



Ruth Benedict: Stranger in This Land (American Studies)

Margaret M. Caffrey

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Poet, anthropologist, feminist—Ruth Fulton Benedict was all of these and much more. Born into the last years of the Victorian era, she came of age during the Progressive years and participated in inaugurating the modern era of American life. *Ruth Benedict: Stranger in This Land* provides an intellectual and cultural history of the first half of the twentieth century through the life of an important and remarkable woman.

As a Lyricist poet, Ruth Benedict helped define Modernism. As an anthropologist, she wrote the classic *Patterns of Culture* and at one point was considered the foremost anthropologist in the United States—the first woman ever to attain such status. She was an intellectual and an artist living in a time when women were not encouraged to be either. In this fascinating study, Margaret Caffrey attempts to place Benedict in the cultural matrix of her time and successfully shows the way in which Benedict was a product of and reacted to the era in which she lived.

Caffrey goes far beyond providing simple biographical material in this well-written interdisciplinary study. Based on exhaustive research, including access for the first time to the papers of Margaret Mead, Benedict's student and friend, Caffrey is able to put Benedict's life clearly in perspective. By identifying the family and educational influences that so sharply influenced Benedict's psychological makeup, the author also closely analyzes the currents of thought that were strong when Victorianism paralleled the Modernism that figured in Benedict's life work. The result is a richly detailed study of a gifted woman.

This important work will be of interest to students of Modernism, poetry, and women's studies, as well as to anthropologists.

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