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• DAVIES M. (2010): "The Corpus of Contemporary American English as the first reliable monitor corpus of English," *Literary and linguistic computing*, 25(4), p. 447–464.

• QUAGLIO P. (2009): *Television dialogue: The sitcom Friends vs. natural conversation* (Vol. 36), John Benjamins Publishing.

• RÖMER U. (2010): "Using general and specialized corpora in English language teaching: Past, present and future," *Corpus-based approaches to English language teaching*, p. 18–38.

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Playing Seriously with Genres: Sapir's 'Nootka' Texts and Mead's Balinese Anthropology

PHILIPP SCHWEIGHAUSER♦

From September to December 1910, in 1913–14, and then again in 1934, the major Boasian anthropologist Edward Sapir did fieldwork among the Nuu–chah–nulth, a group of indigenous communities of Vancouver Island whom anthropologists of Sapir's time called "Nootka" (Sapir, 1994d: 335; Darnell and Irvine, 1994: 255-257).[1] During his distinguished career, Sapir published no less than two book–length collections of Nuu–chah–nulth texts with extensive notes and commentary (Sapir and Swadesh, 1939; Sapir and Swadesh, 1955), two substantial memoirs for the Canadian Geological Survey (Sapir, 1915; Sapir, 1916), fourteen scientific articles, and a set of three texts that focus on Sapir's Nuu–chah–nulth informant Tom Sayach'apis (see fig. 1). The latter include the impressionistic sketch "Tom" (1918), the poem "The Blind, Old Indian Tells His Names" (1921), and a compressed survey of Nuu–chah–nulth culture by way of Tom's biography, "The Life of a Nootka Indian" (1921), which was republished in a slightly revised version as "Sayach'apis, a Nootka Trader" (1922) in the following year.[2] His first publication on the Nuu–chah–nulth was the article "Some Aspects of Nootka Language and Culture" (1911), his last the posthumously published book *Native Accounts of Nootka Ethnography* (Sapir and Swadesh, 1955). Sapir's research on the Nuu–chah–nulth constitutes his "most intensive ethnographic effort" (Darnell and Irvine, 1994: 26n. 1).

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2 I am citing from the reprint of "Sayach'apis, a Nootka Trader" in volume 4 of *The Collected Works of Edward Sapir*.

Fig. 1: Photograph of Tom Sayach'apis, in Sapir, Edward. "The Social Organization of the West Coast Tribes." *Transactions*, Royal Society of Canada, Second Series, 9, 355–374 (1915). This content has been reproduced with the permission of the Royal Society of Canada.

In what follows, I zoom in on the three texts revolving around Tom Sayach'apis and, much more briefly, *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis,* a pioneering work in visual anthropology co-authored by his colleague and friend Margaret Mead and her husband Gregory Bateson, to inquire into the ethical and political ramifications of Boasian anthropologists' transgressions of generic and medial boundaries. While this essay probes the intersections of literary studies and cultural anthropology, the principal addressee of its call for modesty is practitioners within my own discipline, literary studies. More specifically, what I hope comes into view as the argument develops are less auspicious uses of literary forms and literary-critical concepts by cultural anthropologists than those many a literary scholar and many an ethnographer has become accustomed to since the writing culture debate of the 1980s and 1990s.

Published in the *Canadian Courier* on December 7, 1918, Sapir's six-page sketch "Tom" begins with an account of the foul weather bugging Sapir as he approaches the Nuu-chah-nulth reserve near Alberni on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Partly adopting the perspective of his indigenous subjects, Sapir describes himself as "the rubber-booted rain-coated individual who had come to get his field data for another of the series of scientific monographs with which ethnology is just now deluging the country" (Sapir, 1994f: 451). His interpreter's welcome and advice are equally underwhelming: "At last my half-breed interpreter arrived, smiling blandly. He was just three-quarters of an hour late, for he had been 'very busy.' He had just decided the best thing I could do was to get my information from Tom. Tom did not know a word of English, but we could get along with Chinook, the *lingua franca* of the Pacific Coast natives, aided by the interpreter's well-paid intermediation" (451–452). The sketch continues in the same vein once Sapir has been introduced to blind old Tom and welcomed into his grandson's cabin, which Sapir describes as tasteless, sordid, smelly, and unbearably noisy. Tom has squandered his wealth in potlatches and now appears before Sapir as a shabby old man who "had had his days of prestige and

now rested content in their memory" (453). With financial agreements made, Sapir, Tom and the interpreter set to work on the next day, "recording the ethnological information that was stored up in Tom's encyclopaedic mind" (453). Tom has to be taught to speak more slowly but soon "acquire[s] an intelligent and repetitive docility worthy of any dictaphone or college professor" (454). Sapir's mildly self-ironic account of his Nuu-chah-nulth informant remains condescending when he characterizes the little jokes Tom makes when welcoming Sapir in the mornings as a "quaint conceit" (454) that amuses no one but Tom himself. But then, in the final paragraph of this brief sketch, Sapir's tone changes:

> But Tom was no mere mystery-monger or sentimental ritualist. He had led an extremely active life—traded up and down the coast with canoes, driven hard bargains with the whites at Victoria in the early days, built houses, dabbled with Indian doctoring, sealed and fished and hunted like the rest, given many feasts to his own tribesmen and to alien tribes whom he made his guests, and left his descendants an honored name. And that is how I came to feel that the shabby old man was one of the victorious ones of the earth. Pity of him was an impertinence, for he had tasted of all the fruits that grew on the stem of his tribal life. And when I shook hands with him at the end of my season's work, I took leave not of my "informant," but of a genuine man. (454)

Sapir is no longer the distanced and bemused observer but himself becomes the subject of a learning process. Of course, the hierarchy remains firmly in place: it is the ethnographer who reserves himself the right to judge that Tom is, after all, "a genuine man." Sapir arrogates all the definitional power to himself: when he takes leave of him, Tom is "a genuine man" because Sapir considers him so. But in ending this sketch, which begins on a consistently condescending note, with a paean to the fullness of this First Nations subject's life, to his mastery of songs, his dignity and his legacy, is to admit to the hastiness and wrongness of the ethnographer's initial judgement. In putting "informant" in scare quotes in the final sentence, Sapir—a linguist as well as an ethnographer—also engages in an act of discursive self-reflection as he questions the accuracy of the terms anthropologists use to refer to the subjects of their research.[3] Indeed, names and naming play a crucial role in Sapir's three texts about Tom. In "Tom," we learn that this old man "left his descendants an honored name.

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3 Since the writing culture debate, the term "informant" has come under scrutiny from cultural anthropologists since it appears to reduce the human beings that anthropologists engage with to mere providers of data (Smedal, 1994: n.p.). Some of this unease can be felt in Sapir's reflection on the term in "Tom."

honored name" (454). In Sapir's "The Blind, Old Indian Tells His Names," naming is the leitmotif.

"Sayach'apis, a Nootka Trader" begins on a note very different from "Tom." While pointing out his subject's poverty, he introduces him as a dignified man of solid reputation:

> Tom is now old and poverty-stricken, but the memory of his former wealth is with his people. The many feasts he has given and the many ceremonial dances and displays he has had performed have all had their desired effect—they have shed luster on his sons and daughters and grandchildren, they have "put his family high" among the Ts'isha'ath tribe, and they have even carried his name to other, distant Nootka tribes, and to tribes on the east coast of the island that are of alien speech. (Sapir, 1994e: 481)

Though Sapir writes about "his name" in the singular here, he elaborates on the fact that, during his lifetime, Tom had no less than six names. His present name, "Sayach'apis," is "an old man's name of eight generations' standing" and means "Stands-up-high-over-all" (481). As Sapir explains, names are privileges that are passed down the generations in Nuu-chah-nulth culture, not unlike songs, legends, and ceremonies. In this case, the original bearer of the name received it as a gift from "Sky Chief" in a dream; Tom assumed it around the age of 50, at a potlatch he organized in honor of his oldest daughter. Before that, he bore a young man's name, "Nawe'ik," which is said to translate as "Come here!," a demand made by a spirit whale during a dream of its first bearer. Tom's fourth name was another young man's name, "Kunnuh," which means "Wake up!" This name too has its origin in a dream of a spirit whale (482) and was given to him at a naming feast when he was around ten. His third name was "Ha'wihlkumuktli," a boy's name that signifies "Having chiefs behind" (483) and derives from Tom's grandmother's father's father, a whaler whose wealth and reputation surpassed other chiefs'. Tom's second name was "Tl'i'nitsawa," which translates as "Getting-whale-skin." His father chose it because young Tom would run to the beach to get slices of skin from caught whales. He got it at a mourning potlatch for his recently deceased father. Tom does not remember his first name, which was a child's nickname that comes with no privileges (483).

Sapir comments on Tom's various names at some length because they illustrate the importance of privileges and of descent and kinship ties, all of which determine social status among the Nuu-chah-nulth. Thus, Tom is assigned the role of a representative of his people, whose social structures and ritual activities (from potlatches to marriage ceremonies) are portrayed via the story of one of its men.

Sapir's poem "The Blind, Old Indian Tells His Names" was published in the September 1921 issue of *The Canadian Bookman*. Based on the story of Tom Sayach'apis as we know it from the essays "Tom" and "Sayach'apis, a Nootka Trader," the poem interweaves two voices. The first is a third-person voice that introduces the poem's eponymous figure and watches him stumble off as the poem ends. Its major part is taken up by the First Nations figure's first-person account of what names he has worn throughout his life and how he received them. This account is reported as direct speech given in quotation marks. Three times, the indigenous figure breaks into song.

The poem's politics of representation is ambivalent. On the one hand, it is mostly given over to the First Nations voice. Thus, there is an attempt on Sapir's part to stage a First Nations subject's act of self-representation. On the other hand, this first-person voice is framed and contextualized by a third-person, Western voice. Given the obvious and close connections between the essays and the poem, given Tom Sayach'apis' penchant for song, and given that the poem's focus on naming is drawn directly from "Sayach'apis, a Nootka Trader," we may safely call the author of the poem's First Nations voice "Tom"—provided that we remember neither the persona nor any of the voices that speak in a poem are identical with any living being.

What is most striking about the story of naming that we get in "The Blind, Old Indian Tells His Names" is that it does not match the account in "Sayach'apis, a Nootka Trader." The poem begins by telling us that Tom's first name is "Stand-up high" and that its first bearer received it from "The Heaven-Chief" (Sapir, 1994a: 507) in a dream. Up to this point, Sapir's verse account of the origins and meaning of Tom's present name, Sayach'apis, corresponds to what we know from the essay. What may seem a discrepancy between the two accounts is the fact that "Stand-up high" is Tom's sixth name in the essay while it is referred to as his "first" in the poem. One might assume that this apparent incongruity is simply based on a different kind of framing and that "Stand-up" is Tom's "first" name in the sense that it is the name that comes with the greatest age and privilege. But that hypothesis crumbles as we reach the second name in the poem, "Talking-of-the-day," when it becomes clear that Sapir reverses the chronological order: "'Talking-of-the-day,' / This was my second name. I threw away / My first" (507). This second name is nowhere to be found in the essay, but four lines later in Tom's account of the origin of that name, we encounter a gnome shouting "Wake up or freeze!" (508) to another of Tom's dreaming ancestors. Thus the poem goes on to establish a connection to the essay's fourth name, "Kunnuh," translated there as "Wake up!" In the essay, "Stands-up-high-over-all" is identified as Tom's present and most recent name while "Wake up!" is an earlier name. The reverse holds true for the poem, where "Stand-up high" is an earlier name that Tom "threw away" when he adopted "Talking-of-the-day" (or "Wake up or freeze!"). Should we still speak of Sapir's poetic license here? Do the epistemological and ethical obligations of anthropologists toward their indigenous subjects radically change when those subjects are transposed into the realm of poetry? These questions become more pressing as we continue reading the poem.

By the time it reveals that Tom's "third" name is "Red-Mounded" (508) we have learned to understand that this is again a more recent name that displaces the second name. Unlike the two earlier names, "Red-Mounded" cannot be linked to any one of the names mentioned in the essay with any certitude. The poem tells us that this third name is "another whaling name" (508) and takes us into a time in which Tom's people suffered from hunger, zooming in on a particular day on which "[a] thick and thundering darkness came / Upon our village shore and killed the day" (508). During this stormy day, courageous Tom braves the weather and spots a whale carcass illuminated by lightning. As he announces in a triumphant song that "silence[s] his foes" (510), this whale's flesh ended his people's hunger. Clearly, there are parallels between this story and Sapir's essay on Nuu-chah-nulth culture. For one, the Nuu-chah-nulth that we know from the essay are a fishing culture that lives primarily off salmon, salmon trout, herring, halibut, cod, shellfish, "mussels and clams and sea urchins, sea cucumbers, and octopuses" (Sapir, 1994e: 486). In addition, they hunt a variety of highly prized sea mammals including "the humpbacked whale, the California whale, the sea otter, the sea lion, and, most important of all, the hair seal" (486).

Still, despite these convergences, the third name of the poem, "Red-Mounded" cannot be identified with any one of the six names mentioned in the essay. Most likely, "Red-Mounded" collapses three of the essay's names into one: Tom's fifth name "Nawe'ik," his fourth name "Kunnuh," and his third name, the boy's name "Ha'wihlkumuktli." All of these names, Sapir's essay tells us, originated in an ancestor's dream of a spirit-whale (Sapir, 1994e: 482–483). The whale-spotting story that Sapir weaves around "Red-Mounded" likewise has a dream-like quality; it is set at night and in a partly mystical, partly gothic atmosphere. The poem's story is also dream-like in a second, Freudian sense: it constitutes a wish-fulfillment of sorts since the essay tells us that while Tom caught plenty of seals and sea otters in his lifetime, he never caught a whale (486–487). Thus, while the poem's narrative about the nightly sighting of a whale carcass is nowhere to be found in the essay, that story is woven out of several threads strewn throughout it. In this case, then, there are narrative convergences but no exact correspondences.

The poem ends with Tom playfully suggesting that he will "tell [his] fourth name at a feast, / Throwing away 'Red-mounded'" before "stumbl[ing] off" in the poem's final two lines (Sapir, 1994a: 510). If we compare the poem's ending with the essay's account, it is indeed possible that this blind old man will acquire yet another name in the course of his life. As we read in the essay, "Tom did not always have the name of Sayach'apis, nor need he keep it to the end of his days" (Sapir, 1994e: 482). But as we have already seen, while the essay suggests that this new name would follow Tom's present name Sayach'apis, the poem suggests that Tom threw away Sayach'apis long ago and that "Red-Mounded" is his present name that he might throw away when he acquires his new name at a future feast.

To sum up, while Sapir's account of Tom's names in "The Blind, Old Indian Tells His Names" obviously draws on his essay "Sayach'apis, a Nootka Trader," the poem departs from the essay in at least four significant ways: first, it reduces the number of names from six to four; second, it reverses the chronological sequence of some of the names; third, it collapses three of the essay's names into a new name that is unique to the poem; and fourth, in telling the story of Tom's names, the poem freely draws on various narrative threads of the essay that have little or nothing to do with acts of naming.

What do we make of the poem's many departures from the essays' non-fictional accounts? Given Sapir's exploration of the ethics of naming and misnaming in "Tom," these discrepancies between ethnographic and literary representations of a First Nations voice are remarkable. Of course, from the perspective of literary studies, we could simply put these discrepancies down to the writer's poetic license: Sapir the poet is much less bound to a truthful rendering of Tom's narrative than is Sapir the ethnographer. Moreover, writers and literary critics alike have made the argument that fictional representations of the (historical) real may in many cases be more truthful than, or at least provide a different yet equally powerful kind of truth as the professional accounts of historiographers, sociologists, or anthropologists. To give but one example: E. L. Doctorow states that his invention, in his historiographic metafiction *Ragtime*, of an encounter between J. P. Morgan and Henry Ford in which the two men discuss reincarnation is all the more true *because* it is fictional: "I'm satisfied that everything I made up about Morgan and Ford is true, whether it happened or not. Perhaps truer because it didn't happen" (Levine, 1983: 69). Doctorow here makes an assertion concerning the truth value of fiction: for him, it reveals historical truth in the sense that his portrayal of two major public figures of early-twentieth-century America captures the spirit of the era. Raymond Williams's notion of "structures of feeling" allows us to conceptualize such accounts of the truth value of fiction. For Williams, literature gives expression to structures of feeling, to "meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt" and "the relations between these and formal or systematic beliefs" (1977: 132), before they are theorized by sociologists and political scientists. Williams's most memorable example concerns the novels of Charles Dickens and Emily Brontë, which departed from dominant Victorian explanations of poverty and destitution as effects of moral failure by "specif[ying] exposure and isolation as a *general* condition and poverty, debt or illegitimacy as its connecting instances" (134). In this, they anticipated Marx's "alternative ideology," which "relate[d] such exposure to the nature of the social order" (134).

If Doctorow's and Williams's insights are transferrable from prose narratives to lyrical ones, we can say that, based on what we know from "Tom" and "Sayach'apis, a Nootka Trader," Sapir's poem "The Blind, Old Indian Tells His Names" does capture some form of truth about Tom Sayach'apis and the community he lives in. We learn

about Tom's striving for an elevated social position, about the past greatness of this shabby old man, about his penchant for singing, about the importance of names in his culture, about the social significance of potlatches, and about the centrality of fishing and whaling in the Nuu-chah-nulth economy. The poem, in other words, imparts a significant amount of verifiable biographical and ethnographic knowledge.

And yet, one cannot shake the feeling that Sapir's exertion of poetic license violates a contract. What would the real-life Tom Sayach'apis say about Sapir inventing new names for him and rearranging their chronology? One of the important practical insights that the writing culture debate has bequeathed to cultural anthropologists is that the accounts they give of other peoples must hold up to those peoples' self-descriptions. Torben Monberg's "Informants Fire Back: A Micro-Study in Anthropological Methods" (1975) provides early, pre-writing culture testimony to this awareness. In the essay, Monberg, a Danish cultural anthropologist, reports on the harsh feedback his Polynesian informants provided on his and Samuel H. Elbert's book *From the Two Canoes* (1965), a "volume of oral traditions from the two Polynesian Outlier islands, Rennell (Mugaba) and Bellona (Mungiki)" that "contained 428 pages, including 236 texts in the language of the two islands comprising mythology, quasi-history and history" as well as "brief ethnographic accounts and information concerning methods of collecting, genealogies, and short biographies of the informants" (Monberg, 1975: 218). One Bellonese reviewer reported that "some people think that the book is bad in some ways, because there are bad stories about ancestors and of people who are still alive" (220); another "feel[s] sorry because *our* traditional stories are not in the book" (220), adding that the anthropologists' selection of stories does not give equal weight to the stories of the two communities—the Bellonese and Rennellese—and is therefore "controversial" and "bad" (221). Monberg's essay registers one of the ethical impasses of anthropological work to which Stephen A. Tyler responds when he calls for a "post-modern ethnography" that "foregrounds dialogue as opposed to monologue, and emphasizes the cooperative and collaborative nature of the ethnographic situation in contrast to the ideology of the transcendental observer" (2011: 126). Tyler's essay is his contribution to the key text of the writing culture debate, James Clifford and George E. Marcus's edited volume *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (1986), which post-dates Monberg's essay by eleven and Sapir's texts on Tom Sayach'apis by over sixty years.

It is in hindsight then, with knowledge of the writing culture debate, that we feel that Sapir, the anthropologist-turned-poet, has a different kind of responsibility toward the subjects he writes about than do other poets. In the case of "The Blind, Old Indian Tells His Names," this responsibility is especially pronounced since Sapir exerts his poetic license over a particularly sensitive area of Nuu-chah-nulth culture: names. Throughout Sapir's many publications on the Nuu-chah-nulth, we are reminded of the cultural centrality of naming. In "Indian Legends from Vancouver

Island" (1925), he identifies "Nootka" names as "privileges […] which derive from the ancestral experiences" (Sapir, 1994b: 525). Sapir and Morris Swadesh's joint volume *Native Accounts of Nootka Ethnography* (1955), published after Sapir's death, includes a multitude of indigenous accounts that highlight the great significance of names. In one account given by Tom Sayach'apis in the 1920s, we learn about a Tsishaa man praying to the supernatural creator Day Chief, "May I be named by all people. May I be as those dwelling alone. May the different tribes hear only of me. May they know my name. May they mention my name to the end of the coast" (Sapir and Swadesh, 1955: 53).[4]
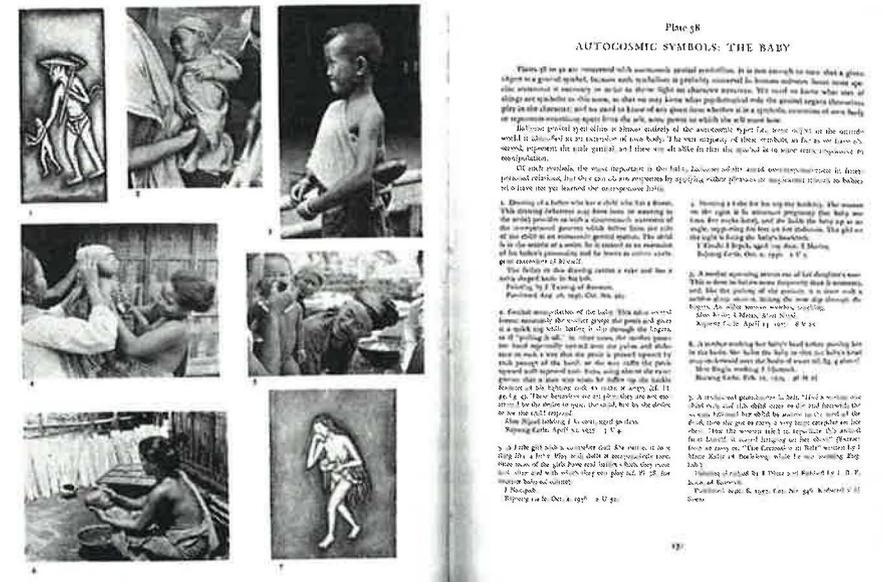

Fig. 2: Plate 38 in Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead, *Balinese Character* (1942). Used with permission. © The New York Academy of Sciences.

Given the pivotal significance of names and naming among the Nuu-chah-nulth, Sapir's creative reworking of Tom Sayach'apis' names and his invention of new names for him may strike us as morally suspect. At what point does Sapir the poet's exertion of poetic license clash with Sapir the anthropologist's moral and epistemological obligations toward his indigenous subjects? We may ask a similar question about his Boasian colleague Margaret Mead's offhand remark over the reproduction of a Balinese painting in her and Gregory Bateson's *Balinese Character*, a major early contribution to visual anthropology. The painting is part of the book's

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4 The "Tsishaa" (now called "Tseshaht") are one of the fifteen tribes that make up Nuu-chah-nulth culture.

plate 38 ("Autocosmic Symbols: The Baby"), which has the same form as all of the 100 plates that make up the heart of the book: on one page, we see an ensemble of images (in this case, five of Bateson's photographs of Balinese babies and children and two reproductions of related drawings by Balinese artists); on the facing page we find a short introductory text by Mead followed by a brief description of each image (see fig. 2).

Plate 38 as a whole is concerned with 'autocosmic symbolism,' which Mead defines as a type of symbolism in which "some object in the outside world is identified as an extension of [sic] own body" (Bateson and Mead, 1942: 131). In this case, Mead speaks of "autocosmic genital symbolism," where the object in the outside world is identified as an extension of the male genital. In Mead's interpretation, the baby is "the most important" (131) autocosmic general symbol in Balinese culture, hence the various representations of babies and children in the images.

While Mead's caption for image 6 performs a solely ekphrastic function, it is in the caption for image 1 that Mead's theoretical framework and ethnographic knowledge are put to use:

> Drawing of a father who has a child who has a flower. This drawing (whatever may have been its meaning to the artist) provides us with a diagrammatic statement of the inter-personal patterns which follow from the role of the child as an autocosmic genital symbol. (131)

Mead's interpretation of the drawing and, by implication, the photograph becomes clear. In both images, we see the child/baby as an "autocosmic genital symbol," an embodied, symbolic extension of the male genital. While the photograph (fig. 3) documents the baby's function as such a symbol in Balinese social life, the drawing (fig. 4) highlights the general cultural (spiritual, mythical) meaning of Balinese children. Clearly, Mead draws on a psychoanalytic framework here. But rather than elaborating on the Boasians' impositions of Freudian/Jungian frameworks on other cultures, I want to zoom in on Mead's parenthetic comment: "whatever may have been its meaning to the artist" (131).

This offhand remark speaks volumes, especially when read in connection with Sapir's exertion of poetic license in "The Blind, Old Indian Tells His Names." Both make moves familiar to literary scholars. In Mead's case, her brushing aside of the artist's intention resonates with any literary scholar who has read William K. Wimsatt and Monroe R. Beardsley's "The Intentional Fallacy" (1946), published nine years prior to Balinese Character, or studied equally influential essays published after Mead and Bateson's book such as Roland Barthes's "The Death of the Author" (1967) and Michel Foucault's "What Is an Author?" (1969). Yet what do we, as literary scholars, do when assumptions many of us have learned to take for granted—writers have the right to poetic license, the author is either dead or a discursive function, and the

intentional fallacy must be avoided—crop up in ethnographic texts and there ring false, smack of ethnocentrism?

One of the crucial legacies of the writing culture debate is to raise cultural anthropologists' awareness of the rhetorical construction of ethnographic authority. Major contributions to Writing Culture draw on concepts from literary studies and its various theoretical frameworks for their critical analyses of ethnographic texts' embeddedness in (post-)colonial power/knowledge nexuses: Vincent Crapanzano discusses George Catlin's, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's, and Clifford Geertz's hermeneutic strategies of self-authorization; Clifford writes about "ethnographic allegory"; Paul Rabinow draws on Fredric Jameson's reflections on postmodernism; Michael M. Fischer reads literary texts by African-American, Chicano/a, and Native American writers as postmodern ethnographic self-descriptions. Thus, the tools of literary studies and the concepts of literary and cultural theory are employed in the service of speaking truth to ethnographic power.

Clearly, the case is different with Sapir and Mead. Their principal aim is not to stage a critique of the ethnographic construction of authority but to describe and evoke other cultures in poetry, ethnographic prose, and (in Mead's case) images. What connects the early-twentieth-century Boasians and the late-twentieth-century postmodern ethnographers though is their recourse to concepts current in the literary-critical circles of their time. Yet the transfer of literary forms and ideas to cultural anthropology has a very different political valence in these two moments in the history of anthropology. Literary scholars may feel a sense of pride that "their" terms have been adopted by major cultural anthropologists like Clifford, Marcus, and
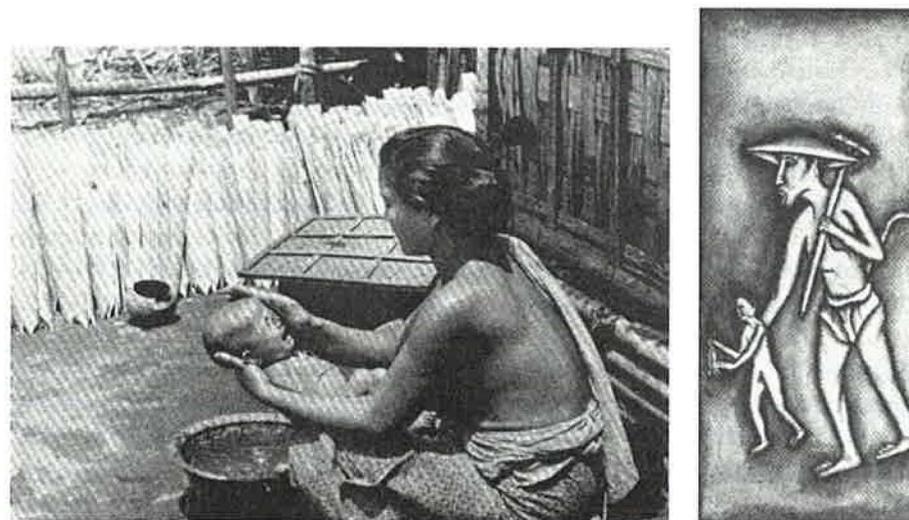
Figs. 3 and 4: Details of Plate 38 in Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead, Balinese Character (1942). Used with permission. © The New York Academy of Sciences.

Rabinow in the service of promoting more self–reflexive and ethically more viable ethnographic writing practices (Marcus, 2011: 168n. 5). Yet a close look at Sapir's work on the Nuu–chah–nulth and Mead and Bateson's on the Balinese reveals a different side of such transdisciplinary transfers.

In "The Blind, Old Indian Tells His Names," Sapir plays fast and loose with an especially sensitive area of Nuu–chah–nulth culture: naming. Of course, his exertion of poetic license is perfectly in sync with a modern understanding of artistic autonomy, but it also betrays a carefree, perhaps careless use of ethnographic data that appropriates biographical and cultural knowledge gained during fieldwork in ways that are difficult to reconcile with and possibly offensive to members of the culture subjected to the anthropologist–poet's gaze. Likewise, while Mead's brushing aside of a Balinese artist's intention easily aligns itself with formalist (New Critical, structuralist, and post–structuralist) attempts to liberate works of art and their reception from the authoritative force of artistic intention—attempts that were on their way to becoming literary–critical doxa when *Balinese Character* was published— they testify to an anthropologist's disregard for a culture's self–description. In fact, while the Boasians have often been credited with "writing culture" *avant la lettre* (Manganaro, 2002: 157; Fischer, 2011: 217; Darnell, 1992: 45–46), Crapanzano's acerbic critique of Geertz in his contribution to *Writing Culture* applies with equal force to Sapir and Mead. In response to Geertz's famous claim in "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" (1972) that "[t]he culture of a people is an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong" (Geertz, 1973: 452), Crapanzano writes:

> The image is striking: sharing and not sharing a text. It represents a sort of asymmetrical we–relationship with the anthropologist behind and above the native, hidden but at the top of the hierarchy of understanding. [...] There is never an I–you relationship, a dialogue, two people next to each other reading the same text and discussing it face–to–face, but only an I–they relationship. [...] All too often, the ethnographer forgets that the native [...] cannot abide someone reading over his shoulder. If he does not close his book, he will cast his shadow over it. Of course, the ethnographer will also cast his shadow over it. (2011: 74–76)

One should not overemphasize the similarities between Geertz's method of thick description and Boasian anthropology: for Sapir, Benedict, and Mead, cultures were not texts but more or less successfully integrated wholes (Manganaro, 2002: 151–157). What unites the two generations of cultural anthropologists though is their recourse to concepts and methods fashionable in the literary theory and criticism circles of their time (in Geertz's case a structuralist understanding of culture as "text" and

a determination to "read" cultures much like the hermeneutic tradition interprets literary texts). Strikingly, what also unites them is their use of literary–critical doxa in ways that reify the power differential between the anthropologist and the culture that they study. Sapir's poetic appropriation of biographical and ethnographic data collected during fieldwork among the Nuu–chah–nulth, Mead's indifference to a Balinese artist's understanding of his own work, and Geertz's (too) masterful reading of the Balinese cockfight all create "a sort of asymmetrical we–relationship with the anthropologist behind and above the native, hidden but at the top of the hierarchy of understanding." With regard to Sapir and Mead, the point that I wish to make is not that they draw on literary–critical concepts and convictions for nefarious ends. The point I wish to make is that, while many proponents of "writing culture" did tap into the critical energies of the "school of suspicion" (Ricoeur 1979: 32 *et passim*) that most literary scholars attend, we should not be overconfident about the emancipatory potential of the literary forms we study and the analytical tools we use. As the examples of Sapir, Mead, and Geertz show, the "shadow" that ethnographers cast over other cultures sometimes has a literary hue.

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