PREFACE

The papers in this collection represent the work of student participants in a graduate seminar on the life and work of Margaret Mead. Held during the Winter Quarter of 1985, it was initially planned in response to the great debate and lively discussion swirling about Mead. A large body of materials had been produced in homage and critique at the time of her death, followed by the attack on her Samoan study by Derek Freeman, with the publication of two important biographies of Mead coming shortly thereafter. The three books produced a great quantity of comments and reviews, a great exchange of attacks and counter-attacks in a still growing mass of ephemeral materials. These, in their turn, provided an impetus for further discussions, and called for an evaluation of the debate as an anthropological phenomenon.

Various universities have held discussions, forums, and seminars dealing with Mead's life and work, often specifically with Samoa and the Mead-Freeman controversy. Professor Esther Pressel of Colorado State University reported to me on such a discussion which she had attended and which had stimulated her to organize a seminar for her students. I have not regretted following suite.

As part of the seminar, and in addition to reading and reporting on voluminous writings by Mead and others, we saw several of Mead's films from the collection of the University's Office of Learning Resources, in particular "Four Families," and "New Guinea Journal." We had the opportunity of listening to a collection of audio tapes, featuring Margaret Mead in various lectures presented in Columbus during her many visits here, and also several interviews, mostly from National Public Radio. For the loan of the tapes we are indebted to Professor Jeannette H. Henney of Capital University, Dr. Nancy Baker, and Mr. John Dilenschneider.

In addition to those contributing papers here a number of others took an active part in seminar discussions: Professor Amy Zaharlick of the Department of Anthropology, Mrs. Barbara Hoffmann of the Colleges of Arts and Sciences and a Ph.D. student in an interdisciplinary program, Meghan Walsh Felz, an undergraduate in Political Science and now a student at the University of Vermont, and Elizabeth Wilson, a Ph.D. student in Communications, as well as several occasional visitors. A number of people in the group had heard Mead speak on one or more occasions, in formal lectures and in other settings. Elizabeth Wilson told of chatting with an elderly lady - perhaps a student's mother or grandmother - in the cafeteria of a Central Ohio college, and discovering only later, to her amazement, that she had been speaking with the famous Margaret Mead. From these accounts, it is clear that a substantial body of Mead folklore has developed, from personal encounters and the tales of others handed on through ever-widening circles. Not only the eulogies but also the reviews of the biographies, listed in Appendix II, include a rich body of such personal encounter tales.

In all, the Mead seminar was an exciting collective experience, from which we all learned a great deal, indeed more than we are able to reflect in these pages. Revision of the papers for publication presented a new challenge: participants read and criticized each others' drafts and revisions,
until final versions were produced. Critiques and suggestions for more promising approaches sharpened the focus of some while others were encouraged to shift topics and seek a newer perspective.

In the meantime, participants needed to continue with their own studies and their own lives. Frank Spaulding passed the hurdle of the General Examination and is now pursuing fieldwork on ethnicity in Pakistan. Phyllis Turk completed her dissertation and has returned to Israel for further research, collecting life histories from elderly Oriental immigrants. Romana Prokopiw left the University and is now working in Chicago.

Since the end of the Seminar, the debate surrounding Margaret Mead's work has continued, and shows no sign of termination. To wit, both the December 1985 and March 1986 issues of the American Anthropologist carry exchanges between Derek Freeman and his critics. Further reviews of the biographies have also appeared such as that by L.L. Langness, entitled: "Margaret Mead: The Examination Begins" (Reviews in Anthropology 12 [1985]:15-20) and one by Dennis Porter (American Anthropologist 88 [1986]:245-246). Then there is the publication in October of 1986 of Lowell D. Holmes' The Quest for the Real Samoa (Bergin and Garvey, Inc.). And so the discussion goes on. Undaunted, we are contributing our own small share to it. It was our aim to examine Margaret Mead's work in three contexts: that of her life, that of American culture, and that of 20th century anthropology. These proceedings are presented as an initial step toward such an effort.

We are indebted to the many friends who have helped us locate items listed in Appendix II, in particular Professor John C. Messenger, Jr., and Dr. Semra Somersan. Anne-Marie del Guidice undertook the often tedious task of cataloguing, tracing, and organizing these materials. Linda Hartranft's careful editorial eye has assured the orderliness and stylistic unity of the manuscript, and thereby improved it measurably. Karen Snyder and Michele Morock typed early drafts of the manuscript; the final draft reflects the conscientious work and attention to detail of Anita Durbin and Lucia Ivanovici.

To all these we are grateful.

We hope these proceedings will be seen as a small but productive contribution and will provide a favorable start for our renewed series of Occasional Papers in Anthropology.

Erika Bourguignon
INTRODUCTION

ERIKA BOURLGUIGNON

Writing on another topic, Weston LaBarre (1985:212) speaks, almost as an aside, of "the debacle of several large reputations from Malinowski to Mead." Robert A. Paul (1984:101-02), writing of Margaret Mead, remarks:

A world-class superstar from the 1920s through the 1950s her lustre faded in the discipline and languished throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Last November [1983] witnessed the end of that era, when what seemed like half the anthropologists in the world crowded into a grand ballroom in Chicago to cheer while everyone from cultural relativists to sociobiologists to cultural materialists defended Mead's honor against Derek Freeman's attack.

The Freeman-Mead controversy provided one of the starting points of our seminar, and we discussed it and its context at some length. Although no paper in this collection deals with it specifically, it is reflected in Appendix II, where numerous contributions to the debate are listed. Also, as a result of our discussions, Phyllis Turk was prompted to seek out contemporary reviews of Coming of Age in Samoa and Growing up in New Guinea. In the light of later events, and, specifically, the controversy, they make fascinating reading. They show clearly how broad a public appeal Mead's work had from the very beginning. Few ethnographic reports by American anthropologists, then or now, were so widely reviewed, and by such diverse publications. Few, from the beginning, were surrounded by such acclaim and skepticism. In Appendix I we are able to offer only a selection of excerpts from the reviews, but these well merit reading. Can this be serious scholarly research, yet well-written and comprehensible to the lay person? Is this anthropology, when recommendations are made for domestic application of the findings? Both lay readers and anthropological colleagues, here and abroad, raised such questions.

Thus, in a generally positive review, M.J. Herskovits (1931:33) comments: "...whether one likes one's science to stay within the confines of its own boundaries or applied to problems of the day is a matter of personal preference." Robert A. Lowie (1929:533) remarks more strongly: "I am afraid Dr. Mead has not been quite ingenious in her applied anthropology and fortunately readers of this journal are not concerned with pedagogical sermonizing." As a lay reader, H.L. Mencken (1928:579) remarks: "Miss Mead's book would have been better if she had avoided discussing the woes of American high school girls and confined herself to an objective account of life in Samoa." On the other hand, the New York Times Book Review (1928), under the title "The Adolescent," speaks of Coming of Age in Samoa as "a remarkable contribution to our knowledge of humanity," while Ruth Benedict (1929) calls it "a book we have been waiting for." The Booklist (1929) warns that "Some communities will require the circulation of this book to be restricted."

From the beginning, then, Mead appealed to a larger public beyond the profession, and saw herself criticized for doing so. While criticism sometimes took the form of doubting the wisdom or appropriateness of turning
anthropology into an applied science, others questioned the appeal to the lay public, the popularization or "sermonizing" in Lowie's phrase.

In this country, Margaret Mead has long been the only or the principal anthropologist known to many people outside the profession. Minderhout (1986) has recently documented this in a study of introductory texts in sociology and psychology: Mead was referred to in 40 out of 51 sociology texts—only Benedict was mentioned as frequently—and in 25 of 61 psychology texts. There Mead is cited most often with regard to her book, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*. No other anthropologist was referred to as often. It is then not surprising when, in a newspaper article concerning the anthropological debate over cannibalism, reference is made quite gratuitously to Margaret Mead, whose work William Arens is said to contradict (Holland 1986).

A major theme that emerges from the papers in this collection is Mead's commitment to the application of anthropological knowledge to the practical problems of the day. This interest in and commitment to application of her own findings (and those of others) appeared in her Samoan study and lasted throughout her life. In contrast to many applied anthropologists of later years—Mead was a founder of the Society for Applied Anthropology—her concerns were directed first and foremost to the amelioration of her own American society. A first concern was adolescence, and then, earlier phases of childhood. During the war years, as Frank Spaulding shows in his contribution to this collection, her interests turned toward issues of war and peace, the support of the U.S. war effort in multiple forms. These ranged from attempts to understand the enemy, to improve communication with allies, to increase American self-understanding, as in her war-time book on the United States, *And Keep Your Powder Dry* (1942) (published in England under the title *The American Character*), and a variety of other activities, including work as executive secretary and director of research of the Committee on Food Habits of the National Research Council (1942-45). After the war, this work continued with her directorship of the Research in Contemporary Cultures project at Columbia University. During much of this time, her concern was, as in her Redbook Magazine articles, reviewed by Mary Montgomery below, with bringing home news of the wider world and both sharing information about this world with her audiences and improving their ability to solve problems in their own lives by looking at how others live.

One of Mead's central themes was her concern with commitment, a word that appears in the title of one of her last books. She was committed to her culture and society, and she was committed to making that society, and the world, a better place. This is the theme that runs through all of her work, whether explicitly or implicitly. The commitment is one to work that needs to be done to make the world a better place to live and to rear children. "We live in an age," she writes (1949:9), "when every inquiry must be judged in terms of urgency." That conviction never left her and could be taken as the motto of her work.

Mead's commitment to applied anthropology was so strong that it affected even the way in which she approached her autobiographical writings. Thus, in *Blackberry Winter* she sets as one of her aims in discussing her own childhood "to sort out the experiences that might become part of the way of bringing up children" (Mead 1972:3, cited by M. Kanner, below). This emphasis also appears in her documentation of the birth and early life of her own child. What can we learn from our observations, whether of ourselves, of those close
to us, of those we go to study? This is the refrain. What can we learn that has practical implications for building a better society, a better world?

As Mead has pointed out repeatedly, her childhood prepared her for "the role of cultural observer and analyst" (Mead 1949:455). Indeed she describes her childhood as one of participant observation of the behavior of people around her, and as a subject of study for her mother. In a document that deserves some attention, she discusses "The Ethics of Insight-giving" (Mead 1949, Appendix II). Here she speaks both of the power of the social sciences and of the responsibility of those who hold the knowledge that is the power:

The social scientist, working with an emerging awareness that if pursued will surely alter the shape of our world, carries a heavy load of obligation. When the social scientist says understanding will make men freer to shape their own destiny, he claims not only that understanding is good, but also that he can offer some of that understanding, or at least the way to attain it (Mead 1949:431).

This is the statement of an optimistic creed, one few among anthropologists or other social scientists are likely to hold in the mid-1980s. Mead notes the uses of social science in warfare and propaganda, and the complex ethical issues involved, and often the destructive uses to which the social sciences have been put, and calls for the development of "an ethic of insight, an ethic" she goes on to say, "to guide those who are beginning to apply social science consciously and responsibly" (Mead 1949:433).

Yet here she draws a distinction, which may strike us today as curious. The study of contemporary societies, the results of which may be applied immediately for destructive or constructive ends, is, she says,

quite a different thing from the technical description of the culture of the Mundugumor who sixteen years ago were a vanishing and disintegrating group of people on the banks of an obscure river in New Guinea. Only by taking such remote ethnological knowledge, stating it very abstractly, and then translating it back into a concrete contemporary situation, can it be used for any practical purposes whatever...Applied anthropology depends not only upon the knowledge of a set of abstractions brought out of the primitive laboratory, but upon the concrete, specific knowledge of the situation to be changed (Mead 1949:434).

Here the concrete specific situation is one that exists in the nation states. Indeed, she continues, "Without a knowledge of American, Russian, German, French, Chinese, English, Japanese culture, the most careful studies of Eskimo, and Hottentot, Arapesh and Cheyenne, remain on the whole quite innocuous." Issues of morality arise only when we study modern mass societies. The "primitive laboratory" apparently, is just that: a laboratory. The studies are not ends in themselves. The primitives are means to other ends.

We should not judge such views too harshly: they clearly represent the temper of the times, even if they were surely not shared by a preponderant number of anthropologists. Once Mead returned to Manus in 1953 and saw the Manus as a people in the modern world, her perspective changed, and she hoped
her work on the Manus would have relevance to the people themselves. Indeed, as Kanner notes, below, Mead returned to several of her early field sites in her later years.

The construction of a better world became the overriding concern of Mead's last years. She writes that at the end of War II, there was the "hope that the new high technologies would produce plenty for all, a world free of hunger and want, where a literate, healthy populace with fewer and fewer hours of work a day could enjoy everything that made life worth living" (Mead and Heyman 1975:34). She learned from the Manus, in her 1953 visit, that change could be both rapid and constructive. Although, as Theodore Schwartz (1976) has noted, she tended to overestimate the radical discontinuity in Manus culture, she expected that constructive, rapid change could also occur elsewhere. "Constructive and effective behavioral change goes better," she wrote (Mead and Heyman 1975:93), "when whole systems of interrelated behavior can be changed at one time." And there was plenty to change, for "no country in the world, no tribe, no village, was free or is free from many things that some of their members will not want to change as soon as they are exposed to the technical and social inventions of contemporary civilizations" (Mead and Heyman 1975:91). And there is the optimistic note, the faith in progress: "each enlargement in our lives that a technical discovery has brought us has also enlarged the human spirit" (Mead and Heyman 1975:215).

And this, in spite of the bitter observation that

We [of the industrialized nations] now know that it did not turn out the way we expected [in 1945]; more people are suffering and enormously more are unhappy and feel aggrieved and oppressed than ever before (Mead and Heyman 1975:210).

And finally:

Can we do it? Can we do it in time? That is both the question and the answer...The very magnitude of the task with which we are involved today may be used to reduce every human being to a cipher, or it may enable each as part of a whole larger than we have known before (Mead and Heyman 1975:216).

That comes as close, perhaps, to a final message as anything she has written.

The papers in this collection address a series of Mead's principal themes. Melinda Kanner, in her first contribution, sets out the contours of Mead's life story, permitting the reader to place the research and writing cited by the other contributors into the appropriate context of her life story. Linda Hartranft deals with Mead's contributions to studies of Sex and Gender, topics that have grown in saliency for both researchers and their readers since Mead's earliest contributions to this area in her study of young girls in Samoa and then in the much cited Sex and Temperament. Hartranft in particular shows how later researchers have built on Mead's earlier work. Next, Frank Spaulding reviews Mead's work in the area of National Character Studies and seeks to put this work into the historical context of the years of World War II and the immediate post-war period. Mary Montgomery reviews Mead's long term as contributor to Redbook Magazine, a major
effort at speaking to a broad audience. Here Mead's explicit aim was, as she stated it in 1963 (in a phrase reminiscent of Mao Dzedong), "to try to alter the climate of opinion so that new ideas may bud and flower." These articles, spread over a fifteen year period, show changes in the country, as reflected in the magazine, and in Mead's views as well. Sandra St. Martin considers Mead's writings on change, both in the lives of individuals and those of societies, both the destructive and the constructive elements. In two further contributions, Melinda Kanner discusses Mead's relations with two significant people in her life, Ruth Benedict and Gregory Bateson, and explores the possibility of noting regularities or patterns. Using four biographies as source materials, she treats them as ethnographic texts and discusses the relationship between biography and ethnography as scholarly enterprises. Finally, Romana Prokopiv reflects on the collection as a whole and offers suggestions for further research. Appendix I presents excerpts from early reviews of Mead's work, collected by Phyllis Turk, and Appendix II lists bibliographic items that form the background to this collection. These Appendixes provide documentations and source materials.

The production of these contributions has taught us a great deal about Margaret Mead, about the history of anthropology, of our society and of our times. Margaret Mead was a woman with special talents and special opportunities. Her impact was significant far beyond her discipline. That criticisms of her and of her work have been raised is not surprising in the case of one who offers such a large target. Indeed, Margaret Mead enjoyed a good fight and would surely have been glad to participate in this one. Her ultimate contributions will have to be evaluated when the dust has settled, and it remains to be seen what remains intact of her work. Indeed, in science as in politics—and much of Mead's contribution must be considered in that light—the ultimate contribution must be measured by its impact on contemporaries and those who follow in later generations. How would American anthropology have been different without Mead—anthropology today, and anthropology tomorrow? How would the application of social science to policy-making have differed? How would public knowledge of anthropology have been altered? These many related questions cannot be fully answered as yet. But we do know that no one has come along to take Mead's place, and a large place it was, indeed. We offer our seminar papers as a small contribution to what will surely be a continuing discussion.

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