

Publication

An Anthropologist at Work: Ruth Benedict's Poetry

Book Item (Buchkapitel, Lexikonartikel, jur. Kommentierung, Beiträge in Sammelbänden)

ID 80007

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Year 2006

Title An Anthropologist at Work: Ruth Benedict's Poetry

Editor(s) Rehder, Robert; Vincent, Patrick

Book title American poetry : Whitman to the present

Publisher Gunter Narr

Place of publication Tübingen

Pages 113-125

ISSN/ISBN 978-3-8233-6271-5 ; 3-8233-6271-2

Series title Spell

Number 18

Ruth Benedict, an influential twentieth-century anthropologist best known for her *Patterns of Culture* (1934), has written a considerable range of poems, a good number of which have been published in distinguished poetry journals such as *Monroe's Poetry*. Considering her double interest in poetry and anthropology and her use of modernist poetic techniques, this writer's works are privileged sites for an interrogation of the complex relations between cultural alterity (ethnic otherness) and poetic alterity (poeticity, literariness). Benedict emerges as a modernist poet of a different sort. Her rhymes and religious subject matter testify to her rootedness in nineteenth-century aesthetics, but her complex interweaving of cultural and poetic forms of alterity place her at the heart of a modernist enterprise, whose frantic search for new forms of artistic expression has from its beginnings been bound up with a sustained interest in the language and practices of cultural others.

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