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Paul Shankman. *The Trashing of Margaret Mead: Anatomy of an Anthropological Controversy.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009. Illustrations. xvii + 299 pp. $29.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-299-23454-6.

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Few women in recent history have earned as much respect as Margaret Mead. As both anthropologist and social activist, Mead became a role model to women in the United States while shaping anthropological studies in the South Pacific Ocean. Her book *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928) attracted academic attention and, perhaps more important, captivated her American audience. Building off U.S. interest in the Pacific Islands, *Coming of Age in Samoa* also commented on adolescent stress, urging U.S. citizens to follow the Samoan example of greater freedom from sexual constraints. Although Mead's work faced a certain level of criticism, she remained popular throughout her life. In 1983, however, five years after her death, Australian anthropologist Derek Freeman published *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth.* Attacking both Mead's work and her person, Freeman instigated an intense controversy that questioned not only Mead's research but also paradigms within anthropology and theories of "nature vs. nurture." Cultural anthropologist Paul Shankman joined the Mead-Freeman debate early on. As a critic of Freeman, he succumbed to Freeman's assertions and personal attacks. Shankman, therefore, has had a vested interested in the Mead-Freeman controversy (a term Shankman uses freely) and in educating anthropologists and the general public about the details of the conflict, identifying information the media failed to address. *The Trashing of Margaret Mead*, therefore, seeks to preserve Mead's reputation as an anthropologist, explain the details of the Mead-Freeman controversy, and provide a voice for Samoans within the debate.

Shankman is not the first critic of Freeman, or the only anthropologist to explore the Mead-Freeman debate. Lowell Holmes's *Quest for the Real Samoa* (1987) also investigates the Mead-Freeman controversy as does James Côté's *Adolescent Storm and Stress* (1994). Like Shankman, these scholars questioned Freeman since his 1983 critique of Mead's arguments and findings. In 1999, however, Freeman published a second book that intensified his attack on Mead. *The Fateful Hoaxing of Margaret Mead* concluded that Mead had fallen victim to Samoan girls' pranks and lies, and this book again aroused debate among anthropologists. Hoping to reinstate Mead to her earlier position of respect, Shankman published *The Trashing of Margaret Mead* to "extricate Mead's reputation from the quicksand of controversy" (p. 19). Because it was published after Freeman's 2001 death, this book sets out to finally put this argument to rest by assessing the full run of Freeman's attacks on Mead.

Shankman's book follows multiple articles he wrote regarding the Mead-Freeman controversy in addition to a recent British Broadcasting Corporation documentary about the conflict, *Tales from the Jungle: Margaret Mead* (2006). Indeed, Shankman has been writing about the controversy since 1983, when Freeman published *Margaret Mead and Samoa.* Like other scholars, Shankman addresses the debates between Freeman and Mead, the significance of "nature vs. nurture" within the dispute, and the effect of the scandal in the field of anthropology. Ron Theodore Robin's *Scandals and Scoundrels* (2004) and Hal Hellman's *Great Feuds in Science* (1998) also place the Mead-Freeman controversy in the larger academic context, though Shankman argues in his book that the dispute did not shake up the field of anthropology to the extent that some people have suggested. To Shankman, the Mead-Freeman debate exemplifies the disconnection between public media and academia, as Freeman contrived problems in the field of anthropology that actually did not exist.

The book is organized into five thematic parts. The first provides an overview of the controversy and the effects of the media's interest in Freeman. Because of public interest in the "nature vs. nurture" debate in the 1980s, Freeman's labeling of Mead as a "cultural determinist" intrigued critics (p. 15). Freeman's assertion that he was creating a paradigm shift in anthropology did not, however, convince academics. Yet, with the media's at-

tention, Freeman quickly gained notoriety not only as an anthropologist but also as a celebrity.

In parts 2 and 3 of the book, Shankman delves into both Freeman's and Mead's lives and writings. He explores Freeman's research, narrates his nervous breakdown in Borneo, and portrays him as a bully. While emphasizing his respect for much of Freeman's scholarly work, Shankman nevertheless convinces readers that Freeman made personal attacks, was selective in his research, and viewed himself messianically within the field of anthropology. Likewise, Shankman seeks to show Mead in a human light. He freely addresses problems within her research methodology but places these methods within the proper timeframe and accepted standards. While not revering Mead, Shankman forgives her of the immaturity and naïveté Freeman accused her of. The author carefully addresses Freeman's critiques of Mead, proving that she was neither a cultural determinist nor deceived by Samoan adolescents.

Shankman strengthens his analyses by emphasizing historical context. He provides an overview of U.S. culture and society in the 1920s to explain Mead's appeal to the public. Likewise, he presents the perspectives of Samoans, detailing Samoan beliefs and behaviors relative to Mead's and Freeman's conclusions. While interesting and certainly helpful to readers, Shankman's summary of U.S. and Samoan culture feels tangential. Furthermore, his discussion of more recent findings about the influence of American culture and suicide rates in today's Samoan society (and elsewhere) seems anachronistic or unnecessary. Despite these weaknesses, Shankman demonstrates the importance of looking to Samoans for greater clarity and further perspective on points debated by Mead and Freeman rather than confining the Mead-Freeman conflict to two, albeit key, characters.

Perhaps the greatest strength in this book, though, lies in Shankman's discussion of Samoan culture. In several instances, Shankman concludes that perhaps both Mead and Freeman arrived at invalid conclusions or that both based their findings on too small an area or data sample. For instance, neither one reported realistic findings of cases of rape. Overall, however, Shankman supports Mead's work while not negating Freeman's research in Samoa. Mead, for instance, gained much of her data through observation and informal interaction with adolescent girls. She did not have prior language training and did not attempt to "go native." In contrast, Freeman participated more in Samoan culture and associated with Samoan chiefs. By finding value in various methodologies, Shankman supports past anthropological research, shows that different approaches to research are acceptable, and determines that Freeman's greatest weapon was his use of personal attacks on his opponents.

The author concludes that the Mead-Freeman controversy involves broader issues than simply trying to find "the truth" about Samoan sexual standards and practices. He shows that Freeman used personal attacks on Mead to negate everything about her and her research. He also proves that the "nature vs. nurture" debate was not at issue in Mead's work; both she and Freeman believed in "interactionism" or the interplay between nature and nurture. Freeman succeeded in damaging Mead's reputation because he knew how to gain attention, rather than engaging in wholesome academic debate. Consequently, Shankman concludes that Mead is still important to anthropologists, and it is her entire life's work that must be regarded rather than only *Coming of Age in Samoa*. In fact, he attributes anthropology's current popularity in large part to Mead. Yet, if anthropologists want to avoid conflicts such as the Mead-Freeman controversy, they need to write for the public, as well as their peers. Had such been standard procedure in the 1980s, perhaps the media would not have latched onto Freeman so quickly and demonized Mead for academic blunders she never actually committed.

The book is quite accessible to a general audience. The prose flows well, weaving a story that interests readers while critiquing the actors and their actions. Mead is certainly the heroine of the work, but her flaws are also evident. The book includes several photographs of Mead, Freeman, and other key figures in addition to an appendix where Shankman explains his personal experiences with Freeman. Extensive notes, bibliography, and an index also aid the reader in using this text for further research. Shankman's major source material comes from various documentaries from the time period as well as more recent scholarly work concerning the dispute. In addition, he refers to news sources, personal communications, letters, memoirs, and, of course, Mead's and Freeman's writings. The book provides solid research not just about Samoa but also about Mead's and Freeman's work and lives.

The Trashing of Margaret Mead reminds readers of the pitfalls of academia. It urges scholars to avoid personal attacks and to engage in healthy debate. The book redeems Mead while also redeeming the field of anthropology. By showing the uniqueness of the Mead-Freeman case, Shankman places his continued confidence in academia, scholars, and the field of anthropology.

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