

*With a
Daughter's Eye*

*A Memoir of Margaret Mead
and Gregory Bateson*

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II.

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As I have mused back over memories of my relationships with my mother and with my father and of their relationship with each other as far as it was accessible to me, I have become more and more sharply aware of how many other lives are linked with these three, and of how the threads go back before my own birth in 1939 and continue after my parents' deaths in 1978 and 1980.

Margaret's story begins in a series of New Jersey and Pennsylvania farmhouses where her academic parents raised her and her younger siblings, a brother and two sisters. It continues through a year of college in the Midwest followed by a transfer to Barnard College. New York was Margaret's base for the rest of her life, on through graduate school at Columbia as a student of cultural anthropology under Franz Boas and an appointment at the American Museum of Natural History which she held for the rest of her life. By the time Margaret met my father she was already famous for her work in Samoa, and she had established a pattern of trips to the field and returns in which the work was written up not only as the careful documentation of exotic cultures in Samoa, New Guinea, and Bali but as relevant to the lives of ordinary Americans, to their decisions about how to raise their own children or order their public or private lives. She told that story herself in her autobiography, *Blackberry Winter*, hinting at a springtime with an edge of pain which makes possible the later harvest.

My father's story goes back through three generations of English academic life shaped by the traditions and expectations of Cambridge University and the scientific commitments of his father, a distin-

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guished geneticist. Gregory was the youngest of three sons, but by the time he grew up both of his older brothers were dead. Only slightly younger than Margaret, Gregory was far younger professionally, fixed in the styles of academic bachelorhood, with only two slim articles in print and no clear sense of where he was heading as an anthropologist.

When Margaret and Gregory met, Margaret had already been divorced from her first husband, Luther Cressman, and was remarried to Reo Fortune, an anthropologist from New Zealand. Margaret and Reo met Gregory in New Guinea in 1932 while all three were doing research on the Sepik River, and after Margaret divorced Reo, she and Gregory married in 1935. The best years of their marriage were the years when they did fieldwork together in Bali and in New Guinea, years of such intensity that Margaret felt they had included a lifetime and produced as first progeny a family of books in which they shared in different ways.

All of this is history for me, known only at second hand, chewed over by now by a whole series of biographers. The first years of my own life are equally remote from my direct knowledge, and yet, clouded by forgetfulness, they remain most deeply and immediately present, the substratum of the feelings of later years. In trying to write about my relationship to my parents I feel a special need to recapture the period after my birth, for only in those years and only briefly did I experience them as parents together, before war and their estrangement intervened. I fill my imagination with the anecdotes and reminiscences that were told to me about my own childhood, and with photographic images, drawing on my sense of what lies deepest in my own personality and on the ways in which my own choices as a parent differ from the choices of my parents.

In some ways, the record is extraordinarily rich. Margaret and Gregory saw my childhood in a context they were committed to studying—child development and character formation as these vary in different cultural settings. All the societies in which they had done research had in common that they were relatively small and homogeneous, but they differed radically in the kinds of person who would be at home and productive in each. In their most important joint work, in Bali, they had worked closely together, Margaret taking notes and Gregory taking a vast number of photographs, with particular emphasis on the congruence between the experience of infants in their first few years and the wider structures of the society, the forms

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of cooperation and leadership, the shapes of the imagination in ritual and the arts.

They approached the experience of parenthood with the intention of questioning forms from their two backgrounds, combining elements of the British tradition from which Gregory came and the old American tradition from which Margaret came with care and discrimination, making innovations along the way. This meant that note taking and photography would go on and that my childhood would be documented and folded into their emerging understanding and later shared with many other people. In my family, we never simply live, we are always reflecting on our lives, and yet, against this background, as I write about my experience, I repossess it.

I start, as, I suppose, every child of divorce would, with the effort to see my two parents together in relation to me, to unite in one their separate images. The times in which I can see them both are few: a few years at the beginning of the war when I was an infant, one year after the war before they separated, transient professional meetings in the years that followed. Finally, as death approached, each one acknowledged illness and loss as occurring within a context they shared. In the last half year before my mother died, they met repeatedly, giving me again moments like the fragmentary images saved from my childhood: Gregory's skepticism modified by tenderness, Margaret's drive and energy once again expressed through a tiny body, the heaviness of her later years now wasted. The sweetness of these meetings reevoked for me hours of hovering, as a child, at the edge of intense conversations and explained to me why I did not retreat from abstraction and abstruse speculation. The play of intellect was a carrier of emotion, the conversation a form of lovemaking.

You could not see them together without thinking in terms of contrasts, and the same sharp sense of dissonance assails me when I look through old photographs or call up memories. Most striking was the difference in height and in their styles and rhythms of movement. My mother, barely five feet tall, was compact and economical in her motions, gathering all that she needed efficiently around her, reaching out from the elbow rather than from the shoulder. Gregory, just over six foot five, had spent much of his youth concealing his inches in a slouch and had more limbs and height than he knew what to do with. I visualize them now, sitting with me on a blanket on the ground outdoors. Gregory's legs are drawn up in neaks, one of his elbows

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Margaret sits on one hip with her feet drawn up and her skirt neatly arranged, like a lady riding sidesaddle, her hands gathered in her lap, but leaning forward in the intensity of speech. Her compactness created shelters: an enclosing lap that was stable to sit on, within encircling arms, or a very special space to cuddle next to her on the sofa, while she read aloud. Gregory's body, for a child, was like a jungle gym rather than a nest. The most glorious place to be was up on his shoulders, perched far above the crowd, ducking down to pass under doorways or the branches of trees.

Their rhythms were different also. Margaret was swift and sure of her intent as she moved through the day, almost as if she were following an agenda in which every activity was labeled, seemingly untiring but never wasting energy, ending phone conversations abruptly and rarely turning for additional farewells once a new trajectory was set. Gregory's day was filled with postponements and moments of sinking into quiescence, briefly aimless before all that length could be mustered for some next activity. His feet indeed were distant colonies, far from his caring; as he grew older they lost feeling, so winter and summer he wore his shoes without socks. Often his feet were left out of the warmth, protruding beyond the bedclothes and over the floor on beds too short for his height.

When I picture my parents I see their hands. Margaret's were small and delicate with tiny half-moons in the nails, moving in symmetrical gesture with the palms cupped upward in front of her as she spoke, drawn back when the phrase was complete. Almost it seemed as if she were symbolically offering her breasts in her palms, a persuasion of nurture behind even the most trenchant argument. Gregory's hands were dramatic, long-fingered and angular, with large discolored nails. He used them asymmetrically in speech, and sometimes a hand would remain extended in gesture, forgotten. His maternal grandfather had been a famous surgeon at Guy's Hospital in London, whose students were said to be distracted from the details of surgical procedure by the beauty of his hands in motion. My grandmother, after passing on this family lore, remarked that Margaret had nice hands too, "though small," and I grew up watching my own hands for clues to who I might be becoming, moving hands imaged and reimaged in the poems I wrote as semaphores of intimacy or loneliness. My mother used to say that I used my hands like her in speech, but that in repose they resembled his.

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at war and my father, still a British subject, was groping for an appropriate role in the war effort. Always liable to fatalism and futility, he was surely less dubious than about the intentions and plans of others than he later became, but he always lacked a clear projection of the future. Margaret was expecting American involvement in Europe but the interval before Pearl Harbor gave her a fortunate period of leeway to "get life organized." She would have persisted indomitably in spite of uncertainty, constituting and reconstituting her arrangements to fulfill the multiple imaginations of herself in marriage or parenthood or career, even as events forced alterations. As a young girl she had pictured herself as the wife of a country clergyman, with five children, organizing the lives of the family and the parish, but even as her interest in anthropology was deepening, her husband, Luther, decided to leave the ministry. In 1926 she was told by a doctor that she would never be able to have children and set to work to recast her life. Not long after her return from her first fieldwork in Samoa, she and Luther divorced and she married Reo, whom she had met on the ship returning from the field, intending to establish a childless lifetime partnership in research.

My version of this sequence and how it led to my birth is remembered from what my mother told me when I was eleven, shortly after she and Gregory had also divorced. She took me with her on a trip to Australia and New Zealand where we met Reo, an awkward, gawky man, both shy and abrasive, and she asked me how I would have liked him as a father. I replied that he didn't seem to know much about children. She said that she had married Reo expecting never to have any and had then fallen in love with Gregory as a potential father as well as a scientific collaborator. She did have at least one miscarriage while married to Reo, however, and the outcome was by no means sure with Gregory. Some of what she said, speaking to me about the kind of love that includes the idea of a man, this man, as the father of one's child, may have been an effort to reinforce my sense of the specialness of the man who was in fact my father, although he was the third of three husbands. Just as when one explains to adopted children that they were the chosen ones, this explanation may have been meant to dispel a certain sense of randomness. As a student, when I studied different techniques for drawing kinship diagrams, I experimented with ways of incorporating fictive kin and kinship across ritual bonds when these have been dissolved: What was my relation-

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ship, I wondered, to my mother's ex-husbands, those who might have been the parent of her child? What about their spouses and the children they might have? No one else I knew seemed to have such complex networks of people who were not quite kin to imagine relationships with.

Margaret and Gregory returned in 1939 from their last joint fieldwork, in Bali and New Guinea, to be caught up in two uncertain currents, the onset of World War II and my mother's suspected pregnancy. For months it was unsure where my father could most usefully go, where my mother would live, and what the war, preempting all their plans and their imagined futures, would mean. The pattern of life for the next five years was shaped by the war and by their sense of having something essential to contribute to the effort to defeat Hitler. When they discussed it they said that an Axis victory would set science back a hundred years. My mother and I later spent hours in the Vietnam years discussing what it had meant then for intellectuals to be so committed to a military victory—whether indeed one could ever feel such a commitment again after the development of nuclear weapons and whether the new generation could empathize with that past commitment. Thus, although both of them spent some time experimenting to find out how to contribute to the war effort, they lived in a world with one overriding goal, unsure sometimes about how to proceed but clear on the priorities. In later years when Gregory puzzled about the nature of purposiveness, he used to speak of the clarity that a state of war brings as a great relief, of the temptation in any society to resolve ambiguity and hard decisions by turning to warfare.

Gregory had actually traveled to England before I was born, following the instructions of the British consul in New York that sent him home where he waited disconsolately as it became clear that no one knew how to use his particular set of skills. When the news of my birth arrived, the story goes, he tossed his pipe into the air and over the garden wall, and rushed out to send a cable instructing DO NOT CHRISTEN. My mother always said that this was a replacement for his original text, DO NOT CIRCUMCISE, but given the studied atheism of his family an entirely predictable instruction. The fact that either question occurred to him so late and so abruptly is an indication of his improvisation.

Margaret and Gregory had no household established between their

return from the South Pacific and my birth. Instead, my mother brought me from the hospital to the place that was my second and most constant home throughout my childhood, the apartment of her college friend Marie Eichelberger, the place from which I set out for the church on my wedding day. This was a ground-floor apartment in an old house in the Chelsea district of New York City, furnished with the antiques brought from Aunt Marie's childhood in York, Pennsylvania, including a tallboy, a bureau standing some six feet tall with deep, wide drawers, one of which was pressed into service as a crib.

For all the years I have known Aunt Marie, these drawers have always been carefully packed with linens, individually wrapped in tissue paper, tied with thread and labeled, and sewing supplies and fabrics or remnants saved for some future project, as well as mementos of a Pennsylvania Dutch childhood. Aunt Marie is for me the providence represented by that tidy drawer full of little packages, each of which would have been lifted out carefully to store elsewhere, and she is the absolute willingness to dedicate a bureau drawer or a room, an hour or a lifetime to my needs or my mother's. Aunt Marie was older than the other students when she met Margaret at Barnard and had spent years on a cure for tuberculosis. As a student, although Margaret invited her to be a member of her group, the "Ash Can Cats," she declined, preferring the individual friendship. Later she became a social worker and worked in New York, never marrying, and my mother and I were her family as she participated vicariously in our lives. "You just looked at me across the room," my mother said to her once, "and fell in love with me."

One example of the uncertainties of that period is that, although my parents had agreed to name a daughter Mary Catherine, they had not discussed what I would be called. In the effort not to preempt that decision, my mother carefully called me Sugar until Gregory's arrival in America, varying it through the permutations of diminutives allowed by Balinese morphophonemics: Sugar, Shook, Chook, Chookin, Nyook, ingeniously trying to protect his sense of participation in decision. For years I remained Chook to her rather than Cathy. Friends from that period who had been out of touch would call and say, "How's Sugar?"

I have no record of what I would have been called if I had been a boy, but I know that my father vetoed the name William, the name

of his father and grandfather, as "too confusing for librarians," while accepting the name of his maiden aunt, Mary, a pioneer social historian of medieval England who had already given librarians a Mary Bateson to worry about, and that later he named the son of his second marriage for his oldest brother, John. Catherine was for my mother's baby sister, Katherine, born when she was four, whom she was allowed to name and who died within a year. The double-barreled name was also a sort of acrostic establishing a whole set of other references, with the initial *C* replacing the original *K* for my father's mother, Caroline, and the *Mary* referring to my birthday on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, which pleased the nuns at the French Hospital, whose support Margaret set out to recruit for feeding on demand instead of on a schedule.

After Gregory arrived from England, Margaret and Gregory set up housekeeping on Ninety-third Street. The pattern of those years affected me a second time when I was making decisions about the care of my daughter, Vanni, and my mother and I looked at films and photographs of my childhood and she advised and reminisced. Margaret wrote that when my father arrived from England, when I was six weeks old, "We let the nurse go and took care of her ourselves for a whole weekend. . . ." ¹ "A *whole weekend . . .*" Even without italicizing, the phrase bemuses me. All by themselves, they sampled the experience of bathing and changing and caring for a fretful infant and then handed me back to Helen Burroughs, the English nurse Margaret had hired, secure in the sense of having experienced child care.

My mother used to comment that I was doing far too much of the physical care of Vanni in combination with my other work, physical care that I found deeply satisfying. This no doubt corresponded to something I would like to have experienced more fully and richly in my own infancy, ways in which I wanted to make up to Vanni for things I had not had. But for an infant growing up in that era when mother-child relationships were so often scheduled and invaded by technology, I was unusually fortunate, my relationship to my mother firmly established in months of relaxed breast-feeding and many of the chores that go with raising an infant in the practiced and familiar hands of a nurse, the physical care warm and reliable. It seems to me probable that the deficits I was trying to make up came later when that early constellation had been broken by the war.

Margaret always had a multiplicity of rationales for her arrangements. The decision to put me in the care of an English nanny was both an effort at building links and a way of giving her more time and space in which to function. She felt that Gregory, as an English father, would respond best to a child brought to him calm and sweet-smelling and rather briefly in the time-honored manner of an English child, and expected that the echo of English culture in my own behavior would strengthen my relationship to him throughout my life and keep open the option she and Gregory had discussed of living some part of their lives, after the war, in England. In 1947, Margaret took me to England, where we visited Geoffrey Gorer, and was vindicated in this belief when we walked in the gardens at Hampton Court and I bent down to smell the roses, cupping them gently in my hand with the stem between forefinger and middle finger. Geoffrey remarked that I treated the flowers as an English child would have done, an English child instructed by a nanny to "come and see the pretty flowers."

All my mother's arrangements, the choice of a nurse like the choice of a name, had the complicated quality of that kind of lacework that begins with a woven fabric from which threads are drawn and gathered, over which an embroidery is then laid, still without losing the integrity of the original weave. Thus, the choice of my nurse was both a solution to the problems of child care that would permit her her own professional life and an attempt to build a bridge between two cultural traditions and two styles of child rearing. At the same time, it was also a reference back to strategies developed by her own mother, who hired as domestics women with illegitimate children, allowing them to keep the children with them instead of being separated. Nanny, whose husband was long gone from the scene, had an adolescent daughter who lived with us and helped "amuse the baby."

This model, in turn, cropped up in a new variation in my own solution, when my husband and I arranged an apartment, adjoining but separate from our own, which we would rent to a young couple with a child slightly older than our newborn, with a built-in babysitting arrangement. Like my mother, I was trying to combine elements in order to serve many goals. I was trying to build, in a new period, on the situation of the woman who wants to stay home with her child yet feels a need to contribute to household expenses. At the same time I was trying to re-create the form of joint household my

mother later shared with the family of Lawrence and Mary Frank, in which the children moved freely between two households, almost like siblings, and the adults had separate and private lives.

When Margaret added a detail to the pattern or made some innovation in the arrangement of life, she was expressing her awareness of how the details of any stable human way of life are linked, interacting in meeting needs and also resonating aesthetically. In a lifetime of rapid change and borrowing of cultural traits from one place to another, a lifetime in which there were continual rents opened in the fabric she worked with, she engaged in constant careful needlework in which repair and elaboration were indistinguishable. When she hung an oval mirror above the marble fireplace in the living room, for example, she thought about what would be reflected in it—two Balinese carvings mirrored within the ornate golden frame—and put a vase from Java at just the right angle to reflect in the mirror as well. She stopped often on the way home from her tower office in the Museum of Natural History to buy gladiolas whose upright forms would reach up into the mirror and echo the Balinese lady opposite with a lotus blossom in her hand.

She was doing the same thing when she hired a nurse, strengthening the echoes in retrospect with a further elaboration of her own motivations and reasoning, so that even the makeshift was eventually stitched into the whole. In the marriage she was the one who set the patterns, for Gregory lacked this fascination with pervasive elaboration. Instead, he was adept at focusing with brilliant clarity on a single point of high patterning, attending to its projections on the surrounding material, but unconcerned by a surround of messiness that was not neatly integrated into the single configuration. Thus, in Bali, he recorded the way in which the hands of men watching cockfights moved in echo of the conflict, but was uninterested in the mass of background detail—uninterested indeed in photographing the fighting cocks themselves. His life was full of loose ends and unstitched edges, while for Margaret each thread became an occasion for embroidery.

Margaret planned in patterns and watched for and accentuated those she found, giving to many decisions that others would take as a matter of course a special quality of purposefulness. Even those things that may have been accidental or simply assumed were afterward treated as a part of the pattern. It is not surprising that the

things that I know and have always known about my own early childhood turn up repeatedly in her writings, stitched and restitched into the myth of herself and the myth she gave me of myself. But the elaboration of detail and the wish to specify it exactly were rooted in precise and elaborate fieldwork, ethnographic study of eight different peoples, each handling the details of life differently in the certainty that their way, the way it had always been done, was the right way. Once, after the death of her sister Priscilla, Margaret asked a florist to put together some distinctive and clearly visualized arrangement and he rebuked her, explaining that it simply was "not done" that way. She stamped her foot and said, "I've organized funerals on four continents, and I'm going to have the flowers the way I want them."

Having the long-hoped-for baby was also a chance to choose purposefully among many alternatives she had seen, or rather to make selective variations in the customary that she felt would be improvements, and doing this carried with it the obligation to observe. At one period, they planned to set up floodlights in every room of the apartment so that it would be possible to record immediately any interesting piece of infant behavior. My early memories of my father always include the Leica that hung around his neck. Since Gregory was away when I was born, my mother arranged for somebody else to film my birth, a procedure that was almost unheard of in those days. Margaret believed that an infant, in the hour after birth, unless she is heavily affected by anesthetics given to the mother or battered by a particularly difficult passage, is more clearly herself than she will be again for days or months as the environment makes an increasing mark, so that these moments were critical to record.

Recorded they were, in detail, with a series of neurological tests and manipulations that are disturbing to see on the film today, with our growing sense of the importance of tenderness in the delivery room. But seeing that film before my own infant was born was probably helpful to me in making me less fearful of the fragility of the newborn, as the infant on the screen—myself—is poked and tickled, bent and dangled, howling and finally exhausted. My friends ask whether it makes me angry to see that, and I respond, no, here I am, I'm okay.

When Margaret planned for my care and feeding, she set out to combine the generosity of most primitive mothers, who nurse their infants when they cry and remain with them constantly, with the resource of civilization, the clock, and this too meant recording. She

would record the hours at which I demanded feeding and then, by analyzing these times, construct a schedule from the order immanent in my own body's rhythms which would make the process predictable enough so she could schedule her classes and meetings and know when she should be home to feed me. I have the notebook that records these feeding times and other observations, as I also have the notebook in which my grandmother recorded her observations of the infant Margaret and the one in which I recorded my observations of my daughter, Vanni, while I went off between feedings to teach a seminar and analyze films of the interactions of other mothers with their children.

Margaret's ideas influenced the rearing of countless children, not only through her own writings but through the writings of Benjamin Spock, who was my pediatrician and for whom I was the first breast-fed and "self-demand" baby he had encountered.² If the weight of early experience is as great as we believe it to be, I belong to a generation that is chronologically some five years younger than I, psychologically one of the postwar babies although I was born in 1939. What Spock finally wrote about "self-demand" after the war, however, was not quite the same as the method Margaret developed, for Spock advised mothers not to enforce a schedule immediately but to wait and shift infants gradually into the classic feeding times, rather than assuming they would develop and retain individual rhythms.

Spock was blessedly relaxed about letting my mother do as she wanted, abandoning the fixed schedules that were regarded as essential to health, but he seems to have been only partly aware of the innovation taking place in front of his eyes, for he wrote later that the first experiment in "self-demand feeding" took place in 1942,³ an example of the limited willingness of physicians to learn from patients. In 1969 when Vanni was born and I rethought these questions, it seemed to me that Spock's approach corresponded to the false permissiveness of campus administrations all across the country, urging that students be given a degree of freedom *until they settled down*, rather than really listening and taking seriously what young people were saying, the emergent clarity of their own visions, like the order immanent in an infant's bodily processes.

The photographs and films that were made of my infancy do not really belong to me, are not private records. Because of the war, the series was broken and has less value than Margaret hoped it would,

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something I am grateful for, since it meant that her discussions of my childhood stayed within an anecdotal framework. Still, when I wanted as a college student to discard a great stack of my childhood paintings, my mother told me I had no right to do so—that I had probably had the best-documented childhood in the United States. From the recording of a unique case of innovation something might be learned, and so it was subject to her ethical commitment to collecting and sharing knowledge. Still, she was not experimenting in the usual sense of the term, for she could have made the decisions she made only in the conviction, already arrived at, that her innovations would be improvements, that her knowledge of human cultural diversity could be combined with the possibilities of technology and modern medicine to improve conditions at the beginning of life. The process of inquiry, involving the life of a child, could have been pursued only in a context of advocacy, and advocacy, for Margaret, was never far behind.

Anthropologists sometimes speak of the field as their laboratory, but in general our knowledge is based on observation rather than on manipulation. Where we act for change it is to achieve goals seen as valuable rather than to generate data. Usually, our experiments are those arranged by history and most of our variables are embedded in the flux of human life and cannot be isolated, having neither beginning nor end but unfolding over time. Traditionally anthropologists have not been able to work with randomly selected populations and matched controls; their data have come from the observation of unique individuals and could be compared from one to another only because the place of each was known. Each life history, and the record of each community with its own distinctive and interlocking patterns of adaptation, is valuable and to be recorded, a unique experiment.

Margaret was experimenting as a painter or a sculptor experiments, innovating against the background of tradition and previous work in response to a changing imagination, following an emergent certainty of the place for a brushstroke or a patch of color, seeking and expressing not curiosity alone but the discovery of conviction. She retained the humanistic awareness that the creation will be unique and the scientific belief that the process is not finally a private one. She was recording as anthropologists always record, in the hope that whatever the outcome, when the unique instance is fully placed and described it will be an addition to our understanding of the human condition.

I have wondered sometimes about her assurance, since she was

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doing things that were widely believed to be wrong or unhealthy for infants, calmly planning how to bully doctors and vamp nurses into allowing all sorts of irregularities at a time when most women find themselves easily bullied by those who represent medical authority. When Vanni was born, I was enriched by my mother's confidence, becoming able in my turn to reject the kinds of advice that undermine breast-feeding and invade the intimacy of mother and child. It was splendid, for instance, to have Margaret robustly declare that it was rubbish that I should never nurse Vanni in bed for fear of dozing off and suffocating her, as all the nurses insisted. All around the world mothers and infants sleep side by side and the danger of suffocation arises mainly when mothers are drunk or sick, not under normal circumstances—it is the American habit of leaving an infant alone in a crib in a separate room that is at odds with the normal range of human behavior.

Some of her assurance came from having seen alternative ways of doing things, healthy mothers and infants thriving within a variety of different patterns. This range gave her a sense, behind the diversity, of what was essential, different from the assurance of those who take tradition as their only base. She had been raised in a context of educational experimentation and she was working in a time of newly vivid awareness of the damage that could be done by Western and "modern" forms of child care, of the burdens of neurosis carried by members of her own generation. Indeed, she selected Spock as a pediatrician because he had been psychoanalyzed.

Nevertheless, she would have known that there were risks in her innovations. Details of infant care are helpful or harmful depending on the way they fit into the rest of experience. She often told stories of incongruous or incomplete cultural borrowing—a change in patterns of food preparation that leaves out an essential nutrient, or the way that many Western mothers, imitating other methods of child rearing, carry their infants on the right hip, making themselves unable to work and depriving the infant of their heartbeat. There is always the risk of crippling some basic biological capacity, as has been demonstrated in experiments with distortions of the infant experiences of monkeys or birds, which then grow up unable to mate or unable to care for their young. The more important risk was that some changed constellation of infant experience would set me at odds with my own society in subtle ways or leave me unable to adjust to later challenges to fall in love, to care for a child, to function in relation

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to contemporaries whose early experiences were profoundly different from my own. I was inordinately proud, as a child, of having been a "self-demand baby," but in other periods I puzzled about whether I was different and whether there was something in my childhood that made it seem so difficult for me as an adolescent to blend in and be like everyone else.

It seems to me in retrospect that Margaret's willingness to make innovations came out of a certainty of her own love, a sense that she had been loved and could trust herself to love in turn, with a continuity of spontaneous feeling even where she was introducing variation. She was prepared to take responsibility because she did not suspect herself of buried ambivalence either toward me or toward her own parents. Indeed, in a life lived in an era of introspection and self-doubt, her conviction of undivided motives was distinctive, an innocence that leaves me sometimes skeptical and sometimes awed. Just as all of her commentaries about American culture and suggestions for alternative arrangements must be read against her general affirmation of the American tradition, so her sense of choosing her own style in child rearing was secured by her appreciation of her own childhood and her desire for motherhood, for she believed that these would protect her from destructive choices. She drew an immense freedom from her conviction that she had no inherent temptation to destruction and that the arrangements that best served her professional life, given her ingenuity, were in no inherent conflict with my welfare. Over the years this attitude was contrasted with cultural styles that depend upon a suspicion of one's own cruel or evil impulses, as English children are taught to be kind to animals because of the temptation of cruelty.

My mother and I used to discuss sometimes which parts of her approach to child rearing seemed right in retrospect and which needed to be thought through again. Both of us felt comfortable about self-demand feeding and I followed her version with Vanni, but there were areas where more or less pattern seemed to me necessary. I argued with her, for instance, that pleasant as it is to have an unroutinized body in a society where others are dogged with concerns about "regularity," a little more routine would be useful—some points should be fixed in the day, if only so that one could, if necessary, remember to take medication on schedule. Thus, she never insisted that I brush my teeth because she had found the process unpleasant

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and painful as a child, so this was a routine I had to establish on my own, that required attention at a stage when most of my contemporaries did it automatically—but then, I don't suffer when some hitch in arrangements separates me from my toothbrush for twenty-four hours. Another area that we debated was sleep and how to arrive at a balance between a child's sense of her own needs and the patterns of the day. I resisted sleep all through my childhood, giving Vanni in turn much more leeway to find her own rhythms, and I teased Margaret at her inconsistency in not applying the concept of self-demand to sleep as well.

Margaret's childhood experience had made her different from others, but generally in ways that she found rewarding rather than alienating, and this was something she wanted to pass on. She spoke, for instance, of having been brought up by parents who were genuinely not racist and thus of not sharing in the residual guilt that others use to mobilize commitment. Similarly, I sometimes wish I could share more in the feminist anger of my contemporaries; but even though anger and guilt are useful in many situations, they carry great costs. There is no way finally that I can evaluate the extent of my own difference or how much this is related to infant experience. For it seems to me that all of us share to some degree in the experience of unintelligibility, sometimes feeling less than we might have been, or uncomfortable in our own skins and alien from those around us. I have always tended to look to the special circumstances of my childhood whenever I felt unhappy or lacking in confidence, and yet it is not reasonable to attribute a degree of estrangement that is part of the general human condition to a particular idiosyncratic experience. There is no form of human child rearing that does not leave an occasional residue of fear and yearning; these are part of a common inheritance matched in the wider culture by at least partial forms of solace, with as many forms of psychotherapy as there are forms of ritual and belief. In this country, too, difference is part of what we share.

The innovations that Margaret made as a parent were actually greater than they now seem because so many have since been incorporated in the patterns of the society. They were balanced, however, by patterns of conservation, by the delight Margaret took in tradition and the desire to preserve complicated kinds of intelligibility. No one with an English nanny can grow up without a sense of continuity.

Over time it turned out that the most important characteristic for me to have—adaptability to different kinds of people and situations—was also what Margaret would come to care most about providing for a generation that was to grow up in the midst of change.

As I write, I am struck by how little my father comes into the discussion of the details of my infancy. Usually he was behind the camera, not in the picture. I know he found great pleasure in his children as soon as we were old enough to begin to talk and play, but I suspect that his relationship with me as a tiny infant was a gingerly one, a carefully monitored delight. My mother emphasized the role of fathers in relation to infants less than has become fashionable in recent years. She was leery of the father's presence in the delivery room, feeling that this role belonged to another woman, one who had had experience of childbirth, a grandmother or perhaps, as among the New Guinea Arapesh, the woman who has most recently given birth.

When Vanni was born, even as I was taking notes about the way in which my own reactions to the newborn were biologically activated, Margaret argued that the emotions to be activated in a father were those of caring for and protecting the mother-infant pair, not the individual infant. At the same time she argued that if a diffident new father was allowed to put off taking the fragile-seeming newborn in his arms, it might be six months before the inhibition was overcome. She talked of the sweet and inoffensive smell of infant feces, so long as they are receiving breast milk only, but she did not seem to expect that a husband or father would be tolerant of this or any other smells, and advised me to give Vanni vitamin drops instead of orange juice so that when she spat up there would be no sour odor. This was Margaret, however. Gregory was basically indifferent to wet spots on his knees, to stains and spills, from children or animals, and indeed to the stings or scratches he got from handling wild creatures. His tenderness, whether to children or to animals, always contained an element of the naturalist's care, tolerant and admiring of living grace.

The first few images of the transition from infancy to childhood, fragmentary glimpses only: walks with Margaret and Gregory on which I was held securely on a leash, so that I could safely range farther than a child held by the hand; trips to the park when my father would push the swing high enough to run under it; Nanny's horror when I found a longicorn beetle which I remember as a "laun-

and made a pair of courting "light birds" dart across the walls and ceilings by reflecting light from the bowls of silver spoons.

The continuity of that household, the matter-of-fact and slightly astringent affection of Nanny and the shared affection of parents still happy in their marriage and delighted at having a child, continued until I was two. The modern appraisal of the importance of early infancy was just beginning to be widespread in those days, but there is no question that Margaret and Gregory were consciously trying to establish in me a base of trust and self-confidence. On two occasions, once when I was eighteen months old and once when I was two, they worked on plans, never realized, for teaching films that were to convey an understanding of what trust and confidence mean in a child, and I was to be that child, to exemplify that trust and confidence. Margaret wrote in *Blackberry Winter*, "How much was temperament? How much was felicitous accident? How much could be attributed to upbringing? We may never know. Certainly all a mother and father can claim credit for is that they have not marred a child in any recognizable way. For the total adult-child situation could be fully understood only if one also had the child's own interpretation of the parts that adults played in its life."⁴

This book cannot be the child's interpretation, for that child is now an adult, and what I write about that period is a reconstruction. Nevertheless, it has seemed to me, when I pass through difficult periods and try to wrestle through to a better understanding of myself, that behind the veils of perplexity or despondency I find resources of faith and strength, a foundation that must have been built in those two years.

When my daughter was an infant, I took Margaret's advice not to worry greatly about persuading her to sleep through the night, and enjoyed my nighttime interludes of nursing in the dark and silent house where no telephone rang, sitting in a rocking chair my mother gave me and wrapped in a shawl sent by my husband's mother. I pursued a more immediate intimacy with Vanni than my mother had wanted or, indeed, been allowed, handing over less to other caretakers and nursing longer. I was also more relaxed about the resilience of an infant, and I watched with amusement when Margaret visited and carefully washed her hands and changed out of street clothes before she approached the baby, still knowing and full of good advice but slightly tentative.

I got many of my ideas about child rearing from my mother but

With a Daughter's Eye

I also read "Doctor Spock" in my turn. Gregory and his third wife, Lois, had a daughter a year and a half before Vanni was born, and many of my ideas came through Lois's contact with women who were thinking about home birth and breast-feeding, in a new interweaving of the generations. In Vanni's infancy, Margaret again brought photographers, this time to take illustrations for her article "On Being a Grandmother,"⁵ and for other films and writings. The discussions of child development went on into a new generation as I contributed my awareness of the development of communication. But the real clue to understanding the quality of the infancy my mother gave me was my own deep pleasure in mothering, and the sense I had that the innovations I wanted to make in my turn were essentially affirmations.

III.

*A Household Common
and Uncommon*

The pattern Margaret and Gregory established in their apartment on Ninety-third Street, with Nanny and her daughter to help in looking after me, was varied by summers in the country when the entire household went to stay in rented quarters near Holderness, New Hampshire. The Bateson family, like other families of social scientists over the years, was drawn there by Lawrence Frank, who was emerging as a central figure in setting the pattern for interdisciplinary cooperation in the social sciences. Finally, in 1942, when I was two, we moved into the Frank house in New York and the households were merged, winter and summer, "for the duration."

That decision was made on December 7, 1941, the day before my second birthday. Margaret and Larry Frank were together at a conference, one of a series Larry had organized, and when the news came of the raid on Pearl Harbor, they turned to plans for mobilizing themselves for the war, for the Japanese attack meant American involvement in both Europe and Asia. It meant that this would be a world war. Ruth Benedict, Margaret's friend and anthropological colleague from Columbia, proposed that Margaret go to Washington, where she would work with the Committee on Food Habits, and Larry proposed that the Batesons move into his house at 72 Perry Street in Greenwich Village. Larry was a widower with a new and much younger wife, Mary, an infant son, Colin, and the five older children of his previous marriages.

My own coherent memories of childhood begin at Perry Street, a complex household with much coming and going, a huge table spread with great meals for which Mary baked and baked. It was a five-story