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剑桥美国小说新论·31
(英文影印版)

New Essays on

*The Education
of Henry Adams*

《亨利·亚当斯的教育》新论

John Carlos Rowe 编



北京大学出版社
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CS1123558

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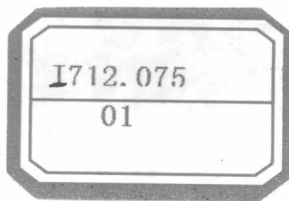
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UNIVERSITY PRESS



北京大学出版社
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著作权合同登记 图字: 01-2006-7125 号

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

《亨利·亚当斯的教育》新论 = New Essays on *The Education of Henry Adams* / 罗维(Rowe, J. C.)编. —北京: 北京大学出版社, 2007.1

(剑桥美国小说新论·31)

ISBN 978-7-301-11093-5

I. 亨… II. 罗… III. 长篇小说-文学研究-美国-近代-英文
IV. K837.125.8

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字(2006)第113616号

Originally published by Cambridge University Press in 1996

This reprint edition is published with the permission of the Syndicate of the Press of the University of Cambridge, Cambridge, England.

THIS EDITION IS LICENSED FOR DISTRIBUTION AND SALE IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA ONLY, EXCLUDING HONG KONG, TAIWAN AND MACAO AND MAY NOT BE DISTRIBUTED AND SOLD ELSEWHERE.

书 名: New Essays on *The Education of Henry Adam*

《亨利·亚当斯的教育》新论

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组稿编辑: 张冰

责任编辑: 孙凤兰

标准书号: ISBN 978-7-301-11093-5/I·0824

出版发行: 北京大学出版社

地 址: 北京市海淀区成府路205号 100871

网 址: <http://www.pup.cn>

电 话: 邮购部 62752015 发行部 62750672

编辑部 62767347 出版部 62754962

电子邮箱: zbing@pup.pku.edu.cn

印刷者: 北京宏伟双华印刷有限公司

经销者: 新华书店

650毫米×980毫米 16开本 11.25印张 185千字

2007年1月第1版 2007年12月第2次印刷

定 价: 22.00元

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导 读

北京大学英语系教授 陶洁

近年来,美国文学在我国很受欢迎。大专院校英语系纷纷开设美国文学选读和专题课,学生从中学到的大部分内容是美国小说。不仅如此,在本科毕业论文、硕士论文或博士论文方面,学生所选题材也大多为关于某部美国小说或某个美国小说家。然而,我们的学生往往热衷理论而对作品或作家缺乏深入细致的了解和分析。他们往往先大谈理论规则,然后罗列一些例证,不能很好地把理论和文本融会贯通,恰如其分地结合在一起。在这种情况下,我们需要一些好的参考资料来帮助学生更好地认识和理解他们在阅读或研究的作品和作家。《剑桥美国小说新论》正是这样一套优秀的参考书。

这套丛书的负责人是曾经主编过《哥伦比亚美国文学史》的艾默里·埃利奥特教授,并且由英国剑桥大学出版社在上世纪 80 年代中期开始陆续出书,至今仍在发行并出版新书,目前已有五十多种,不仅出平装本还有精装本。一套书发行二十多年还有生命力,估计还会继续发行,主要因为它确实从学生的需要出发,深受他们和教师的喜爱。

《剑桥美国小说新论》的编排方式比较统一。根据主编制定的原则,每本书针对一部美国文学历史上有名望的大作家的一本经典小说,论述者都是研究这位作家的知名学者。开篇是一位权威专家的论述,主要论及作品的创作过程、出版历史、当年的评价以及小说发表以来不同时期的主要评论和阅读倾向。随后是四到五篇论述,从不同角度用不同的批评方法对作品进行分析和阐

释。这些文章并非信手拈来,而是专门为这套丛书撰写的,运用的理论都比较新,其中不乏颇有新意的真知灼见。书的最后是为学生进一步学习和研究而提供的参考书目。由此可见,编书的学者们为了帮助学生确实煞费苦心,努力做到尽善尽美。

这五十多种书有早期美国文学家库珀的《最后的莫希干人》,也有当代试验小说大师品钦的《拍卖第49号》和厄普代克那曾被《时代》杂志评为1923年以来100部最佳小说之一的《兔子,跑吧!》;有我们比较熟悉的麦尔维尔的《白鲸》,也有我们还不了解的他的《漂亮水手》;有中国学生很喜欢的海明威的长篇小说《永别了,武器》,令人想不到的是还有一本论述他所有的短篇小说的集子。有些大作家如亨利·詹姆斯、威廉·福克纳等都有两三本作品入选,但它们都分别有专门的集子。丛书当然涉及已有定论的大作家,包括黑人和白人作家(可惜还没有华裔作家的作品),但也包括20世纪70年代妇女运动中发掘出来的如凯特·肖邦的《觉醒》和佐拉·尼尔·赫斯顿的《他们眼望上苍》,甚至还有我国读者很熟悉的斯托夫人的《汤姆叔叔的小屋》。当年这部小说曾经风靡美国,在全世界都有一定的影响,后来被贬为“政治宣传”作品,从此在美国文学史上销声匿迹。70年代后随着要求扩大文学经典中女性和少数族裔作家的呼声日益高涨,人们才开始重新评价这部作品,分析它对日后妇女作家的影响、对黑人形象的塑造,甚至它在美国文学的哥特式传统中的地位等等。

这样的例子还有很多,例如威廉·迪恩·豪威尔斯和他的《赛拉斯·拉帕姆的发迹》。以前人们只肯定他在发展现实主义文学和理论方面的贡献,对他的作品除了《赛拉斯·拉帕姆的发迹》评价都不太高。但在这本新论文集子里编者对已有定论进行挑战,强调豪威尔斯的小说、他的现实主义跟当时的社会经济文化现状有很大的关系。他的小说既有其文学形式,又是一种社会力量。另外一位19世纪新英格兰作家萨拉·奥尼·裘威特过去一向被看成是乡土作家,现在学者们用女性主义观点强调她的《尖枫树之乡》对美国文学的贡献,分析当年的种族、民族主义和文学市场

对她写作的影响。用封底宣传语言来说,这本集子对美国文学研究、女性主义批评理论和美国研究等方面都会引起很大的兴趣。

还有一本书似乎在我们国家很少有人提起过——亨利·罗思的《就说是睡着了》。此书在20世纪30年代曾经风靡一时,此后长期销声匿迹,60年代又再度受到推崇。现在这部小说则是上面提到的《时代》杂志100部优秀小说中的一部,被认为是上个世纪头50年里最为出色的美国犹太小说、最优秀的现代主义小说之一。评论家认为集子里的文章采用心理分析、社会历史主义等批评方法探讨了有关移民、族裔和文化归属等多方面的问题。

这套集子里还出现了令人信服的新论点。很长时间内海明威一直被认为是讨厌女人的大男子主义者。但在关于他的短篇小说的论述里,作者通过分析《在密执安北部》,令人信服地证明海明威其实对妇女充满同情。不仅如此,这一论断还瓦解了海明威在《太阳照样升起》中充分暴露他的厌女症的定论。

然而,作者们并不侈谈理论或玩弄理论名词,所有的论断都是既以一定的理论为基础,又对文本进行深入的分析;既把理论阐述得深入浅出,又把作品分析得丝丝入扣,让人不由得信服。他们能够做到这一点完全是因为他们了解学生的水平和需要。

我认为《剑桥美国小说新论》是一套很好的参考书。北京大学出版社购买版权,出版这套书是个有益于外国文学研究教学的决定。

Series Editor's Preface

In literary criticism the last twenty-five years have been particularly fruitful. Since the rise of the New Criticism in the 1950s, which focused attention of critics and readers upon the text itself – apart from history, biography, and society – there has emerged a wide variety of critical methods which have brought to literary works a rich diversity of perspectives: social, historical, political, psychological, economic, ideological, and philosophical. While attention to the text itself, as taught by the New Critics, remains at the core of contemporary interpretation, the widely shared assumption that works of art generate many different kinds of interpretation has opened up possibilities for new readings and new meanings.

Before this critical revolution, many American novels had come to be taken for granted by earlier generations of readers as having an established set of recognized interpretations. There was a sense among many students that the canon was established and that the larger thematic and interpretative issues had been decided. The task of the new reader was to examine the ways in which elements such as structure, style, and imagery contributed to each novel's acknowledged purpose. But recent criticism has brought these old assumptions into question and has thereby generated a wide variety of original, and often quite surprising, interpretations of the classics, as well as of rediscovered novels such as Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, which has only recently entered the canon of works that scholars and critics study and that teachers assign their students.

The aim of The American Novel Series is to provide students

of American literature and culture with introductory critical guides to American novels now widely read and studied. Each volume is devoted to a single novel and begins with an introduction by the volume editor, a distinguished authority on the text. The introduction presents details of the novel's composition, publication history, and contemporary reception, as well as a survey of the major critical trends and readings from first publication to the present. This overview is followed by four or five original essays, specifically commissioned from senior scholars of established reputation and from outstanding younger critics. Each essay presents a distinct point of view, and together they constitute a forum of interpretative methods and of the best contemporary ideas on each text.

It is our hope that these volumes will convey the vitality of current critical work in American literature, generate new insights and excitement for students of the American novel, and inspire new respect for and new perspectives upon these major literary texts.

Emory Elliott

University of California, Riverside

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剑桥美国
小说新论

1

Introduction

JOHN CARLOS ROWE

Think now
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
Guides us by vanities.

— T. S. Eliot, “Gerontion” (1919)

I.

THROUGHOUT his adult life, Henry Adams was always writing a book, so it is quite probable that his private publication of *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* in 1905 is one way to date the beginnings of his next book-length project, *The Education of Henry Adams*, privately published in 1907.¹ Of course, the precise “origins” of Adams’s *Education* are far more difficult to determine, as they usually are for works of comparable influence and complexity. In his biography of Adams, Ernest Samuels “dates” Adams’s first plans for *The Education* in a variety of ways, including “the anniversary of Henry’s wedding day in June 1904,” with its reminder of his wife, Marian’s, suicide in 1885, and Adams’s reading of his friend Henry James’s *William Wetmore Story and His Friends* (published in 1903), with its evocation of their New England generation and its fatal innocence of what history would bring.² As he wrote James on November 18, 1903: “So you have written not Story’s life, but your own and mine, – pure autobiography, – the more keen for what is beneath, implied, intelligible only to me, and half a dozen other people still living. . . .”³

Adams’s mood of reminiscence, sometimes maudlin or excessively self-critical in the years 1903–1905, mixed with yet other,

practical concerns Adams felt about putting the historical record in order regarding the significant lives of his powerful friends and relatives. From 1900 on, Adams's close friend and Washington neighbor, John Hay, had been in ill health made worse by the demands of his office as Theodore Roosevelt's Secretary of State. A year and a half before John Hay died in July of 1905, Adams wrote his friend from Paris in a jovial yet prophetic vein: "Please read Harry James's *Life of Story!* Also Morley's *Gladstone!* And reflect – wretched man! – that now you have knowingly forced yourself to be biographised! You cannot escape the biographer" (*Letters*, V, 526). Yet, it may well have been to "escape" becoming Hay's biographer that Adams wrote *The Education*, anticipating Hay's death and trying to find an alternative to what he described in that letter as the biographer's tendency to stick "pins" into historical figures, propped in their "cages," in the vain effort for them to "keep the lively attitude of nature" (*Letters*, V, 526).

In the aftermath of Hay's death, Adams would use *The Education* explicitly as his excuse for refusing the task of "biographising" his friend that Hay's widow and Adams's friends insisted he take on. As it turned out, Adams avoided the dreaded task only by agreeing to serve as "a kind of sub-editor" to Mrs. Hay's "artless" project of publishing *Letters of John Hay and Extracts from Diary*, which Ernest Samuels judges "one of the oddest memorials ever printed" (*Major Phase*, 397).⁴ Typically ironic as Adams's claim was to have written *The Education* " 'wholly due to piety on account of my father and John Hay (the rest being thrown in for mass), ' " it nonetheless has a measure of truth in terms of what scholars have judged the pragmatic reasons for writing an "autobiography" so elusive and ironic (*Major Phase*, 397). Adams's *Education* reveals as it protects, explains as it mystifies, "confesses" as it represses some of the most significant personal and historical records of American modernity.

In the summer of 1905, following Hay's death during the final negotiations of the Portsmouth Treaty (settling the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905), Adams was writing at what Samuels speculates "must have been furious speed" (*Major Phase*, 329). When he returned to Washington for the winter that year,

Adams must have had a substantial part of the manuscript completed, because he made "preliminary arrangements for printing it with Furst and Company, the same firm which had done the *Chartres*" (330). Even so, Adams passed another summer in Paris before returning to Washington in November 1906 with the "main part of the *Education*, if not all of it, . . . in proof" (332). This was the very time when Adams was most pressed by Mrs. John Hay to help with her memorial work to her husband, and Adams found and used the excuse of work on the proofs of *The Education*.

Perhaps with the negative example of Mrs. Hay's editing of her husband's letters and diaries in mind, Adams planned to send what he called "proof sheets" of *The Education* "to friends who were mentioned in the text, asking them to let him know if they objected to anything said of them" and requesting that they do so by returning the text "with offending passages stricken out as might be called for" (*Letters*, VI, 39). This was a ruse of sorts, because Furst and Company had printed one hundred beautiful copies unlikely to be "marked" by friends in the manner requested; indeed, only three copies are known to have been returned to Adams. Had he really wanted to elicit candid comments and encourage such collaborative "proofing" from his friends, he might have circulated copies of the printer's proofs he was reading in December 1906. Instead, the elegantly printed "proofs" came complete with a "Preface" dated "February 16, 1907," Adams's sixty-ninth birthday. Samuels explains that Adams could not have written this Preface on his birthday, so that this too was a symbolic touch likely to convince first readers that the text was indeed quite finished (*Major Phase*, 332).

The usual story of *The Education*'s private circulation is that Adams was under almost constant pressure to publish a work declared by President Theodore Roosevelt (who received the "first" formally distributed copy) a "masterpiece," but that Adams insisted on keeping the work exclusively in private circulation until his death. Nine years after he privately printed and distributed it, Adams wrote Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, President of the Massachusetts Historical Society, "requesting that the book be published on behalf of the Society." Accompanying that letter

was “a sealed packet containing a corrected copy of the 1907 private printing and an ‘Editor’s Preface,’ which Adams himself composed but to which he affixed in a shaking hand the initials ‘H. C. L.,’ with the puzzled but indulgent acquiescence of Lodge.”⁵

The first public edition was published in 1918 by Houghton Mifflin and Co., with “Lodge’s” “Editor’s Preface” and Adams’s original “Preface,” dated February 16, 1907. Insistent that *The Education* be published without the subtitle “An Autobiography,” Adams was foiled by posthumous editors, since the 1918 edition carries that subtitle. Ernest and Jayne Samuels would restore the intended title in their scholarly edition of 1973, reminding modern readers that Adams planned to subtitle the work, “a Study of Twentieth-Century Multiplicity,” to emphasize its connection with the companion text, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*: “a Study of Thirteenth-Century Unity,” both of which subtitles are mentioned in the “Editor’s Preface” to the 1918 edition (EHA, xxvii).

Adams had ended his *Chartres* with the long chapter on “St. Thomas Aquinas,” which was the part over which Adams had “worried” the most. St. Thomas both explained and thus hastened the transformation of Catholic religious authority in the Latin Middle Ages; what was a cultural “unity” for Adams under the authority of the Virgin Mary (the Cult of Mariolatry) was already multiplied in the rationalism of the Scholastics from Albertus Magnus to St. Thomas. In short, St. Thomas was a figure worthy of “biography” not for the sake of his “personality,” but by virtue of the historical transformation his work and life happened to identify and clarify. It has often been thought that Henry Adams is the modern equivalent of St. Thomas, and there is, of course, much to support this view. Adams would have been pleased, indeed, to have been taken for a latter-day St. Thomas, figuring out the “secrets” of modern Science and History with the same enthusiasm and intelligence as St. Thomas had theorized God’s ways in the intricacies of scriptural hermeneutics.

The parallelism is both too neat and too exclusive, however, to tell the entire story of *The Education* as proper “companion text” to *Chartres*. St. Thomas is unthinkable without the Virgin, and I think that “Henry Adams,” at least as this name figures in

The Education, is unthinkable without John Hay. The medieval Virgin points to the unknowable Godhead of the Catholic Church; the modern Secretary of State points to the equally unfathomable Authority of the nation-state. St. Thomas ushers in modern "multiplicity" in his efforts to rationalize what the Virgin symbolically represents; Henry Adams carries that multiplicity a step further by attempting to "explain" and render "intelligible" the political authority that John Hay came to embody.

In the end, Adams did, then, write the "biography" of Hay that he tried so desperately to avoid, even as he did avoid "biographising" his friend, the statesman. He also wrote his "autobiography," despite his best efforts to keep such indulgence from the "title page" of a book he hoped would represent more than the mere vanity served by the many memoirs published by his powerful contemporaries.

II.

Henry Adams's *Education* has exasperated generations of readers and still maintained its classic status, even though we know today that the "classic" must undergo several transformations by different generations of readers to warrant the title. Books that exasperate and perplex readers often survive because there is some elusive pleasure in the hardship they provoke. Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, Eliot's *Waste Land* have vexed several generations of readers still tantalized by the promise of understanding their secret meanings, whether these be located in the inner workings of the literary mechanism or in some metaphysical message tapped, as it were, between their lines. Even in the Moderns' immediate predecessor and friend to Adams, Henry James, the impatience of the reader is often tolerable in hopes of the unraveling either of a plot or its modern equivalent, a character's intricate psyche, in the course of a story still readable amid the distractions of the difficult, modern style.

Yet, Adams gives the reader little such satisfaction in *The Education*, even as he forces us to endure in condensed form the tormenting bafflement before the modern age that he himself

experiences throughout the sixty-seven years of admittedly failed education. *The Education* is not “difficult” to read in the same sense that the great modernist literary works are, even if it is justifiably celebrated for its stylistic originality. The “difficulty” of *The Education* is not so much the complexity of Adams’s style, philosophy, or even his own life (complex as that surely was, given his ancestry); it is first and foremost the difficulty of *history*, especially as we understand this history in terms of the great powers – England, France, Germany, Spain, and increasingly the United States – working out our dismal inheritance for the rest of the twentieth century. It is history that baffles and torments us in *The Education*, not Adams’s rhetorical flights or his philosophical speculations.

The great literary moderns I mentioned above all attempted to compete with history, often even claiming to *replace* history with some sort of literary or aesthetic genealogy. Adams never claims to compete with history in *The Education*, even though I think there are subtle ways in which he does participate in the redesign of history from an American vantage, as I argue in my contribution to this collection of essays. Yet, the reader’s impression is still carefully constructed by Adams to be that of the autobiographical figure, “Henry Adams,” as always subjected to historical forces both more powerful and complex than any he can muster as mere intellectual. The baffling multitude of historical characters, significant events, and political currents has generally been the first obstacle to the reader’s involvement in this narrative. Ernest and Jayne Samuels’s wonderfully annotated edition of *The Education* was not published until 1973; it still amazes me that readers helped turn a book of such difficult historical references into a classic in the several reading generations separating its private publication in 1907 and scholarly publication in 1973. Yet, in the sixty-six intervening years, the *Education* continued to exert significant influence on intellectuals, literati, and political leaders, as Brook Thomas points out in his contribution to this volume.

It is by now conventional to explain the success of *The Education* as a consequence of Henry Adams’s distinguished legacy – great-grandson of John Adams, grandson of John Quincy Ad-

ams, son of Charles Francis Adams, Free Soil Party vice-presidential candidate in 1848 and Ambassador to Great Britain during the Civil War. Certainly, Adams's autobiography owes its historical complexity and its interest for readers in part to the access it gives us to the Adamses' family power, not only in American but also in emerging global politics from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. If it is the promise of the "inside story" of the first American "ruling" family – our "first royalty," as the Adamses were sometimes called – that attracts us to *The Education*, then it is one repeatedly broken by a narrator who insists upon the family's steady loss of power and confirms it by virtually erasing from the narrative any traces of real, flesh and blood "Adamses," including "Henry Adams" himself.

Ernest Samuels suggests in his biography that one of Adams's motivations for writing *The Education* grew out of discussions Henry had with his brothers, Charles Francis, Jr., and Brooks, concerning "the disposition of the family papers" (*Major Phase*, 316). Samuels reasonably concludes that such decisions put Henry into a "retrospective mood," especially since he was concerned at this time (1903–1904) with deciding the "relative success of the leaders of his generation" (Samuels, 316). Yet, the three brothers decided to restrict access to their father's papers for the next half century, and *The Education* seems more to contribute to that privacy of the family's interests and secrets than to the public judgment of the Adamses' *achievements* that Samuels argues might have been one of Adams's aims in writing *The Education*.

Adams opens his Preface by quoting Rousseau's *Confessions*, both to draw on a great autobiographical pretext and to distinguish his own work from such romantic expressivism. When it comes to revelations about the Adams family, Henry is just as circumspect as he is with regard to confessing any of his "least agreeable details." The other autobiographical classic invoked in Adams's Preface is Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, decidedly less "revealing" and more mythically "controlled" than Rousseau's *Confessions*, and it is the former that informs Adams's own attitude toward the representation of his ancestors in his own autobiography. The "inside story" of the Adamses is no more