the Grand Ronde reservation southwest of Portland, Oregon, »Jargon« or »Wawa« has a small army of devotees across the putative nation of Cascadia, which unites the U.S. States of Oregon and Washington and the Canadian Province of British Columbia in an imaginary ecological utopia. For some of these aficionados it is virtually an obsolescent national language deserving to be revived.[15]

Unfortunately, Boas too did not lavish the same attention on Chinook Jargon he did on Shoalwater and Kathlamet, but some useful observations on this pidgin-creole did come from his pen, as did a trove of Chinook Jargon songs he collected in canneries of New Westminster, B.C., relatively soon after his arrival on the Northwest Coast (1888). A second short piece, reprinting a few of those songs and adding a tale in Chinook Jargon told him by a Tsimshian in 1888, appeared in a »Note on the Chinook Jargon« commenting on the Chinook Jargon Melville Jacobs had taken down from his informant Victoria Howard.[16] In it Boas makes clear that the Chinook Jargon he had spoken forty years before both in Oregon and Washington ('with Tillamook, Clatsop, Chinook proper, Lower Chehalis') and on the B.C. coast ('Songish, Kwakiutl, Bella Bella, Tsimshian, Haida') differed substantially from the Clackamas-influenced variety Jacobs had transcribed.

Boas 'learned [Chinook Jargon] in 1885 from a number of Bella Coola',[17] this during the sojourn of a troop of Bella Coola to Germany organized by Adrian and Fillip Jacobsen in 1885–1886.[18] A second more tangential but apparently inspirational encounter was an excerpt of Chinook Jargon he came across in 'a third-class novel, *For Love and Bears*'.[19]

The material in this novel is of scant philological interest (*Nika cultus Kootnai siwash siah / Nika olo pee, till nika soleks* – 'I'm a bad injun from far Kootenai / I'm hungry, I'm tired and I'm mad').[20] When he arrived in B.C. in 1886, Boas set out to discover the 'origin of these songs'. He found material much more exciting than the travestied ditty in the Daly narrative, and determined, as a phonetic note reveals, that there were two distinct modes or dialects of Chinook Jargon, that used by Whites, often satirically or condescendingly, and that used by Indians among themselves when they were without another common language. As for the lat-

[14] Cole 1995: 91–92.
[15] Lilliard and Glavin, 1998.
[16] Boas 1932; Jacobs 1932.
[17] Boas 1932: 209
[18] Cole 1985: 68–73.
[19] Boas 1888: 221.
[20] Daly 1886: 92–93.

ter dialect, Boas's brief introduction to the songs, while borrowing from previous texts, described the range of Chinook Jargon in strikingly new terms, for 1888: 'it is spoken from Washington Territory to Lynn Channel, in Alaska.' More precisely, for the purposes of his collection of songs: 'The Indians are at present in the habit of living part of the year in Victoria, Vancouver, or New Westminster, working in various trades: in saw-mills and canneries, on wharves, as sailors, etc. ... At these places members of numerous tribes gather, who use [Chinook Jargon] as a means of communication'.[21] Boas went on to observe that 'the structure of [Chinook Jargon], as far as it has any structure, shows certain characteristics of [Lower Chinook]'. Recent work on Chinook Jargon has confirmed this observation.[22]

Within two years Boas would be faced with the challenge of transcribing *Q'ilti's* Chinookan into a consistent phonemic alphabet. In the case of »Chinook Songs«, his aims were more modest. The spelling, he allowed, was 'not strictly phonetic' though he did try to capture salient traits of the Indian pronunciation of Chinook Jargon. For example, for the 'exploded [inverted k], which is not used by whites speaking [Chinook Jargon]' he proposed *k'* (glottalized k is still represented this way in the Grand Ronde orthography of Chinook Jargon, and was also captured in the early orthographies created by the French Catholic missionaries who came to the coast in 1838).[23] The 'exploded' *t* was written *tl*, as it has come to be in systematic orthographies of Chinook Jargon. 'The guttural *k*, which the English ear does not distinguish from the ordinary *k*, is printed *k*. The German *ch* in Bach is rendered by the letter *q*'.[24]

This is not the place to dwell upon the details of the Americanist phonemic alphabet Boas helped develop. The relationship between his system and those of his students and successors can nonetheless be seen at the glance in the technical note on orthographies at the head of the *Handbook of North American Indians* volume on Languages,[25] and a concise history can be found in Mithun.[26] It is, in any event, obvious that Boas was training his ear for Northwest Coast phonologies, and that this collection of Chinook Jargon songs was one early step in that process.

Although Boas did not use the word »potlatch« he characterized the feasts in which these songs were sung in terms which reflect that stereotype of Northwest Coast Indians (and also, perhaps, some of what Sapir called his 'highly inhibited nature').[27]

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[21] Boas 1888: 220.
[22] Zenk and Johnson 2007.
[23] Lang 2008: 10–12.
[24] Boas 1888: 221.
[25] Godard 1996
[26] Mithun 1999: 20–22.
[27] Sapir in Bringhurst 1999: 363.

> The Indian is very hospitable, and particularly anxious to make a display of his wealth to visitors. Thus it happens that their little shanties are frequently places of merriment and joy; invitations are sent out, a great table is spread, and whiskey helps to stimulate the humor until the day ends in stupid drunkenness. It is at such feasts that songs frequently originate. If they happen to strike the fancy of the listening crowd they are taken up, and after a lapse or a few years known all over the country.[28]

There is space here for only a few samples of what we might legitimately call »Chinook Jargon drinking songs« (I have softened his orthography a bit, stripping away the macrons, to avoid formatting complications).

- Tlaksta *sweetheart* haiu patlem? / Naika *sweetheart* haiu patlem! / Wek maika yutl kopa naika. [x 3] / Naika kumtuks kada maika!
  Whose sweetheart is very drunk? / My sweetheart is very drunk / You do not like me [x 3]! / I know you!.

- Kakao naika telhum memalos / *Steamboat* tlatowa, naika kelai.
  Because my relations are dead / When the steamboat leaves, I cry.

- Ikta mumuk Bill alta? / Yeke tlatowa beerhouse. / Boston wawa: *Get out o' way* / Yeke tlatowa. / Haiu kelai.
  What is Billy doing now? / He is going to the beerhouse./ The American says : Get out of way. / [Billy] goes and cries aloud.

- *White man* alta kopa maika man, Mary. / Dja! Tlos ka'koa maika mash maika. / Kaltas kopa naika alta. / Ya aya aya.
  A white man is now your husband, Mary. / Ha, cast me off thus! / I do not care now. Ya aya aya.

- Kaltas kopa naika. / Spos maika mash naika. / Haiu puty *boys* kuli kopa *town*. / Atlki weqt naika iskum. / Wek k'al kopa naika.
  I don't care / If you desert me. / Many pretty boys are in the town. / Soon I shall take another one. / That is not hard for me!

Boas's remark that „these songs convey a better idea of the character and life of the Indians living in the cities of British Columbia than a long description could do"[29] is to the point, but it verges on the sardonic. The songs range from maudlin and sentimental to satirical and lyrical but they almost all transparently reflect the dispossession, dislocation, forced migration, and anomie which the Northwest Coast peoples suffered during the second half of the nineteenth century. Here, Boas is speaking somewhat uncharacteristically, since these contemporary songs

[28] Boas 1888: 221.
[29] Boas 1888: 224.

Abbildung 5.1: Kwakiutl Mädchen in traditioneller Kleidung.

were peripheral to his primary concern, that of preserving dying indigenous cultures, the over-riding agenda of »salvage« ethnology of the times. Accordingly, it is all the more telling that the concrete qualities of the songs grabbed Boas's attention. First, these pieces were linguistically heterogeneous, incorporating phrases in other languages, Nookta, Tsimshian or Haida. In other words, Chinook Jargon partook of a general regional tendency toward code-switching, and itself was sometimes inserted into Tlinglit or English or other language songs, of which Boas quoted examples. Second, the poetic and musical system of which Boas captured these fragments was spontaneously creative, not reflexes of some static tradition, instead expressive in given moments, and then taken up and performed by others if well received. There was no essential(ist) Chinook Jargon culture.

Interestingly, the lyrical voice, Boas remarked (though not in these terms), belonged more often than not to women. Single events were memorialized in songs which circulated later. Tunes were amenable to improvision, and there was something akin to a hit-parade. Certain songs were known far beyond their immediate venue, even geographically specific ones: ... *Elip naika nanitch / Sitka mesaika eli. / Kaltas spos naika memalos / Yakwa elip* (I have seen Sitka [Alaska] your country. / Never mind, if I die / Now soon). It is worth mentioning here that Franz Boas was a skilled classical pianist, especially fond of Haydn and Mozart. His ear for and training in music was sufficient to lead him to transcribe three of the songs onto staff and bar. Over forty years later, in his comment on Jacobs, he converted his transcriptions to phonetic effect: „The tunes given there show clearly that the full forms were used".[30]

I do not wish to exaggerate the import of Boas's passing remark that these songs were the work of „native poets"[31] nor to imply that this song genre system was in some way exceptionally »dialogic« (Bakhtinian heteroglossia is a state pervading all communication). The fact remains that we are lucky to have these ephemeral pieces, which we would not if Boas had not let his curiosity and his sensitivity to artistic expression even in forms previously unknown to him lead him to the canneries of New Westminster.

Q'ilti as Boas Had Him

Scientifically speaking, *Q'ilti* was far from being an ideal informant for Shoalwater Chinook. His wife spoke Lower Chehalis, which is Salish. This was the language of their children and of *Q'ilti*'s daily life, as it was for surviving Chinookans at Shoalwater Bay. James G. Swan had described that population two generations earlier, the community, then about a hundred souls, having taken refuge on the coast as the invasion of American settlers radically transformed conditions in their

[30] Boas 1932: 209.
[31] Boas 1888: 226.

original homeland on the lower reaches of the Columbia River and throughout the region.[32] Chinook Jargon was widely spoken at Shoalwater. Lower Chehalis had become common, though it had always had a foothold along the northern shores of Shoalwater Bay. *Q'ilti* himself had more or less abandoned speaking Shoalwater Chinook after his youth, using it only with a few relatives who had passed away by the time Boas met him, and with a woman by the name of Catherine, who lived not far from Bay Center on Shoalwater Bay. *Q'ilti*'s mother was Kathlamet, which *Q'ilti* spoke as well. This turned out to be an advantage. Once Boas had recorded the main body of the Shoalwater Chinook texts, he switched to the study of Kathlamet.

It was however worrisome to Boas that *Q'ilti* was the „only source for two dialects of the Chinookan stock". There were legitimate reasons to fear that *Q'ilti*'s Shoalwater had been affected by his frequent use of Chehalis or mixed with Kathlamet. In his Introduction to *Kathlamet Texts* Boas explains the precautions he took to „ascertain the accuracy of his mode of telling. I had two stories which [Cultee] had told in the summer of 1891 repeated three and a half years later, in December, 1894.... They show great similarity and corroborate the opinion which I formed from internal evidence that the language of the texts is fairly good and represents the [Kathlamet] dialect in a comparatively pure state".[33] Nonetheless, there may have been some marginal interference between the two languages, as Michael Silverstein wondered in 1974, referring to a phrase of *Q'ilti*'s Kathlamet which displayed a form more typical of Shoalwater: „Whether this is an artifact of Q'ilti's bidialectal speech, or a genuine remnant of gradual morphological replacement, is difficult to say. It would seem the latter is true".[34] Dell Hymes compared the distance between Shoalwater and Kathlamet to that between Spanish and Portuguese.[35]

This is only an approximate analogy, to be sure, yet it suggests that it was feasible to control one language against another, just as we can distinguish Spanish and Portuguese in almost any situation. We can thus legitimately suppose that *Q'ilti* must have learned both languages at a early age and independently in order knowingly to make such a sharp shift from one to the other, and not simply mix them. Both plainly had had a center which held, the boundaries between them being recognizable to speakers of either. Hymes' „Ethnological Note" at the reference just cited contains more detail. There is a useful language boundary map in Suttles[36] and in Lang.[37] Silverstein is exhaustive in its parsing of the relationship between the Chinookan varieties. He argues that Shoalwater was the historically

[32] Swan 1857: 108ff.
[33] Boas 1901: 5.
[34] Silverstein 1974: S77.
[35] Hymes 1981: 16.
[36] Suttles 1990: 534.
[37] Lang 2008: 13.

antecedent form, which then „gradual[ly] spread upriver".[38]

An additional factor potentially militating against *Q'ilti*'s reliabiity as an informant is that he was a „fervent enthusiast of the Indian Shaker religion".[39] While not exactly mainstream Christian (in fact Shakers were vehemently rejected by Euro-American Christian authorities), this allegiance might have led him to censor his words. „Early Shakers saw themselves locked in mortal combat with the powers of shamans".[40] As Boas had observed about the Tsimshian, converted Indians often expurgated their myths in terms of the newly embraced value systems: „Christian influences are evidently very strong among tribes of northern British Columbia, and a study ... shows also very early that the coarseness of their tales has been very much toned down".[41] Boas's allusion to *Q'ilti*'s „remarkable intelligence" has been cited repeatedly, and his reasons for such a judgement explained in both the public and the private record. For scholarly readers Boas claimed: „After he had once grasped what I wanted, he explained to me the grammatical structure of the sentences by means of examples, and elucidated the sense of difficult periods".[42] For his family in a letter dated July 9, 1890, Boas wrote, „Fortunately my [sic] Indian is very intelligent. His English is not very good, but he quickly caught on to what I wanted, and he understands his own language".[43] *Q'ilti* did possess extraordinary memory for stories he had not heard or told in either Shoalwater Chinook or Kathlamet for years. He also had the capacity to see that this strange *paston* – »Boston«, Chinook Jargon for American – wanted information on the nuances Shoalwater and Kathlamet could express, but also sought to record myths in their traditional forms. There is no trace of anachronism in the sense of »rewriting« or censoring of the Chinookan heritage in *Q'ilti*'s delivery of it. It would be speculative but appropriate within the theoretical framework laid out above to suggest that, in the contact zone of Shoalwater Bay 1890–1894, *Q'ilti* would on his side also have learned from Boas, the questions touching on grammar being ones he had certainly never heard, and the planned use of the myths and tales coming from an altogether different world.

All that said, the very nature of the transcription process of elicited texts creates certain distortions. Over a century later Robert Bringhurst was to argue, concerning the Haida recorded by Boas associate John Swanton in 1900–1901, that the slow repetition of sentence after sentence has sometimes „produced better results than tape recordings".[44] This is a positive reminder that technological advance does not equate automatically with quality. Boas, however, acknowledged that the

[38] Silverstein 1974: S99.
[39] Cole 1985: 171.
[40] Amoss 1990: 637.
[41] Boas 1916: 31.
[42] Both Boas 1894: 5 and Boas 1901: 6.
[43] Rohner 1969: 119.
[44] Bringhurst 1999: 440.

„slowness of dictation that is necessary for recording texts makes it difficult for the narrator to employ that freedom of diction that belongs to the well-told tales, and consequently an unnatural simplicity of syntax prevails in most of the dictated texts".[45] A normal informant could also be expected to inflect his speech down in front of a foreigner, not necessarily to the point of „foreigner-talk" but at least in ways that would render it unnatural. As a thought experiment, imagine yourself telling even a mere joke to someone who doesn't speak your language, or who speaks it badly, and who is intent on writing what you say down. Perhaps one of the reasons Boas praised *Q'ilti*'s intelligence was that he was able to overcome that temptation, which he must have felt on occasion; or worse: simply to get up and walk away. Instead, he actively bought into to the project, and came back over and over for more.

Although Boas continued to refer to the language of the first volume as „Chinook" or „Lower Chinook", the term „Shoalwater Chinook", first suggested by Leslie Spier in 1936 and adopted by Hymes[46] and here as well, is more accurate. By the 1830s, the original population of Lower Chinook speakers was decimated.[47] *Q'ilti*'s Chinook was directly derived from the speech of the Lower Chinookans who lived at the mouth of the Columbia River a century before at the moment of contact, but there are limits to what linguistics can make of the corpus he bequeathed us. There are, for example, distortions wrought by the story-telling process itself, among them that oral literature „shows marked stylistic fixedness, frequently archaic in form from the point of view of everyday language, but learned by the community in phrasal collocations" (e.g. „once upon a time").[48] This factor provoked healthy skepticism in Silverstein, who reminded his readers that his re-construction of tense and aspect in the Chinookan languages might have been distorted by the fact that the bulk of available material for Shoalwater displayed „myth-text archaism".[49] In addition, although it can be argued that the fact Boas used Chinook Jargon in his work with *Q'ilti* could be seen as prima facie evidence of the subtlety the trade jargon was capable of expressing, there is another way of looking at it. There is an inherent circularity in what we can attest about Shoalwater Kathlamet, one Silverstein describes well:

> In translating through Chinook Jargon, a great deal of the referential specificity of linguistic forms is necessarily lost. Boas's translation in the published versions are interlinear and running in English, so that he has reexpanded the translation medium to a semantically elaborated form. For all but isolated lexical items, he had to use his knowledge of the Chinookan (Shoalwater

[45] Boas 1917: 200.
[46] Hymes 1981: 15.
[47] See Lang 2008: 143–144.
[48] The quote is from Silverstein 1974: S53.
[49] Silverstein 1974: S54.

and Kathlamet) linguistic system to effect this, and hence the retranslation depends on the very corpus that we suspect shows skewing of categories.[50]

There is no fix for this problem. What we have from *Q'ilti* / Boas is all that there will ever be as primary source material for Shoalwater and Kathlamet. To summarize, there were many factors which made and make *Chinook Texts* and *Kathlamet Texts* less than immaculate expressions of the pre-contact Chinookan world. Some of these factors were raised systematically by Dürr,[51] to which the reader is referred. Among them are: Boas's own motives in collecting these texts (*Interessen*); the factors involved in the choice of the informant and the subsequent sollicitation procedures and protocol (*die Informantenproblematik*); the ways the resulting material was pre-shaped editorially and displayed (*die Präsentation der Texte*); the resulting scientific value of the material (*die linguistische Qualität der Sammlungen*). Boas saw these texts *als Grundlage grammatischer Beschreibung*, grist for grammars to be composed. At the same time he sought them out as potential evidence in a projected genealogy of Northwest Coast people determined through the relationship of their myths and tales, which Boas considered a major „tool for differentiating and judging the relationship of tribes".[52]

As we have seen, Boas's mind was divided. The record reveals two distinct personae. There was the Dr. Boas that Boas deliberately constructed and presented publicly as proof of his scientific prowess, on which point Cole is the prime source.[53] And there was the more personal, one might even say »domestic« Boas, the man who comes across in his private letters to his wife and family, Mr. Boas as it were, at that point in time still Herr Boas (many of these letters were gathered by Rohner).[54]

But the mind of Dr. Boas was further divided. Apart from the methodological issue of whether *Q'ilti*'s legacy was grammatical or mythological, both equally valid ways of proceeding, throughout the months Boas travelled through Oregon and Washington he was compulsively acquiring bodily remains and measuring as many Indians as he could lay his instruments on. As Cole states, Chinookan was initially „a diversion" for him.[55] On July 4, 1890, just a few days before he met *Q'ilti*, Boas reported that he had successfully measured ninety-eight persons on the Siletz reservation.[56] Four summers before, Cole relates that Boas had amassed an impressive collection of skulls and skeletons, and he continued to gather pieces like this whenever he could, avidly pursuing his anthropometric work,[57] a project

[50] Silverstein 1974: S53.
[51] Dürr 1992.
[52] Rohner 1969:29.
[53] Cole 1985.
[54] Rohner 1969.
[55] Cole 1985: 147.
[56] Rohner 1969: 117.
[57] Cole 1985: 102

which continued for decades and about which he published no small number of pieces, which can be consulted in the first section of Franz Boas: *Race, Language and Culture*.[58] Of note is „The Half-Blood Indian", published the very summer he returned to work one last time with *Q'ilti*.[59] In this context, the photo of *Q'ilti* at the head of Chinook Texts bears more than documentary import. It is a profile, so it tellingly reveals that *Q'ilti* had been one of the last Chinookans to have been „cradle-boarded" in his infancy and to have the typical back-slanted forehead of the then extinct class of Chinookan nobles. Boas is rightfully credited with having been one of the first anthropologists to question the validity of race as a scientific category, but this was after years of research predicated on racialist categories.

To those who, like the present author, have a strong cultural taboo against not only disturbing gravesites but also measuring the bodies of the living in terms of racial taxonomies, the grave-robbing and anthropometric side of Dr. Boas is disquieting. We cannot help but wonder how much he revealed about these activities to *Q'ilti*. As either a Chinookan or a Shaker, *Q'ilti* could not have thought highly of it. But then *Q'ilti*'s mind was divided as well. If he knew what Boas was doing alongside his recordings of Chinookan myth and tales, by all evidence this did not affect his, *Q'ilti*'s, willingness to divulge the stories he bore in his memory. Perhaps the opportunity to hold forth at length and repeatedly on what he had to know was his and his alone must have seemed to him to be a gift from the gods. It was for us too: „the only locus of myths in Kathlamet at [that] moment may have been in Cultee's head".[60]

Without Boas we would not know that *Q'ilti* the Chinookan belongs in the canon of classic Native American poets: „Bill Ray in Kato, Hánc'ibyjim in Maidu ... , François Mandeville in Chipewyan, Weyiiletpu in Nimipu, Kâ-kîsikâw-pîhtokêw in Cree, Chiishch'ilírs'ósi in Navajo and Kootye in Kawiko, just to name a few".[61]

The Chinookan (Ethno)poetic Legacy

By 1917 Boas understood that he had recorded evidence of „formal [literary] elements" in his Shoalwater and Kathlamet transcriptions, though it was not until 1940, shortly before his death, that he wrote explicitly of „literary form – a subject that has received hardly any attention and the importance of which ... cannot be overestimated".[62] As Hymes admits, ethnopoetic intentions should not be read back into Boas's thinking during the last decade of the nineteenth century, but the crucial Boasian principle which enabled ethnopoetics, at least the Native North

[58] Boas 1940.
[59] Boas 1894, in Boas 1940: 138–148.
[60] Hymes 2003: 7.
[61] Bringhurst 1999: 391.
[62] Hymes 2003: 17.

American sector of it, was succintly expressed by Boas himself: „I do not think that anyone would advocate the study of antique civilizations or, let me say, of the Turks or the Russians, without a thorough knowledge of their languages and of the literary documents in these languages".[63] The same goes for Chinookans, or should. *Q'ilti* provided Boas the matter to construct Shoalwater and Kathlamet grammars „as though an intelligent Indian was going to develop the forms of his own thoughts by an analysis of his own form of speech".[64] Boas sought out thoughts *through speech*, $\delta\iota\alpha - \lambda o\gamma o\varsigma$, but he left behind a legacy not only of thought but of art.

There is no need to rehearse the broader contributions Boas made to anthropological linguistics. These have been covered in Mithun,[65] Cole,[66] and Rohner.[67] Shoalwater and Kathlamet were significant though ultimately rather marginal elements of that legacy. Boas's grammar of Chinook was indeed a virtuoso showpiece in the first *Handbook of American Indian Languages*,[68] a volume in which other contributions were also destined to become canonic, e.g. Swanton's grammar of Haida and Boas's own Kwakiutl grammar. The audience for Boas's Chinookan studies has not, however, been vast. Michael Silverstein's linguistic analyses[69] and encyclopedic cultural interpretation (1990) are indebted to the German-American, and are essential reading for students of all things Chinookan. Yet they too cannot be thought of as especially influential in the wider frame of Americanist linguistics or anthropology. Kwakiutl continued to attract Boas's imagination long after the Chinookan texts were put to print, and his name is more closely associated with that nation than any other. Nor, with the exception of ethnographers who worked directly with Chinookan (Sapir, Jacobs, Hymes), did these languages generate the degree of interest certain other Indian languages subsequently did. So it would be fair to say, I think, that Chinookan, among the Northwest Coast languages, remained in the shadow of more northern ones, Kwakiutl in particular, where the rich material cultural traditions (the heraldic columns or »totem poles«) and elaborate rituals (the »potlatch«) continued to engage scholars for decades.

Ethnopoetics is a movement, both poetic and academic, to retrieve the verbal esthetic of poetries once known as »primitive«, now less offensively but still problematically known as »non-Western« ones. This last notion bears the trace of the cultural wars of the post-sixties, and feels today as fusty as the idea of a »Third World«. There are a lot of cultures which are non-Western but which in no way reflect the purport imputed by »primitive«. Ideally, we would dispense with the

[63] Boas in Hymes 2003: 29.
[64] Boas 1911a: 81 / Hymes 1981: 10.
[65] Mithun 1996.
[66] Cole 1985.
[67] Rohner 1969.
[68] Boas 1911b.
[69] Silverstein 1972; 1974.

prefix »ethno-«, its formerly useful reminder of cultural difference now swamped by what we know of the variety of world cultures, and the fact that there is no longer any need to contest the concept of »Western«, since, to borrow a striking phrase from Marx, it has gone to the „rubbish bin of history". Mere »poetics« should do. In the context of linguistic anthropology, however, there subsists another procedural imperative, which is to »re-oralize« and hence validate the performative experience and practice first captured and then to some extent »essentialized« in textual records of the numerous oral narratives and songs which »Boasian« anthropologists retrieved throughout the twentieth century. Boas was the almost accidental godfather of this movement and of its heritage, but it is significant that Hymes, while on the one hand harkening back to Boas, also avowed the strong influence of a literary scholar like Kenneth Burke, as well as that of Roman Jakobson.[70] Hymes' „text-centered" analysis[71] laid bare the patterns of Jakobsonian „equivalence" in line length, formulaic repetition, and other structural features. It is noteworthy that, in collaboration with Henry Zenk, Hymes also demonstrated that narrative traditions in Chinook Jargon were marked by the same patterns of repeated differentially equivalent entities.[72]

Ethnopoetics per Hymes should not be conflated with the »postmodernist« manner of critical anthropology, which arose a generation later, and which called into question a number of disciplinary postulates, not only the presumed objectivity of ethnographic studies as such, but also the innocent transparity of notes anthropologists compose in the field. Instead, to justify his approach, Hymes refers to Ernst Cassirer's »neo-Kantian« philosophy of symbolic forms.[73] Cassirer insisted upon not only the physical and presentational dimensions of any work of art but also the »personal« ones. Transposed from the pictoral realm Cassirer used as base example to the realm of verbal art, the „physical" [material support of a work of visual art] becomes the text itself, the „presentational" [what is represented in pictorial ways] becomes the „narrative" in the case of myths and tales such as *Q'ilti*'s, and the „personal" [artistic vision], becomes the individual poetic voice – though „voice" is itself a problematic concept.

The lesson Hymes drew from Cassirer is that „meaning is deepest where ... artistry is most evoked" and „[a]lthough it may appear paradoxical, perception of depth depends on perception of details and of the relationships implicit in its placement".[74] This perspective is consonant with though not congruent with Boas's own skeptical approach to natural laws relating to cultural happenings, but even more so with Sapir's above-cited insistence on the „world of meanings with which each one of the individuals may unconsciously abstract".

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[70] Jakobson 1987.
[71] Hymes 1981 and 2003.
[72] Hymes and Zenk 1987.
[73] On Boas's own relationship to Kant see Tilg and Pöhl 2007.
[74] Cassirer 1981: 10.

Hymes seems to imply that there was a fundamental misunderstanding between *Q'ilti* and Boas, this despite the latter's amazement at the intelligence of his interlocuter. *Q'ilti* was telling stories, making art, and was doing so in a manner consonant with his heritage and his personal skills. *Q'ilti* was no doubt also stimulated by Boas's queries. Otherwise, why would he have bothered to reply?

Boas was, however, after other, he thought bigger game: the „thoughts" he believed would be revealed through „speech". It was a mis-marriage made in heaven. The speech of the former, a quadrilingual, did in fact embody and convey thought, but this thought was shaped by esthetic routines invisible to the ethnologist in the field. In the case of *Q'ilti*, whose uniqueness as an informant reinforces the tendency to make him into a token of these two Chinookan cultures, it would accordingly be a mistake to neglect the personal manner or art which he brought to the composition of his verbal texts, rendering them, in Cassirer's terms, *Werk* instead of mere *Wirkung*. We can only imagine how *Q'ilti* reacted to Boas's tedious queries concerning the „grammatical structure of the sentence".[75] But *Q'ilti* was operating also on another level, varying his performances expressively, emphasizing different interpretations of the myths in question at different sessions, and across the span of any given „myth" or „tale". We should also imagine him re-telling these stories after their transcription by Boas, in the same way we all remember and rehearse things we have said or written.

It would be unfair to reproach Boas for having taken so long to recognize the literary implications of the material he had recorded – so excruciatingly, in the face of fleas and mosquites and *ham, ham, ham, and beans, beans, beans*.[76] One pleasure of reading Boas's letters home to New York and Germany [accessible in Rohner 1969] is contrasting his bourgeois discomfort at the conditions on Shoalwater Bay in 1890 with the intellectual joy his transcriptions of *Q'ilti* brought him. Bay Center was, for Boas, *ein ekelhaftes Nest*.[77]

When he encountered *Q'ilti*, he was on a rescue mission, the principle of which was to conserve the remnants of Northwest Coast languages and customs. The grounds to understand the ethnopoetic potential of *Q'ilti*'s »performances« were, moreover, not in place until well into the twentieth century: the advent of literary critical theory in which »literariness« could be construed principally as relations of equivalence or pattern within a text, per Jakobson. This new sense of the poetic was thereafter developed through the experimental practice of free poetic forms, initially *vers libre*, open form or open field writing.[78] Boas's work on Kwakiutl, Haida and Tsimshian art demonstrates that he was sensitive to artistic issues, both theoretical and practical. He was relatively free of ethnocentric bias when it came

[75] Boas 1894: 6.
[76] Cole 1999: 150.
[77] Cole 1999: 150.
[78] Hymes 2003: 34.

to judgements about the art of others and the psychological sides of creativity.[79] As Hymes unpacks *Q'ilti*'s and others' texts, Boas nonetheless missed something major.

Hymes considered it relevant to include a chapter on „Robinson Jeffers' Artistry of the Line" in his Essays on Ethnopoetics,[80] presumably because he thought the long-line style of this twentieth-century West Coast poet might be read fruitfully alongside his re-formating of Boas's Shoalwater and Kathlamet. That was one way to translate the Chinookan poetic heritage, one in accord with American modernism. Another, more compelling to the present author, would be translation into the four-stress, alliterated „Anglo-Saxon" meter which the Irish poet Seamus Heaney cast *Beowulf*,[81] but of which by far the best example remains Ezra Pound's short version of »The Seafarer«. Whether such a dense text could succeed in attracting readers without the prosaic scholarly apparatus Robert Bringhurst[82] brought to his translations of John Swanton's transcriptions of Haida is an open question, one which may remain moot. What would lie ahead for any poet willing to take up that challenge is not only daunting poetic work (*poesis*, ποιησις coming from ποιεω, to make) and mastery of the mysteries of literary translation, but an immersion in *Q'ilti*'s thoughts and words at least as thorough as Boas's was.

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[79] Discussion by Suttles and Jonaitis 1990: 81–84; also see Jonaitis 1995.
[80] Hymes 2003: 411–42
[81] Heaney 2001.
[82] Bringhurst 1999.

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