

MISCONCEIVED CONFIGURATIONS OF RUTH BENEDICT

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Ruth Benedict has been the subject of a number of studies in both Japan and America. However, these studies have, up until now, maintained their international borders and avoided any cross-fertilisation of knowledge. In America, three full length biographies, along with numerous other articles, have been devoted to the work and life of Benedict. In contrast, Japanese attention has mainly focussed on Benedict's famous study of the Japanese, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. Thus, on the Japanese side few have pursued the motivations of the author behind this book, whereas in America, Benedict the cultural anthropologist tends to figure large, leaving little room for discussion of *Chrysanthemum*.

Douglas Lummis, however, has attempted to straddle both sides of the fence with his piece *A New Look at the Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. Unfortunately, for his background knowledge on Benedict, he turns to Margaret Mead but fails to realise that the intricate relationship between Mead and Benedict has greatly influenced the portrait painted by her. The result is a rather heavy-handed attempt to prove that *Chrysanthemum* is merely a piece of "political literature" penned by a poet inhabiting the facade of a cultural anthropologist. Nevertheless, this image created by Lummis has managed to colour a large number of subsequent comments on both the book and author in Japan.

This paper will identify some of Lummis' major arguments against the background of the material he has used to formulate his arguments. Lummis' ideas derive from Mead's biography of Benedict, but by re-examining this biography and comparing it with other biographies on Benedict—and Mead—it becomes obvious that Mead's interpretation of Benedict's complex life was but one side of the story. Thus, Lummis' use of Mead must also be considered when assessing the validity of his interpretation of Benedict.

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Introduction

Few would dispute the fact that Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) is a classic in Japan studies. Moreover, one does not have to be very bold to make the statement that this book had an enormous impact on the initial promotion of post-war Japan studies; an impact which eventually led to the emergence of Japan studies as a legitimate field of research. The book, written for the American general public immediately after the Second World War, led to a wider understanding of the Japanese as a people—as opposed to a previous image of an exotic people or a fierce enemy which seemed to defy all understanding. *Chrysanthemum* thus set the stage for further study of Japanese society whilst also providing a framework to work within. Although it can be argued that her methodology and other elements of the study would create future problems for the field, it nevertheless seems fair to state that Japan studies owes a great

debt to Benedict and her study of Japan. However, her study has been the target for some exaggerated criticisms that have served to focus attention on issues which, in fact, are not representative of the work itself. After nearly fifty years since its publication, the time seems ripe for addressing some of these misdirected criticisms of *Chrysanthemum*.

Mouer and Sugimoto, in reference to Benedict's *Chrysanthemum*, have stated that the "individual motivations of authors need to be set against larger historical trends, in this case the milieu created by the Second World War and America's adversary relationship with Japan" (1986: 62). Indeed, research on Benedict's war-time work and the motivations behind it has been sorely lacking,¹ setting the stage for comments based either on what Benedict wrote in *Chrysanthemum* itself, or on secondary materials and sometimes hearsay. As research on this particular period of Benedict's life has been missing until only recently, much of the commentary on the book and Benedict, herself, has steadily moved away from fact to take on a life of its own. It thus seems that Mouer and Sugimoto's comment might apply equally to her critics as it does to Benedict, and that it would be wise to examine some of the motivations behind these comments in order to evaluate the effects they have had on an understanding of Benedict's classic Japan study.

Although it is not difficult to find comments about Benedict or *Chrysanthemum* in both Japanese and English publications on Japanese society and culture, an all encompassing survey of these would be tedious and unnecessary. Therefore, this paper will give only a brief outline of the trends in commentary on *Chrysanthemum* in Japan before focusing on one particular work that has commanded a great deal of influence in Japan—C. Douglas Lummis' *A New Look at the Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1981 & 82). Douglas Lummis has commanded a disproportionate influence on the perceptions of both Benedict and *Chrysanthemum* in Japan, whilst also extending some influence overseas. Here, the object will be to identify some of Lummis' major, but mostly speculative, arguments against the background of the material he has used to formulate those arguments. Lummis' ideas derive from Margaret Mead's biography of Benedict, but by re-examining Mead's biography and comparing it with other biographies on Benedict and Mead it becomes obvious that Mead's interpretation of Benedict's life was but one side of the story. Thus, Lummis' use of Mead must also be considered when assessing his interpretation of Benedict.

In Japan, commentary on Benedict, fuelled by Lummis' arguments, includes some outrageous suppositions, and repetition of these is not unusual. Consequently, Benedict has tended to have been encompassed by a thick fog of hearsay and myth. Whether Lummis contributed to this unwittingly or not is of no concern. The object here is to deconstruct the myths and then use a synthesis of the now available materials on Benedict to filter through the fog in order to provide a more objective portrayal of Benedict and her wartime work.

1 For recent research on Benedict's work carried out during World War II, see: P. Kent (1994): Ruth Benedict's Original Wartime Study, *International Journal of Japanese Sociology*, 3:81-97.

Chrysanthemum in Japan

In Japan, surveys have shown that over 30% of the population have heard of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* and that Benedict's name is quite familiar (Befu & Manabe, 1987); moreover the book still generates an enormous amount of interest in the halls of academia. Its popularity is evident from the fact that the Japanese translation, in the handy-size version alone, which was first published in 1967, went through its 101st printing in July 1995. From the time the first translation appeared in 1948, up until the present day, not only has the book been discussed avidly in salons but it has also generated an enormous amount of published discussion.

The characteristic Japanese comments focus on *Chrysanthemum* first and on Benedict, as its author, second. Despite the fact that Benedict produced other works that have enjoyed similar popularity in other countries, Japanese commentators have paid little attention to these. Moreover, unlike literature produced in America, which tends to focus on Benedict the cultural anthropologist, very little research on Benedict herself has been carried out in Japan. Instead, criticism has been restricted mainly to the actual text of *Chrysanthemum* with later commentary on the author often based on statements by Lummis.

Commentary on *Chrysanthemum* began in Japan with Tsurumi Kazuko who reviewed the original English version in 1947. Soon after the Japanese translation appeared, some of Japan's leading social scientists reviewed the book from several different aspects in a special edition of the *Japanese Journal of Ethnology* (1949). This special edition has proved over time to have been the most informed and insightful review of the book to date, with five social scientists, Kawashima Takeo (Law), Minami Hiroshi (Psychology), Ariga Kizaemon (Sociology), Watsuji Tetsuro (Philosophy) and Yanagita Kunio (Ethnology) each writing on different aspects put forward in the book, from their own particular field. Symposiums followed suit and, in general, the book was very widely read and discussed.

Shimada Hiromi, who has recently written a review of commentaries on *Chrysanthemum*, points out correctly that most of these earlier critiques focused on the ethics system Benedict describes, but that later on, with the appearance of Sakuta Keiichi's article, "Shame Culture Reconsidered" (1964), *Chrysanthemum* became popularly known for its description of Japanese culture as a "shame culture". Thus, ensuing discussion, found in text books, magazine articles and scholarly works, tends to focus on Benedict's depiction of Japan as a society sanctioned by the power of shame. Also of note is the (rather tedious) chapter by chapter analysis of *Chrysanthemum*, published by Soeda Yoshiya (1993). He attacks each chapter in the same way by: first listing the main points of the chapter, then noting hitherto discussions on these points, followed by bits and pieces of data he has come across in his travels. However, he provides little in the way of new research on either Benedict or *Chrysanthemum*. Whilst it is difficult to find any focus in this book, the fact that it was singled out for review at the annual meeting of the Japanese Sociological Society in 1994 is, nevertheless, further evidence of the enduring academic interest in Benedict's study.

As mentioned above, little research into the background of *Chrysanthemum* has been carried out in Japan with the result that most commentaries on Benedict's approach to the Japanese have usually been confined to the relatively sparse details offered by Benedict on her methods in *Chrysanthemum*'s first chapter 'Assignment'. In that chapter, she informs the reader that she used all available literature, along with movies, and interviews with both those of Japanese origin located in the United States, as well as with Japanese Prisoners of War. In the acknowledgments she takes pains to thank all those Japanese men and women located in the USA, who were so helpful, and singles out Robert Hashimoto, her close wartime colleague. Of course, as a cultural anthropologist she also compared Japan with other cultures she had studied, but was unable to use the most standard tool of her trade, a field trip to Japan, to observe her subject first hand. As her book was prepared for the general public and based on some, then, still classified data, Benedict did not provide a detailed bibliography.² Thus, many criticisms surrounding her sources and research methods have been limited to the brief description Benedict provides in her first chapter. Yet other criticisms of the book turn to: minor facts; her too brief use of history to explain modern society; her categorisation of society as a whole, i.e. as one that bases its behaviour on shame; the problem of sources and the use of data which was already 'outdated' at the time of use; and her perception of the modernisation and democratisation of Japan (i.e. usually seen as forcing American values on the Japanese).

It can be stated that a great deal of the commentary in Japan on *Chrysanthemum* is based on the book as a text, devoid of any historical or social context. One exception, of course, is Douglas Lummis who has discussed Benedict's personal background and the influence this had on her ideas about the Japanese. Consequently, as Lummis has been practically the only exception, his ideas have been widely accepted and widely quoted whenever the topic of *Chrysanthemum* arises in Japan.

Benedict in America

Before moving onto the discussion of Lummis' arguments, it will be worthwhile to briefly touch on literature that deals with Benedict in America. In the 'post-colonial, post-modern' era of American anthropology there has been a spate of articles and books which deal with the contributions to the pool of knowledge which makes up the field of anthropology. As Benedict was one of the early key-figures, there has been a small volume of recent literature which tends to focus on the early role Benedict played in the field of cultural anthropology. The Citation Index shows that the order of importance (if one believes that the Citation Index can indicate such an order) given to her major works is 1. *Patterns of Culture* (1934), 2. *Race: Science and Politics* (1940) and lastly, 3. *Chrysanthemum*. Therefore, it is the topics she discusses in her first book, *Patterns*, that tends to attract the larger proportion of attention. For example, her attempts to clarify the

² For a bibliography for *Chrysanthemum* compiled from materials at Vassar College see: P. Kent, "An Appendix to *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: A Bibliography*" *Japan Review*, 6 (1995): 107-125.

role culture plays in the moulding of an individual, as well as her attempts to demonstrate the distinct but equally valid character of different cultures (cultural relativity) are most often the focus of re-evaluation.

Benedict has also been the subject of three very detailed biographies. The first was written by Margaret Mead in 1959 (and later replicated in a more compact form in 1974), the second was written by Judith Schachter Modell in 1983, and yet a third biography was produced by Margaret Caffrey in 1989. These of course focus on her life and works, but as *Chrysanthemum* was but a small part of her life, discussion accorded it is minimal.³ For the most part, the literature produced in America tends to focus on either Benedict's theoretical contribution to the field or on her life, itself.

The above biographies do provide insight into some of Benedict's "motivations", but each biographer has presented a different aspect of this woman and her work. Lummis, in writing his commentary, only made use of Mead's 1959 biography, despite the fact that he could have also used the 1974 version as well. In failing to do so, he was unable to make a comparison of the two biographies which should have indicated to him that Mead's perceptions of Benedict changed over the interval of fifteen years between the two works; suggesting that perhaps the "individual motivations of authors" of biographies should also be challenged. Although Lummis did try to delve further than the pages of *Chrysanthemum*, he failed to, or perhaps chose not to, read between Mead's lines, preferring instead to prove his argument rather than to test a hypothesis.

C. Douglas Lummis

Lummis' work first appeared in 1981, translated for him into Japanese as *Uchi naru gaikoku: "Kiku to Katana" saiko* (A Foreign Country Within: A Revision of The Chrysanthemum and the Sword 『内なる外国「菊と刀」再考』). The second part of this book, which concentrates on a reexamination of *Chrysanthemum*, was published the following year in the original English, as an English reader, under the title *A New Look at the Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. The publication in both languages gave Lummis access to a wide audience, especially in Japan. The downturn of this is that he has also been responsible for a large number of misconceptions concerning Benedict and her work.⁴

3 On the topic of *Chrysanthemum* in particular, however, Clifford Geertz has written a rather poignant and insightful essay on the enduring nature of this work. Geertz, Clifford (1988) "Us/Not-Us: Benedict's Travels" 102-128, in *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*. Stanford: Stanford UP.

4 Lummis is not solely to blame for the misconceptions surrounding Benedict but he has planted a number of seeds that have in turn grown into fallacies concerning Benedict and her work. For example, Ikeda Masayuki has mimicked Lummis (without question) on a number of points (See Lummis & Ikeda, 1985). Nishikawa Nagao echoes Ikeda's remarks about Benedict's work being racist but attributes this idea to Lummis—whereas in fact, Lummis deliberately states that Benedict was not racist (Nishi, 1994). Soeda has also been highly influenced by Lummis in his choice of themes and references. Although Lummis did not have access to the later biographies, Soeda had ample opportunity to use them, but his references show he has chosen to stick to Mead's two biographies, referring for the most part to the same places and themes as Lummis—with the occasional new twist on the interpretation (Soeda, 1993). There is one example of a dismissal of Lummis' ideas and that comes from Nishi Yoshiyuki who suggests that Lummis is merely a 'born again' American whose 'mission' in Japan is to 'enlighten' the Japanese (Nishi, 1983: 151).

The background material upon which Lummis relies is a single source, the biography written and compiled by Margaret Mead in 1959, *An Anthropologist at Work: The Writings of Ruth Benedict (AAW)*. As Mead notes in her introduction, "Any other of [Benedict's] close friends would undoubtedly have placed the accents differently, for she responded selectively to each one of us" (Mead 1959: xix). Thus some of the accents placed by Mead can be assumed to have been coloured by Mead's "individual motivations." Lummis then employed Mead's accents for the purpose of understanding why *Chrysanthemum* (which, he states, is obviously racked with misconceptions and mistakes) has become a classic.

Lummis begins his discussion by telling us how *Chrysanthemum* served to totally misinform him about Japanese society when he first read it in 1960. The faith which he first placed in it as a true purveyor of the society which he was newly encountering, eventually served to obstruct a truer understanding of Japan for him as the years passed. It is for this reason that he attempts to resolve what is wrong with Benedict's analysis and why he was so misled by it. Although Lummis went through a different number of phases in his understanding of *Chrysanthemum*, he decides that his one-time 'racist-phase theory' is not feasible because of Benedict's active efforts to dispel myths about racism through her publication of *Race: Science and Politics* (1940) and other such articles. So if the problem was not racism, he suggests that the motivation behind Benedict's acceptance to work for the U.S. government, on the enemy Japan, must have been her "horror of fascism". He contends that otherwise it would be difficult to understand why anyone would join the Office of War Information (OWI) and the "American war machine" after having been so active in the antiracism movement (Lummis, 1982: 56).

Benedict was indeed appalled at the thought of any ideology that would deprive citizens of their democratic rights and stated this over and again in her writings but this was not the only factor involved. During the war, it seems that those anthropologists and social scientists who did not work for the war effort were the exception. A paper found in the Ruth Benedict Papers states that 300 out of 307 anthropologists worked for the government during the war,⁵ and many others have commented on their wartime work. Thus it was only natural that Benedict join the company of distinguished social scientists who worked for the OWI, the Overseas Strategic Services and various other Allied government agencies during the Second World War. Moreover, as did many others, she saw this work as a vehicle for promoting world-wide peace after the war ended.

However, Lummis has set out to realise why he has been 'coerced' into believing the contents of *Chrysanthemum* despite the fact that at the time of writing his criticism, in 1982, he knew it to be far removed from the 'reality' of Japanese society. In an effort to understand the brainwashing qualities of *Chrysanthemum* he puts forward the suggestion that it was a product of the propaganda war machine, with the enduring nature of a book that can only be attributed to a work of "political literature". Moreover it is a piece of political literature that overpowers its readers with unforgettable imagery. This imagery is a synthesis of Benedict's poetry and anthropology which blends to shape facts to fit a purpose—and by doing so, effectively becomes fiction. Lummis' intent here is to remove

5 Woman of Science: Ruth Benedict, August 1948. Manuscript, RFB Papers, Vassar College.

Chrysanthemum from the realm of “science” by creating “scientific boundaries”,⁶ arbitrarily drawn up by him, first by discrediting anthropological methods and second by insinuating that Benedict was not schooled in the basic tools of ‘scientific investigation’ which resulted in her analysis being guided by intuition and literature.

Scientific Boundaries

Lummis first discredits anthropology in the following way. He makes clear that Boas was Benedict’s teacher in anthropology and that, under Boas, anthropology moved away from science and towards the humanities, with the result that “the motivation of the anthropologist is described as aesthetic satisfaction, the ‘delight’ at discovering a ‘systematical arrangement’ in the data” (Lummis, 1982: 12-13). He then contends that as Benedict’s undergraduate training was in literature this made her incapable of ‘scientific’ investigation: “the reservoir of imagery, insight, methodology, and style from which her anthropology grew was neither science nor philosophy but literature” (*Ibid.*: 15). The fact that she obtained her Ph.D in three semesters is also interpreted as meaning that she was obviously not sufficiently schooled in the basic tenets of social science.⁷

However, this line of attack is fraught with obvious bias and misunderstanding. To insinuate that Franz Boas was less than methodologically sound in his teaching of anthropology grates against the grain of academic consensus on Boas’ contribution to anthropology. “As a scientist, [Boas] directed the professionalization of the field of anthropology, overseeing its evolution from an amateur hobby to its maturity as a rigorous academic discipline” (Hyatt 1990: x). He did so by demanding very high standards from his students in their research. At the same time, however, he openly allowed them to invest their talents in writing fiction—as long as they clearly distinguished it from their anthropological studies (Krupat 1992: 72). Of course, no exception was made in Benedict’s case. He demanded a full and thorough enquiry of the data she used from the time she wrote her Ph.D thesis “The Concept of the Guardian Spirit in North America” in 1923 (a work that was to become a reference guide for other anthropologists in this area for many years after). Moreover, the fact that she wrote up

6 For a discussion of the various ways “science” has been created by boundary building, see: Thomas F. Gieryn, “Boundaries of Science” in *Handbook of Science and Technology Studies*, S. Jasanoff, et. al. eds., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995. pp. 393-443.

7 As one example of the way in which Lummis’ ideas on this subject have been embellished in Japan, it is worthwhile taking a look at Lummis’ co-author Ikeda who spouts some of the more fantastic aspersions concerning Benedict. He claims that Benedict was an armchair anthropologist (?) and follows this up with the assertion that the methods of cultural anthropology are ‘techno-centred’ and ‘opportunistic’ and therefore, at best, dubious. What exactly he means by this is unclear but in this criticism of cultural anthropology he also singles out the prominent Japanese anthropologist Yamaguchi Masao, claiming that his investigations are fraudulent because all he does is extract one part of a Third World culture to compare this with modern life—all for the purpose of coming up with something new. Ikeda offers no clear explanations or evidence to back up his criticisms, but the content of his criticism demonstrates he has a very foggy notion of the nature of cultural anthropology. Obviously he has taken his lead from Lummis but has embellished the ideas in order to discredit Benedict, and anyone faintly associated with her, through innuendo (Lummis & Ikeda 1985: 116-117).

her thesis in three semesters in no way compromised her essential academic training, as Lummis implies. Benedict first attended classes given by John Dewey at Columbia before, as Mead clearly records, attending the New School for Social Research for two years, and then moved on to Columbia to study under Boas. (Boas, in fact, persuaded the Columbia administration to recognise her accreditations at the New School in lieu of the University's courses.)

When she attended the New School some of the most brilliant minds were also in attendance. There she studied under Alexander Goldenweiser, a man with a "broad range of interests . . . [who] was more interested in theory than fact" (Caffrey 1989: 97). She also studied under Elsie Clews Parsons, an anthropologist from a sociological background who insisted on very thorough and detailed research. Through this training alone Benedict was exposed not only to basic social science methods but also to a variety of approaches. Lummis' accusations about Benedict's lack of training are simply unfounded. His facile argument that literature is not science, or that being interested in literature bludgeons one's sensibilities to objective analysis, is a judgment based on bias and an attempt to create arbitrary boundaries of science. This, of course, is not a bias on which Lummis holds the monopoly.

Arnold Krupat in the first chapter of his book *Ethnocriticism* (1992), outlines the history of the convergence of concerns in literature and ethnography. Both literature and ethnography have pursued truth, which can also be seen as the pursuit of science. Boas pursued truth by sending his students to the field, ensuring they adequately understood the language there, and by instigating "an inductive, particularist, and rigorously relativist method" as opposed to the deductive methods of the evolutionists that were based on "ancient prejudice" (Krupat 1992: 65, 67). Yet, as Krupat points out, the separation of science from literature does not necessarily result in the production of truth. 'Science' has often been known to manipulate the 'truth' to fit the demands of the day. Moreover, science does not belong only to the realm of the Newtonians. Rather, relativistic science and cybernetics have shown that a "blurring of genres" has become necessary for the pursuit of a more comprehensive 'truth' and, in fact, the occurrence of 'blurring' was, up until the Renaissance, more the rule than the exception (*Ibid.*: 60). In the case of ethnographic writing, which is essentially *texte*, there have been many ethnographers and anthropologists who have dabbled in poetry and literature whilst keeping it apart from their scientific writings, along with those who have collaborated with literary critics in their pursuit of the truth. Benedict, can be listed along with others⁸ as an example of this type of anthropologist who also appreciated literature, but Krupat clearly states in reference to the Boas school, "All those mentioned . . . , whatever their attraction to literary pursuits, did keep their art distinct from their scientific pursuits" (*Ibid.*: 73).

Thus it was not unusual for anthropologists of Benedict's time (as it is not unusual for anthropologists today) to turn to literature for inspiration. Yet Lummis would have us believe that the two belong on very different sides of the fence, hence his attempt to cite

8 A large number of anthropologists had a strong penchant for literary work. Elsie Clews Parsons and Ruth Underhill wrote novels whereas Benedict, Edward Sapir, Ralph Linton, Margaret Mead and others wrote poetry (Arnold Krupat 1992: 70-74).

Benedict's farewell speech as President of the American Anthropological Association, entitled "Anthropology and the Humanities" (1948), as proof of his hypothesis that her scientific objectivity was clouded through her exposure to literature. In that speech, Benedict talked about the link between anthropology and the humanities by virtue of the fact that "they deal with the same subject matter—man and his works and his ideas and his history" (Benedict 1948: 585). Lummis, however, would have the unsuspecting reader believe that Benedict advocated the fusion of anthropology and the humanities. The following quote from Benedict's speech, cited by Lummis, is an example of Lummis' determined belief that Benedict remained a literary critic even after venturing into the world of anthropology.

Shakespearean criticism . . . has . . . been most valuable to me as an anthropologist. Long before I knew anything about anthropology, I had learned from Shakespearean criticism . . . habits of mind which at length made me an anthropologist (Lummis 1982: 14).

Yet what Lummis blatantly fails to mention is that Benedict opened her farewell speech with: "Anthropology belongs among the sciences" and goes on to add that "It must constantly try to profit by methods and concepts which have been developed in the physical and biological sciences, in psychology and in psychiatry." This is followed by her reason for talking about the relationship between anthropology and the humanities: "the situation is quite different in regard to anthropology and the humanities. They are so far apart that it is still quite possible to ignore even the fact that they deal with the same subject matter—man and his works and his ideas and his history." She freely admits that "This is a heretical statement" (Benedict 1948: 585) and therefore goes on to justify it by showing how one may proffer from methods, such as Shakespearean criticism and Santayana's philosophy, found in the humanities.

Shakespearean plays had been subjected to a number of varying and changing conditions when performed, according to the demands of the era. This had all been transmitted over the ages and at times simply become excess baggage. However, critics at the turn of the century, by surrendering themselves to the text, were able to understand characters as Shakespeare had portrayed them—in contrast to how they had come to be interpreted in different eras. For example, the relationship between Hamlet and his mother could be understood only if one was familiar with incest in Elizabethan times. Anthropologists could apply similar methods to "the study of a cultural ethos" by taking into account all that they observe and working within that data, using all the insights available to them. Benedict's point was not that anthropology should depend on literary criticism but it should adapt from the humanities methods which were not available in the other sciences that would complement the study of anthropology.

"The Story of My Life"

However, to admit that literary criticism, or even the humanities, may employ any analytical observation or scientific approaches would be to spoil the stage that Lummis sets up in order to reproach Benedict's study of the Japanese. He is paving the way for an argument that typecasts the part of Benedict as a poet dabbling in anthropology.

This then allows him to criticise *Chrysanthemum* as a book set down to promote certain political objectives through the use of literary images. To create the part of the poet, he draws heavily on Mead. In particular, he depends on one particular section, "Anne Singleton: 1889-1934" which includes: Mead's description of Benedict the poet as well as biographical details; "The Story of My Life", a life history written by Benedict at the request of Mead in 1935; fragments of Benedict's earlier journals; correspondence with Edward Sapir which includes some poetry; and an early paper, "The Sense of Symbolism." From these Lummis extracts his two main themes: Benedict's fascination with death; and what he suggests is Benedict's alter ego, Anne Singleton the poet. Anne Singleton was the pseudonym that Benedict used for poems she submitted to publishers, and it was Anne, Lummis contends, that led Benedict to confuse science with the romantic aims of the poet. Lummis' argument hinges on his hypothesis that Benedict's fascination with death influenced her so much that Anne Singleton found beauty only in death. Eventually, as this fascination took over and crossed into her anthropological studies, it took on the form of valiant attempts to rescue dying cultures by rescuing their cultural patterns (Lummis 1982: 23). But to understand this point we first need to have an understanding of "The Story of My Life" from which Lummis has formulated his assumptions.

It is not altogether unnatural that Lummis picked up the death theme from Benedict's "The Story of My Life" (Mead 1959: 97-112) as it is a story that begins with the death of her father which occurred when she was only two years old. Benedict tells how her mother wept uncontrollably over the death of her father not only at the funeral but also on many of the anniversaries of his death for years after. She also tells how she felt repulsion for this show of emotion. This eventuated in emotional stoicism on Benedict's part and was perhaps the reason for many considering her aloof and removed (Linton & Wagley 1971: 48-49). In contrast, Benedict found beauty in the face of her father, as he lay there in his coffin, and found consolation in this beauty throughout her life. From her earliest childhood, Benedict writes, she divided her world into two, that of her father which was death and beauty, and that of her mother which was confusion and weeping, one which she repudiated. Benedict also mentions the suicide of a girl at a nearby farm whom she thought to be quite beautiful compared with the ragged siblings she left behind. This suicide caused her to experience conflict as she had just read about the honour the Greeks had attributed to suicide at school. Her conflict arose from the fact that the very adults who sent her to school to study about Cato, were the ones who were extremely critical of the young girl taking her own life.

In "Story" Benedict also talks about her rebellious childhood which was marked by the tantrums she regularly threw. These she ascribed to the repudiated world she associated with her mother. Unlike her sister Margery, who was of a happy disposition, Benedict often caused trouble in her family, sometimes by wandering off in direct disobedience to her mother's wishes. But Benedict preferred to play on her own, partly because of deafness (she suffered after a childhood bout of measles) which caused her to become confused when many voices spoke at once. Thus one of her favorite games was to imagine an idyllic land over the other side of the hill where she would play with an imaginary friend. This world represented a world of calmness and order. Later on after discovering

what actually lay over the hill was the very un-romantic farm of Uncle George, Benedict began to create her other world from stories she read in the Bible.

Benedict's story goes on to say that despite the economic hardships her 'single parent family' experienced, she was never conscious of the poverty. Instead the family made the most of things and Benedict found pleasure in writing and reading. "Story" ends by telling how the two young sisters would learn poems aloud, together, whilst carrying out their daily chore of washing up the dishes.

It is thus not difficult to see why Lummis assumed that Benedict has some sort of fascination for death. However, his association of this world of death with that of Benedict's world of poetry and the world of Anne Singleton, and eventually the world of anthropology, is a little harder to grasp; for as Lummis says, he can only speculate on why Benedict turned to anthropology—and speculate he does. He bases his speculation on something Margaret Mead wrote in *AAW*: she wrote that in the earlier years of anthropology the principal aim of American anthropology was to collect data on "dying American cultures" (Lummis 1982: 23-22). For some reason, Lummis freely associates the world of death and Anne Singleton with what he sees as the enterprise of anthropology: the rescue of "dying cultures". The following quote sums up the extent of his free associations.

Dying cultures! It is not difficult to imagine how Anne Singleton might see beauty in this enterprise. Is it not precisely in anthropology that she could make a career of quietly exploring "the country over the hill," and contemplating the beauty of the dead? And can it be a coincidence that the man who provided her access to this country—"the world of my father"—was the man she came to call "Papa Franz"? (*Ibid.*: 22)

To come to this conclusion, however, Lummis has also determined that Anne Singleton was Benedict's alter-ego and that Benedict, in this schizophrenic condition, was unable to stop her alter-ego from encroaching upon her anthropological field. Moreover, he has taken "The Story of My Life", a story mainly confined to an analysis of her childhood days, and used it to explain the motivations and behaviour of her adult life. Thus he concludes that just as she created an imagined and beautiful country as a child, she tried to create her own undiscovered country through her study of American Indians (*Ibid.*: 27). Lummis presumes that the dying cultures of the American Indians presented to Benedict the opportunity to create a thing of beauty as this was what she associated with death. Then, eventually as she gave up poetry and concentrated on anthropology, the two worlds of Anne and anthropology synthesised, causing Benedict's studies of cultures to become, in effect, obituaries for dying cultures. Following along this line of reasoning, Lummis finally 'proves' his 'hypothesis' with the example of Benedict's study of Japan which, according to him, can be interpreted as being an obituary for Japanese culture "written by one of the executioners" (*Ibid.*: 59).

Whilst the logic behind this reasoning is rather unclear, it seems that Lummis has freely connected Benedict's seeming preoccupation with death to her interest in poetry, and then purports that these two became the driving force behind Benedict's anthropological

studies.⁹

The reason for tying in the events of infancy and early childhood with work conducted during adult life is given in the form of a quote from Mead, who writes that the structure of Benedict's biography "can be read in any order; a finished life can be seen as simultaneous . . ." (*Ibid.*: 55). Lummis therefore takes the liberty of bundling all the different aspects of Benedict's life into the one basket and then pulling out a suitable aspect, at will, to support his thesis.

Yet an autobiographical life history written in retrospect can often be more of an explanation of the now than an objective appraisal of one's past. H el ene Bowen Raddeker has discussed this topic in her work on Kaneko Fumiko, a woman arrested in 1923 for an alleged imperial assassination plot. While in prison Kaneko wrote an autobiographical account of her life which according to Bowen Raddeker was written to legitimise and explain "a 'predetermined' destiny (of resistance)" that had caused her life of rebellion and her incarceration (Bowen Raddeker 1996: forthcoming). Bowen Raddeker suggests that other authors have been loathe to deconstruct Kaneko's life construct out of respect for her stand against authority, but that the value of her story becomes no less if deconstructed because "[w]e need not judge it conventionally in terms of its 'truth'-value, its ability to reflect a singular totalistic reality" (*Ibid.*). Yet Lummis, in his interpretation of Benedict's life story, has given it the authority of a total account and a truthful account that may be used (however arbitrarily) to analyse Benedict's life in its entirety.

Benedict wrote her account not long after finishing her book, *Patterns of Culture*, in 1935, and wrote it specifically for Margaret Mead. It was a time when Benedict was becoming interested in psychology, and the use of self analysis to explain her personality and behaviour is blatantly obvious. The fact that it was a piece which was re-written a number of times demonstrates the careful way in which it was constructed. Moreover, "Benedict wove the happenings of her childhood into a pattern which she felt defined 'the simple theme' of her own life" (Caffrey 1989: 1). In other words, Benedict was interpreting a life she perceived she had experienced. It is normal for anyone to recollect events in a pattern or order that may not mirror the actual turn of events that have taken place. This is not to say that the what is constructed is a mere fabrication of the mind, engineered simply to prove a point. Quite the contrary. For the author, the events portrayed have an explicit meaning and are nothing other than authentic. However, the authenticity of any life history or the historical reality of a life history must be determined by the those analysing the history. It is up to the analyst to decide if events do parallel objective historical facts and, if not, further explanation of the reasons for the autobiographers interpretation must then added (Nakano 1995: 201-207).

Yet Lummis in his interpretation of "Story" failed to analyse perceived meanings of events in relationship to the more complex and disjointed conglomeration of events that make up life. Instead he has clumsily chosen to reduce Benedict's life to the contents of

9 Following a number of Benedict's poems, Marie J. Diamond concludes her short criticism on these poems with the following words: "[*Chrysanthemum*] demands the repression of her poetic demons and of the demons which haunt her enlightened political vision." This is of course, in direct opposition to the conclusions reached by Lummis. (Poems & Criticism: Ruth Benedict's Vision Quest. *Dialectical Anthropology*, 11 (1986): 169-174 & 175-178.

“Story” which he portrays as a “singular totalistic reality.”

Here Caffrey’s analysis of “Story” will serve to demonstrate the dangers that await the naïve interpreter of autobiographical life stories. Margaret Caffrey, an historian, has been extremely diligent in her research of Benedict’s life history. Her analysis of Benedict’s “Story” demonstrates admirably the complexities involved in interpreting a life history, while at the same time demonstrating how such a history can reveal as much about the reflection of the social background on the author as it does about the character of the author.

In her book, *Ruth Benedict: Stranger in this Land* (1989), Caffrey’s aim is to place Ruth Benedict and her works within the context of changing times and ideas, thus producing a social history as well as a biography. It is this approach that best shows up the exaggerated ideas of Lummis. Caffrey sees Ruth Benedict as a “vehicle for examining the intellectual and cultural history of the first half of the twentieth century” (Caffrey, 1989: viii) and, at the same time, she deals frankly with Benedict’s “woman-identification” as she explores “Benedict’s life as a case study in cultural feminism” (*Ibid.*: vii). Unlike Benedict’s other biographers, Mead and Modell, Caffrey is removed from the area of anthropology and some of the intricacies involved, and therefore is able to deal with the subject of Benedict’s Lesbianism for the first time, along with the subject of her feminism. Caffrey sees Benedict as someone uncomfortable in mainstream American society—as suggested by the subtitle of her biography—but at the same time, also as someone who attempted to explore ways to open up society to a greater number of alternatives through an understanding brought about by tolerance.

The tone and pace of Caffrey’s analyses of “The Story of My Life” are set out in the prologue and continue in the same absorbing manner throughout her book. Whereas Douglas Lummis (and to a certain extent, biographer Judith Modell) chose to read “Story” as a definite theme, with underpinning psychological precepts that portray the overall character of Benedict’s life and works, Caffrey sets Benedict’s story within the context of not only her social background but also her physical development. Caffrey warns us that “it is important to understand Benedict’s own extremely perceptive yet narrowly psychoanalytic interpretation of her childhood and the limitations of that interpretation” (*Ibid.*: 1). Following this, she introduces research which shows that death can have a lasting influence on young children. This appears in Benedict in the forms of her tantrums, and later in life, as depression. Children are prone to tantrums as an expression of their anger, etc., when, at very early ages, they are unable to verbalise their emotions. Death hit Benedict when she was still at the developmental age when tantrums were normal but as she also had a hearing problem, and therefore had difficulty in verbalising her feelings, she no doubt fell back on the familiar tantrums to express herself longer than would be expected in a normal child. But this was not understood by Benedict to be the case, who instead interpreted her actions to be that of a wanton child (*Ibid.*: 5).

Benedict’s “Story” does begin with the death of her father, a major event at any time of life, but death in general was a far more prevalent topic to those born in the Victorian age, when it was a common occurrence and thus a matter of concern for one and all. Moreover attendance at a funeral was often a common Sunday event. Suicide, too, was

also a common event for those who lived in the district where Benedict lived, as it was a region with an uncommonly high suicide rate (*Ibid.*: 13). We can see, therefore, that for Benedict death was very much a part of life rather than a simple obsession and thus it was only natural for her to discuss it throughout her story. This is an important point to note as Douglas Lummis gives emphasis to Benedict's 'obsession' with death because he sees it as a psychologically abnormal state which eventually influenced her to the point that she portrayed Japanese society as one which was beautiful but dead. Yet seen in the context of Caffrey's explanation, Benedict's concern with death was not abnormal, but a product of an age where death and sickness were close at hand, unlike in present times when death has become far removed from daily life. It is therefore unwise to assume that this was an all consuming obsession that eventually consumed Benedict's anthropological studies.

It is interesting to note, however, that Caffrey was not only putting forward the facts but was also setting the record straight on this particular piece by Benedict. Caffrey seems to have no knowledge of Lummis' interpretation of Benedict's life but she was fully aware of the interpretations put forward by her predecessors, Margaret Mead and Judith Modell. Mead, of course, included this piece in the 1959 biography and relied upon it for the information she proffers on Benedict's life in the introduction to the section entitled "Anne Singleton, 1989-1934". Judith Modell's biography, *Ruth Benedict: Patterns of a Life* (1983), possesses some similarities with Lummis' work by virtue of the fact that Modell chose to distinguish Benedict's life in the form of dominant patterns in accordance with Mead's adage that "a finished life can be seen as simultaneous . . ." (Mead 1959: 55).

However, before addressing these other interpretations it would be best to first follow Lummis' ideas through to their conclusion.

Political Propaganda

As already mentioned above, Lummis writes that the enduring nature of *Chrysanthemum* is due to the fact that it is a piece of political literature. This assertion comes after his statement that Japan is the undiscovered country that Benedict strove to find from her early childhood, and that *Chrysanthemum* is also an obituary (written by Anne Singleton) of a dying culture. In this dying culture Benedict was able to create patterns at will and form a beautiful undiscovered country. Lummis asserts that she had plenty of practise doing this in her book *Patterns of Culture* when, in particular, her portrayal of the Kwakiutl was one that was far removed from any that existed for well over one hundred years. Her description had been based on Boas' field work data, which in retrospect was found to have ignored some very obvious facts: the result being that subsequent studies in later years were able to show that his portrayal of the potlatch was quite distorted in terms of the overall society and decidedly anachronistic at the time of his writing. Benedict further promoted this image of the potlatch as a grand destruction of property based on "unqualified penchant for self-glorification" (Harris 1968: 313). Based on this information, Lummis concluded: "I am convinced that [Benedict] took no interest in data of that kind because she saw it as irrelevant to her purpose." But again he has ignored the fact that studies which were to expose these facts did not come to light until

the 1950's—after both Benedict and Boas were dead and many years after the publication of *Patterns*.

The point that he is attempting to make is that Benedict was using her anthropology for self-criticism and political education: a completely valid observation as Benedict actively attempted to apply anthropology as a means for improving society. However, in making this point he hinges his argument on his assertion that Benedict created fictive cultures because she was obsessed with beautiful undiscovered countries and dead cultures. Yet in order to create this image of Benedict, he has to purge himself and manipulate some of the data.¹⁰ Lummis also criticises Benedict's use of history (as have others) but he consciously tries to belittle her sources by dismissing them as "standard history books" (*Ibid.*:65). However, her sources such as E. H. Norman and George Sansom are, even today, respected and relatively reliable histories, and at the time would have been considered the most up to date books to consult—but it seems that such books of this calibre did not reach Lummis' high standards (Soeda 1993: 77-78).

More than anything, however, it seems his expectations of *Chrysanthemum* encompass more than the book was ever meant to be. Lummis wanted something that would explain all of Japanese society to him in a nutshell and, therefore, is naturally concerned with Benedict's omission of economics, politics, power and class. But Benedict was attempting to give a description of the Japanese ethics system which she considered to be at the core of Japanese behaviour rather than a fully comprehensive and fully guaranteed introduction to Japanese society as a whole. His disappointment thus seems to have made him selective in his choice of data and the construction of his argument. Lummis' efforts to use biographical sources in order to understand the *Chrysanthemum* was a fresh and much needed approach against the large volume of recycled criticism. Unfortunately, Lummis could only make use of the work from Mead. The result has been a combination of Lummis' disjointed set of arguments and ill-construed logic—based on arbitrary and loose interpretations of the biography written by Mead—that has influenced a number of Japanese writers interested in Benedict. Lummis' book has been highly praised as 'the best commentary to date' on *Chrysanthemum* by a number of Japanese authors (e.g. Ikeda, 1985; Soeda, 1993; Nishikawa, 1994), but perhaps this is simply due to the fact that, for a long time, Lummis stood tall because he stood alone. Moreover, the fact that he is not Japanese has probably lent more legitimacy to his argument in Japan, as few have made the effort to read the biographies on Benedict available only in English and even

10 Soeda also makes a reference to Lummis' lack of diligence when it comes to checking the facts. Nishi Yoshiyuki in his book *A New Way of Reading The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1983) wrote down his thoughts on why he thought Watsuji Tetsuro did not include his 1949 review of *Chrysanthemum* in the later publication of his entire works. Ikeda and Lummis bring this up in their co-authored work (1985) each putting forward what they believe to have been the reason for the omission. However, none of these three ever bothered to check whether the review was included in the works or not; but should they have checked—as Soeda did—they would have found that their discussion of this subject was based on completely unfounded information. (See Soeda 1993: 52-54)

fewer have ventured back to her original papers available at Vassar.¹¹ Yet by consulting these other available materials it becomes obvious that Lummis (be it either knowingly or unknowingly) has been very selective and subjective in his use of data for his assessment of both Benedict and *Chrysanthemum*. It also becomes obvious that he should have read Mead with a pinch of skepticism, as his uncritical use of the biography has contributed to some of the chinks in his armour. Just as Mouer and Sugimoto's statement "individual motivations of authors need to be set against larger historical trends" can be applied to Benedict, it can also be applied to Mead. She provides the pivotal thinking behind Lummis' ideas and therefore it is pertinent that we now turn to some of the motivations behind her compilation of Benedict's biography if we are to understand Lummis within the context of the overall study of Benedict and her ideas.

Margaret Mead

Lummis gleaned his 'insights' from Margaret Mead's *An Anthropologist at Work: Writings of Ruth Benedict (AAW, 1959)* which is a combination of background explanation and first hand materials. Mead was Benedict's student, intimate friend and colleague and hence experienced at first hand many of the events that affected Benedict's life. Consequently she is considered by many to be *the* authority on Benedict. At the beginning of each section of the book, Mead has provided introductions and some personal observations which set out the background and circumstances behind the various writings that follow. In effect, Mead provides us with a fragmented biography interspersed with first hand materials. These materials include both unpublished and published pieces written by Benedict, earlier writings, poems, essays, "The Story of My Life", letters between Sapir and Benedict, Boas and Benedict, and letters from the field—a large proportion of which are between Mead and Benedict. Thus the reader is allowed a glimpse not only into the professional life of Benedict but also into some of the inner sanctums which she held so private during her lifetime.

Mead also touches on the war years, but only briefly, when Benedict was carrying out research on Japan and other cultures. During this period, Mead herself had an infant to care for, was involved in wartime work concerning nutrition, and spent time in Britain working on cross-cultural understanding between the USA and Britain, and therefore was unable to keep in intimate contact with Benedict's wartime work. Of course, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* was written after the war in 1946, so Mead was well aware of the book but her writing indicates that she is hazy about the research and how it was conducted at the OWI. What is more important to Mead is the fact that *Chrysanthemum*

11 The exceptions are: Kuchiba Masao "A Reconsideration of Culture Patterns" *Ryukoku Daigaku Ronshu* (Collected Papers of Ryukoku University) 386 (1968): 85-100; Yoneyama Toshinao "Ruth Benedict: Her Life and Works" *Jinruigaku* (Anthropology) 1-3 (1970): 192-217, who first introduced Benedict's background in Japan; and the Japanese translators of Margaret Caffrey's book who have also published an informative article on the background to *Chrysanthemum* using the RFB Papers at Vassar: Fukui Nanako & Ueda Yoshimi, "From 'Japanese Behavior Patterns' to 'The Chrysanthemum and the Sword'" *Collection of Papers from the Faculty of Letters, Kansai University: Commemorating the 70th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Faculty* 44: 1-4 (1995): 555-580.

had “an enormous impact on Japan and the US”, an impact which eventually led to even larger studies on cultures at a distance in an ensuing large-scale project known as the Columbia University Research in Contemporary Cultures Project (or RCC) with Mead as a participant and later on, Director.¹²

We find therefore that Mead passes over *Chrysanthemum* in *AAW*, because she was not totally familiar with the details but also for the reason she states in her introduction to *AAW*: “Toward the end of [Benedict’s] life her anthropological writing became a sufficient vehicle . . . The need for describing the background of each paper grows less and less, until finally her last paper stands alone” (Mead, 1959: xvi).

Yet, Mead evidently did feel the need to describe the details behind those last papers later in 1974, when she produced yet another brief biography on Benedict for the Columbia University series *Leaders of Modern Anthropology*.¹³ Although this second version is based on the contents of *AAW*, this time Mead divides the biography into a biographical section and selected writings. Mead intersperses her observations in the biographical section with Benedict’s words, allowing the reader to grasp a more comprehensive and chronological idea of Benedict’s life. Also, the section on the war years contains a little more information—perhaps due in part to the fact that worries about wartime security were now a thing of the past.

Nevertheless, the reader also gets a different sense of Benedict in Mead’s second attempt. As Margaret Caffrey has pointed out, the 1959 version was “of necessity . . . selective, and this very selectivity suggested things about Benedict, concealed other things, and reflected Mead’s own imperatives as well as those of the late 1950’s” (Caffrey, 1989: 400). For example, veiled suggestions of an affair between Sapir and Benedict is for the purpose of concealing an affair between Mead and Sapir (which is revealed in biographies on both Mead and Sapir¹⁴).

Moreover, it covers up the matter of Benedict’s Lesbianism—which included relations with Mead at one point in time. Caffrey also notes that the inclusion of the paper “Child Rearing in Certain European Countries” towards the end of *AAW* “reflected the return of American women to domesticity in the 1950’s” and the age of Momism in which Mead herself was very much active. By emphasising the mothering aspect it was easier to camouflage their Lesbianism (*Ibid.*: 401).

In contrast to *AAW*, the 1974 version focuses on the struggles of Benedict the woman. This, of course, reflects the interest in feminism that surged during the seventies. Moreover, in this version, the story is about Benedict whereas the 1959 version featured Mead very prominently (perhaps in an effort to establish Mead’s position in the history of

12 This project was known as the Columbia University Research in Contemporary Cultures (RCC) or more popularly as the study of National Character and was sponsored by The Office of Naval Research with a budget of \$90,000 a year. It began in April of 1947 with a staff of 17 eventually swelling to over 120. With the unfortunate death of Benedict in 1948, the project lost momentum and it ended in 1951 with the publication of papers on seven cultures studied at a distance in *The Study of Culture at a Distance*, edited by Margaret Mead and Rhoda Métraux. (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1953)

13 1974 *Ruth Benedict*. New York: Columbia University Press.

14 See: Darnell, Regna. 1990 *Edward Sapir: Linguist, Anthropologist, Humanist*. Berkeley: University of California Press; and Howard, Jane. 1984 *Margaret Mead: A Life*. New York: Fawcett Columbine.

anthropology vis-à-vis her relationship with Benedict). We find also that the emphasis on poetry that figured so largely in the first version has been subdued as, in a sense, the poetry section in 1959 was more about Sapir, Mead and Benedict than it was about poetry. Mead was strongly interested in poetry, as evidenced by her expression of interest in her autobiography *Blackberry Winter* (1975). She clearly states there that she aspired to writing poetry but found that she could not compare to the standard of the company she kept in her good friend, the poet Léonie Adams, and colleagues Benedict and Sapir. Mead admits she did not have the talent for poetry (1975: 117-18) but her devotion to the subject in *AAW* and the inclusion of her own poetry alongside that of Sapir and Benedict suggests that at that time she still held unfulfilled aspirations (Mead 1959: 83-96). It is in this same section that Mead discusses the matter of Benedict's pseudonym, Anne Singleton, and the aversion both Mead and Sapir had to its use. Yet, at the later date Mead pays less attention to the subject of poetry and gives less emphasis to Anne. Furthermore, the attention originally given to Benedict's concern with death fades noticeably.

As Caffrey has pointed out, Mead had certain agendas that she selectively played up or down according to the times and her personal needs; thus the different approach to the two biographies. But there is also another side to this story. Although Mead entered anthropology a mere three years after Benedict, Benedict was in fact fifteen years her senior. Mead's first encounter with Benedict was as a student in Franz Boas' class at Barnard College, which Benedict attended as Boas' teaching assistant. Their first meeting was therefore a hierarchical one which developed into friendship later—but only when Benedict allowed it to move in that direction. For Mead, Benedict was someone to look up to and emulate. Yet the two were opposites in many senses. Whereas Benedict was tall, lithe and athletic, Mead was short and not of the sporting persuasion. Benedict's beauty is a topic on which many have touched but not a topic, it seems, which concerns Mead. Whereas Mead was forthright and sometimes abrasive, Benedict, who was hard of hearing, tended to be sometimes withdrawn, soft-spoken and often cool and aloof. Yet despite Benedict's demure demeanour, an anthropologist once mentioned that "the only time I ever saw Margaret Mead take a back seat" was at an anthropological meeting when Ruth Benedict proved to be the "commanding presence." Jane Howard notes that "[Benedict's] presence was then and always commanding as far as Margaret Mead was concerned" (Howard, 1984: 226-27). It seems reasonable, therefore, to assume that the first biography contains some glorification of Benedict's aspects to which Mead aspired but could not emulate. It is therefore quite possible that this led her to place more emphasis on certain aspects than was warranted. Perhaps an awareness of this over-emphasis was the reason for her slimmer second biography in 1974, which paints its picture with much more economical strokes. This, however is not realised by Lummis who failed to refer to the second biography—despite its availability at the time of his writing. He thus bases his appraisal on the first biography which does place emphasis on poetry and on the role the death of Benedict's father played throughout her life.

Yet in either case, the biography could not be a complete one as Mead was not only too close to Benedict, but was also intimate with others who played a part in Benedict's life.

Indeed she was also a participant in many of the events unravelled. Mead herself was fully aware that she had not done true justice to the story of Benedict's life (as no biographer can cover every aspect of a life) and was enthusiastic and encouraging of Judith Modell, who produced a biography of Benedict's life in 1983. Modell and later Margaret Caffrey, have both written excellent, detailed descriptions of Ruth Benedict's life and works. Obviously both are the products of extremely diligent research. However, although the two authors deal with the same subject, and often the same story, their interpretations differ significantly enough to warrant the later biography by Caffrey only six years after Modell's publication.

Judith Schachter Modell

Judith Schachter Modell first wrote on Benedict in 1975 and later wrote on Benedict for her Ph.D thesis which was then to become the basis for her full length biography in 1983.¹⁵ Like Lummis, Modell discusses Benedict's life as a number of themes and underlying precepts that can be used to explain her motivations and ideas throughout her life. Also like Lummis she uses dichotomous relations to describe Benedict's life. However, Modell's discussion is a great deal more sophisticated.

She describes Benedict's life as a constant reconciliation of dichotomies that provide Benedict with the motivation to seek out answers to questions about many of the hard and fast customs in society: especially those pertaining to the distinct and differing attitudes toward men and women. Modell poses the first dichotomy, with which Benedict was faced, as being between masculine and feminine. Here she too turns to "Story" and the two worlds of father and mother. We find here, too, the opposition of life and death, as one of the themes that make up the overall pattern of Benedict's life. Modell also delves into other dichotomies such as: imaginative and practical endeavour; ecstasy and achievement; creativity and attention. For example, in the extended household of Benedict's earlier years, all the women were expected to participate actively in the household chores. Whilst she was not incompetent, Benedict did not care for household chores (practical endeavour) and found it difficult to compete with her domestic-oriented and rather good-natured sister, Margery. Moreover, the tantrums and daydreaming to which Benedict was prone, often cast her as the antithesis of Margery. Only later on when Benedict found she could express herself more openly through the medium of writing stories (imaginative) did the path to usefulness begin to appear to Benedict. In later life, after marriage, Benedict also turned to poetry and it was through this medium that she formed her friendship with Edward Sapir. But as she became more involved in the professional world of anthropology, Modell tells how once again she was forced to reconcile her poetry with her professional scientific writings. Towards the end of her

15 Modell, Judith Schachter. 1975 "Ruth Benedict, Anthropologist: The Reconciliation of Science and Humanism" 183-203, in T. Thorensen, ed., *Toward a Science of Man: Essays in the History of Anthropology*. The Hague: Mouton Publications; 1978 "A Biographical Study of Ruth Fulton Benedict," Ph.D Thesis, The University of Minnesota; 1983 *Ruth Benedict: Patterns of Life*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

career, Benedict was yet again driven by contrasts when she struggled to validate her attempts to combine anthropology and the humanities in a bid to create a meaningful and useful science.

Modell's pursuit of meaning in these dichotomies leads her to conclude that in the last years of her life, Benedict was able to achieve "the understanding that dichotomy did not have to be eliminated but could in fact be productive, fruitful—the source of creativity in a discipline and a self" (Modell, 1983: 304). Here we see clearly the contrast between Modell and Lummis. Lummis sees the dichotomy of Anne Singleton the poet and Ruth Benedict the anthropologist as a destructive one which results in Anne taking over Ruth and substituting poetry for anthropology—whereas Modell assesses the same dichotomy in the opposite way.

Modell, in order to demonstrate her statement uses the very same source that Lummis uses. Modell centres her concluding chapter around Benedict's 1948 farewell address as President of the American Anthropological Association, "Anthropology and the Humanities". She interprets this speech as an expression of self-confidence and the ability of Benedict to put forward her ideas forthrightly about the need for strict scientific inquiry—coupled with the imagination of literature and the human endeavour of the humanities—to make scientific enquiry applicable and useful.

Both Modell and Lummis also bring up the topic of shame and guilt. Lummis prefers to interpret Benedict's use of shame culture in Japan to mean "principles simply play no role in the motivation of its citizens" (Lummis 1982: 60) but Modell's approach is from an entirely different angle. She goes on to weave the final chapter of Benedict's life around her interest in culture as something which is learned, and national culture as a product of child-rearing. She traces Benedict's interest in child-rearing from her paper "Continuities and Discontinuities in Cultural Conditioning"¹⁶ written in 1938, which she suggests dominated Benedict's work for the last ten years of her life (*Ibid.*: 259). The theme of this particular paper is about the ill effects that occur when discontinuity exists between the behaviour demanded of children and adults, as was the case in America. Benedict proves this by comparing American child-rearing practices (discontinuity) with those of the Papago where a child was "continuously conditioned to responsible social participation".

It is within the context of this discussion on child-rearing that Modell interprets the impact of *Chrysanthemum*: that is, Modell sees Benedict's Japanese study as an important contribution to the discussions on child-rearing and national identity. As a result, Modell seizes on the importance of the guilt and shame theories in relation to child-rearing practices and praises Benedict's use of these in her characterisation of Japanese behaviour. In an effort to weave the remaining threads of this life story into a consistent pattern, Modell discusses the post-war RCC project, which Benedict directed, in terms of its attention to child-rearing techniques and the influence these techniques have on shaping an individual's behaviour within the larger context of national character.

Thus, Modell couches her interpretation of Benedict's life and work in terms of emerging contrasts and reconciliation of these contrasts. Like Mead, Modell also lays a

16 *Psychiatry*, 1: 161-67.

great deal of emphasis on the fact that Benedict could have no children and the way her feeling of resentment over this influenced her later studies.¹⁷ She also stresses the impact that poetry had on Benedict's thinking. This occurs because Modell uses textual analyses to construct her theories as opposed to the approach which Caffrey took that set Benedict within the social context and academic milieu of the age. Moreover, Modell sets her theories around themes that do not necessarily follow a chronological order but do create a pattern. Thus she often attempts to validate the influence of earlier experiences in later writings by quoting from earlier poems, letters and papers. In her appraisal of *Chrysanthemum*, for example, Modell sees the echoes of the earlier poet when she states that Benedict's portrayal of the Japanese "had more in common with the poet's 'redundancy' than with the psychologists 'overdetermination'" (Modell, 1983: 282).

In the emphasis she places on literary interests and child-rearing, Modell follows closely in the footsteps of Mead. Like Mead, Modell may have been a little too close to her subject: in the first chapter, Modell notes that "few biographers . . . deny the element of autobiography" and goes on to explain the parallels of their two lives. Both Modell and Benedict started from literature backgrounds; both attended Vassar College; both experienced non-academic periods before going onto careers in anthropology; both attended Columbia (*Ibid.*: 5). Thus, it can be said that Modell has the advantage of being able to see a great many aspects of Benedict's life from an insider's view, especially from the field of anthropology, but as she chose to focus on "Ruth's re-creation of circumstances", this effectively meant peering inside Benedict's head via the medium of deeply personal poetry and an in-between-the-lines reading of Benedict's various texts. This, of course, limits the scope of Modell's study but at the same time gives us one insightful interpretation of Ruth Benedict's life.

Having considered Modell's approach, Lummis' initial approach to his subject does gain legitimacy. However, his analysis and conclusions seem to be the result of some intrepid force exerted centrifugally. Thus although Modell does take a textual analysis approach, her approach never leads her to suggest that poetry in any way marred or detracted from Benedict's anthropology. Benedict's literature background is appraised as a tool for writing very readable prose, but no where is it suggested that the two synthesised in later life or that the effects that her father's death had on her as a child caused her to write obituaries for dying cultures. Benedict's prose was very well written but her analysis was based on an evaluation of the data rather than moulded by poetical talents.

Benedict in Context

Having discussed Modell's interpretation of Benedict, it is now possible to return to

17 Caffrey disputes the importance given to Benedict's childlessness and the influence this may have had in turning her in the direction of anthropology. According to Caffrey, Benedict had already begun studying anthropology when she found it would be difficult for her to bear children. Moreover, journal entries also show her ambivalence towards having children. (p. 82 and also Fn. 26 & 28, p. 362.)

Margaret Caffrey and her analysis of "Story". As already mentioned above, Caffrey set Benedict's interpretation of her own life into perspective by reviewing it within the context of her social surroundings. Unfettered by autobiographical detours, she has been able to penetrate yet another avenue of circumstance that gives the reader a more comprehensive look into Benedict's complex life. Moreover, by virtue of access to more varied information, Caffrey was able to weigh the information compiled hitherto, before adding her own carefully researched interpretation.

Lummis saw Benedict in terms of his Anne Singleton/Ruth Benedict split personality theory whereas Modell posed her interpretation as a feminine-masculine contrast. In either explanation, Benedict is discussed in paradoxical dualities that requires heavy faith in psychological categorisations if one is to accept either of these theories as fully explanatory. It seems Caffrey as an historian chose to see Benedict as a product of the Victorian era. In the Victorian age, women and men were believed to inhabit totally different spheres: the men occupying the public sphere of the individual and the workplace, as opposed to the women who occupied the domestic sphere where emotion, virtue and motherhood ruled. In this way we can see that the dualities of society itself were reflected in Benedict's personality rather than Benedict's personality being a product of schizophrenic imbalance. This also serves to explain why Benedict's mother, a product of the Victorian age, did not feel compelled to stave her emotion. As the times moved from the Victorian through the Progressive to the Modern era, Benedict was involved in reexamining the values of her early years and setting the boundaries for new values in order to qualify the changing times. She was therefore also forced to face many of the paradoxes that the times had created outside her personal sphere (Caffrey 1989: 9-12).

Besides the framework of changing times, Caffrey also places Benedict against the frameworks of some of the more influential intellectual ideas of her day. Benedict's career is traced within the emerging field of anthropology which had to contend with Darwinism, diffusionism and racism while attempting to form a working concept of culture. In the field of anthropology, Benedict was also to be instrumental in the Culture and Personality movement and the ensuing psychoanalytical influences on anthropology. Finally, Caffrey deals with Benedict's vision for anthropology by tracing the work she did in the OWI and the extension of this work that was made possible by the Columbia University RCC Project.

In her attempt to place Benedict within her social and intellectual setting, Caffrey successfully gives a wider interpretation of Benedict's role in anthropology. Because Caffrey is not an anthropologist, she does not see *Chrysanthemum* as simply an application of earlier theories, or a one-off case study. Rather, as with Benedict's other works, Caffrey considers it in relation to her immediate preceding work and within the context of the times. Like Modell, she does see *Chrysanthemum* as an extension of the methodology that Benedict developed for studying cultures at a distance in the OWI, but she also assesses the book as being on the cutting edge of research in Culture and Personality studies. Although not stated, Caffrey implies that *Chrysanthemum* should also be considered against the background of: Benedict's work on racism and synergy; and her desire to apply anthropology for the purpose of attaining lasting peace.

In 1940 Benedict published *Race: Science and Politics* in order to clarify the difference between race and racism for the layman. She did this by explaining the scientific truths behind race and contrasting these with the politics and myths behind racism. Not only did she condemn Nazism but also any form of dictatorships and all forms of racism; including that rampant in the USA against immigrants and, in particular, Jews and Negroes. After publishing this book, Benedict went out of her way to be active in the fight against racism by writing numerous articles and giving talks at all manner of venues: action which showed Benedict's commitment to this cause as she was wont to avoid making public appearances.

While doing her research on race, Benedict was also carrying on with her research on synergy, which she developed substantially in 1941 in a series of lectures given at Bryn Mawr College. There she explained synergy as follows: "synergy . . . [is] used . . . to mean combined action . . . which by combining produce[s] a result greater than the run of their separate actions." When applied to cultures it can be divided into two, low and high synergy: "cultures with low synergy, where the social structure provides for acts that are mutually opposed and counteractive, and . . . cultures with high synergy, where it provides for acts that are mutually reinforcing" (Benedict 1970: 326). Although Benedict herself never published her ideas on synergy, these lectures demonstrated that she was intent on finding out which cultural mechanisms, and how, operated to create a society where members acted in mutually reinforcing ways which would result in a culture that was mutually beneficial and congenial to all its members. These ideas on synergy, however, do not appear to have stopped at Bryn Mawr. During the war, in her effort to find out what made the Japanese Japanese, she investigated mechanisms which worked for and against the Japanese culture, intent on pursuing a form of peace that would be congenial to the Japanese. Although the term synergy never appears in the text of her Japanese study, this concept surely influenced her assessment of the Japanese, whom she seemed to think were capable of high synergy and a peaceful society.

However, as a part of Benedict's life, the period taken up by the OWI and *Chrysanthemum* amounts to but a small portion, hence like the biographers before her, Caffrey does not devote a great deal of space to the actual discussion of the book, even though she does provide further insight through her exposition of the background to it.¹⁸ Nevertheless, it would seem that some of the facts put forward by Caffrey clearly refute the exaggerated emphasis Lummis places on such subjects as her literature/poetry background and anthropology as obituaries. Through her discussion of Benedict's ideas on racism, synergy and her pursuit of a working peace, not inflicted but functioning from within cultural mechanisms, Caffrey also throws aspersions on Lummis' suggestion that *Chrysanthemum* was simply a vehicle for American propaganda. Yet despite the somewhat sensational conclusions of Lummis, his ideas have achieved relatively wide acceptance

18 Caffrey gives a description of the type of work and the countries with which Benedict was involved in the OWI before she went on to study the Japanese. She also gives a list of the memoranda Benedict wrote on the Japanese before finally penning the report "Japanese Behavioral Patterns" in 1945. (Caffrey 1989: 318-321; & Fn. 36, 37, 38: 393-4.)

and this unquestioned acceptance has obstructed any further effort to delve into the background of *Chrysanthemum*—thus leaving speculative ideas to shape perceptions in Japan, and elsewhere, about Benedict and her work.

Conclusion

Lummis would have us believe that the staying power of *Chrysanthemum* is due to the fact that it is political literature. However, as Clifford Geertz has recently pointed out, the immortality of *Chrysanthemum* is due more to the fact that Benedict successfully paints the Japanese as not only “less erratic and arbitrary . . . but by the end of the book, [as] the most reasonable we have ever conquered” (Geertz 1988: 120-21). According to Geertz, by comparing Japanese cultural idiosyncrasies with those of America, Benedict was able to disarm the public and lead them to a human understanding of a people who, a short time ago, had been viewed as the most fierce and unknown enemy America had ever confronted. Geertz goes on to credit this work as Benedict’s best mainly because she pulls “herself free of methodological conceits she did not believe” (*Ibid.*: 116). By ‘methodological conceits’ he refers to psychological methods that put inadvertent emphasis on the role played by child-rearing, and in particular toilet-training, in the formation of national characters: conceits that created an image of the Japanese as compulsive and obsessive.¹⁹ Benedict had, during her time at OWI, learnt the value of shunning propaganda for objective data and thus was also able to shun the ‘politically correct’ image of the day of the imbecile and inhuman Japanese. And yet, Lummis would have us believe that “what she creates . . . is America’s natural enemy” (Lummis, 1982: 64) because she arranges the facts to fit her purpose to finally produce a simplistic but “neat and orderly pattern of values”.

Like “The Story of My Life,” the story behind *Chrysanthemum* is in fact much more complex than it first appears. Although Lummis attempted to go behind the curtains of *Chrysanthemum*, the results were an imposition of extremely simple and disjointed themes, culled from Mead’s biography, in an effort to prove that the problem of his misinterpretation of Japanese society lay not in *his* reading of *Chrysanthemum* but in the cunningly camouflaged style of writing employed in the book itself. It is true that it is impossible to separate authors from their works, just as it difficult to separate the works from the background of the times in which they were written. However, Lummis has tended to put too much emphasis on Benedict’s penchant for poetry to the point where he has blurred the details to prove his theory. Benedict was not the schizophrenic, politically-driven woman that Lummis would have us believe she was. Nor did any final personality integration occur which resulted in the anthropologist succumbing to the poet.

Just as a life cannot be reduced to whole, no single biography can represent a whole life. (Needless to say, a whole life reduced from one section of a biography is fraught with danger.) Each of Benedict’s biographers have added another dimension to her significant and complex life. Now that much more data is available on Benedict’s work, the time is

19 For a discussion of these images, see: John Dower, 1986 “Primitives, Children, Madmen” pp. 118-146, in *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*. New York: Pantheon Books.

ripe for a more comprehensive re-assessment of her contribution not only to anthropology but also to Japanese studies.

Japan studies can benefit from the above collective assessment of the available comment on Benedict in relation to her study of Japan. Why? Because the above is also a demonstration of how Japan studies must continue to review works that have contributed to the field and vanquish any hastily formed perceptions or stereotypes that have been allowed to persist through indolence. Japan studies has for the most part been a volatile area of study, exposed to the tides of political fickleness. This has often resulted in images that serve a political purpose at the time but cloud the path to a clear understanding of the circumstances afterward. Perhaps access to a mounting wealth of information on Japan will lead to some exposure of past bias, thereby leading the way to more objective assessments of Japan related subjects in the future.

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誤解されたルース・ベネディクト像

ポーリン・ケント

要旨：日本とアメリカにおいてルース・ベネディクトに関する研究は数多くある。しかし、これらの研究はボーダーレスではない。アメリカにおいてはベネディクトは文化人類学者として扱われ、したがって彼女に関する伝記や論文は彼女の日本研究である『菊と刀』を文化人類学の仕事のうちのただの一つとしてみなし、それにふれることが少ない。これに対して、日本ではほとんどのベネディクト研究は『菊と刀』だけに注目し、その動機などについては明らかにしていない。例外として、アメリカでも日本でもマージナル・マンのダグラス・ラミスの『内なる外国「菊と刀」再考』がある。そこでラミスはマーガレット・ミードの書いたベネディクトの伝記にもとづいて、『菊と刀』はいかに「詩人による政治文学」であるかということを論じようとした。しかし、彼はミードとベネディクトの複雑な関係を計算に入れることを忘れた。その結果、彼は無理のある議論を進めることになった。

ここではミードによるベネディクト伝記を他のベネディクト伝記、またミードについての伝記と比較することによって、ミードの解釈がワン・オブ・ゼムにすぎないということを明らかにするとともに、ミードだけの解釈に頼っているラミスの議論の持つバイアスも明らかにする。そして、この作業によってベネディクトのより立体的なイメージを描くことができるだろう。