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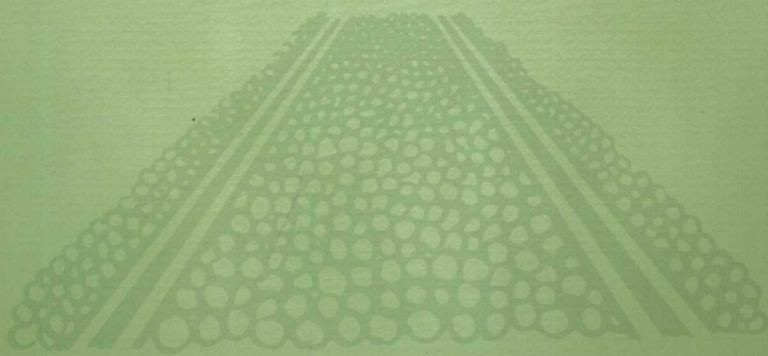
剑桥美国小说新论·4  
(英文影印版)

New Essays on

# *Call it Sleep*

## 《就说是睡着了》新论

Hana Wirth-Nesher 编



北京大学出版社  
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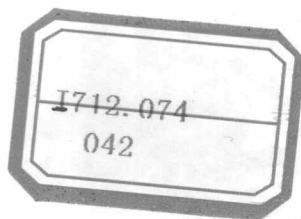
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# 导 读

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《尖枞树之乡》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,让人不由得不信服。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 interpretations has opened up possibilities for new readings and new meanings.

Before this critical revolution, many works of American literature 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 works 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

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*New Essays on Call It Sleep*

guides to American novels and other important texts now widely read and studied. Usually devoted to a single work, each volume begins with an introduction by the volume editor, a distinguished authority on the text. The introduction presents details of the work'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 American literature, and inspire new respect for and new perspectives upon these major literary texts.

Emory Elliott

University of California, Riverside

剑桥美国小说新论



*Henry Roth died shortly before this volume went to press.*

*It is warmly dedicated to his memory.*



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## Introduction

HANA WIRTH-NESHER

IN 1966 Henry Roth published a story in *The New Yorker* entitled "The Surveyor." An American tourist is apprehended by the police in Seville for conducting surveying operations at a public thoroughfare without a permit and for suspiciously laying a wreath at the site later that day. "What is this surveying about?" asks the policeman before bringing him to the local precinct. "Well," answers the tourist, "I tried to locate a place of some sentimental value to myself."<sup>1</sup> A state attorney dismisses the charges when he suspects that the wreath marked the site where heretics found guilty by the Inquisition were burned to death, among them "relapsed *conversos*, those Catholics who secretly clung to their Judaic faith."<sup>2</sup> Startled to find that the state attorney shares this knowledge, the tourist turns interrogator, "Why is everyone ignorant of it but you?" "There may have been personal reasons," the Spaniard replies, and reveals that his family had the strange habit of lighting a candle on Friday night. Each insists on the personal, private nature of his knowledge; yet each shares a collective memory that sets him apart from the mainstream community. Where exactly is this place, this site of sentimental value not easily recognized by others? This is the question raised by both this story and Roth's monumental novel, *Call It Sleep*.

In February of 1992, at the age of 86, Henry Roth completed the manuscript of a second book, more than sixty years after the completion of *Call It Sleep*. Towering over his desk in his living room in Albuquerque, New Mexico, is a many times enlarged photograph of New York's Lower East Side at the turn of the

century, and on his desk is a copy of the daily newspaper delivered to his door, *The Jerusalem Post*. The small wooden bookcase across from the desk holds dozens of copies of *Call It Sleep*, in a great many languages. The space of Roth's private world contains artifacts that point to worlds elsewhere: to a Yiddish world of New York's Jewish immigrant neighborhoods, now relegated to history – "Who would have believed," says Roth, "that I would have seen Yiddish disappear in one lifetime?"<sup>3</sup>, to a Hebrew world in Israel that has a hold on Roth's memory and imagination but is inaccessible to him as a means of communication; to a literary world where he is read internationally in translation as a representative Jewish, American, and modernist writer. Places and languages to which he has no access haunt and captivate him, just as they define the space inhabited by his character David Schearl in *Call It Sleep*.

The publication history of this remarkable novel is itself a dramatic story that uncannily plays out the motif of inaccessibility so evident in his fiction. Published in 1934, at the height of the Depression, the book was acclaimed as a great contribution to American literature. John Chamberlain in *The New York Times* wrote, "Mr. Roth has done for the East Side what James T. Farrell is doing for the Chicago Irish. . . . The final chapters in the book have been compared to the Nighttown episodes of Joyce's *Ulysses*; the comparison is apt."<sup>4</sup> Edwin Seaver of the *New York Sun* called him "a brilliant disciple of James Joyce,"<sup>5</sup> and Alfred Hayes observed "There has appeared in America no novel to rival the veracity of this childhood. It is as honest as Dreiser's *Dawn*, but far more sensitive. . . . It is as brilliant as Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*, but with a wider scope, a richer emotion, a deeper realism."<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Burke found in *Call It Sleep* the same pattern of magic traced by Frazer in *The Golden Bough*: "The great virtue of Roth's book, to my way of thinking, was in the fluent and civilized way in which he found, on our city streets, the new equivalents of the ancient jungle."<sup>7</sup> In the Sunday *New York Herald-Tribune Book Review*, Fred T. Marsh claimed that *Call It Sleep* was "the most compelling and moving, the most accurate and profound study of an American slum childhood that has yet appeared in this day. . . . Henry Roth has achieved the detach-

ment and universality of the artist."<sup>8</sup> And then, as Harold Ribalow noted, "*Call It Sleep* vanished, and so did its author."<sup>9</sup>

For almost twenty-five years the novel was out of print, passed from hand to hand among a cult of devoted readers who searched for battered copies of it in secondhand bookshops. Inaccessible, marginal, nearly forgotten. Its revival is by now a legend in American literary history. For the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Phi Beta Kappa journal, *The American Scholar*, the editors ran a special feature entitled "The Most Neglected Books of the Past 25 Years." The only title to be mentioned more than once was *Call It Sleep*, cited by both Alfred Kazin and Leslie Fiedler. In Kazin's words, "if you imagine the patient sensibility of Wordsworth and the unselfconscious honesty of Dreiser brought to the shock of his [Roth's] environment upon the senses, you may have some inkling of the slowness, the patience and the strange inner serenity of this book – as of something won, very far deep within, against the conventional cruelties of modern city life."<sup>10</sup> Fiedler was as lavish with his praise, "For sheer virtuosity, *Call It Sleep* is hard to best; no one has ever distilled such poetry and wit from the counterpoint between the maimed English and the subtle Yiddish of the immigrant. No one has reproduced so sensitively the terror of family life in the imagination of a child caught between two cultures. To let another year go without reprinting it would be unforgiveable."<sup>11</sup>

It made a miraculous comeback. Harold Ribalow negotiated a reissuance of the novel in 1960, with a critical introduction by Maxwell Geismar. Four years later Peter Mayer, who had been introduced to the out-of-print book by a New York cabbie, used his tiny budget at Avon where he had just landed a publishing job to purchase the rights and reissue it in paperback. It sold a million copies. *Call It Sleep* became the first paperback edition of a work ever to be reviewed on the front page of *The New York Times Book Review*, where Irving Howe called it "one of the few genuinely distinguished novels written by a 20th-century American."<sup>12</sup> A book that had become inaccessible except to a coterie of admirers was transformed overnight into more than a best-seller – "*Call It Sleep* has become a classic," observed the novelist William Styron, "it's embedded, a landmark in our literature."<sup>13</sup>

Its first accolades linked it either with high experimental modernism in the context of Joyce, Eliot, and Frazer or with the American naturalism of Dreiser and Farrell, as a powerful exposé of slum life. The generation that attended its rebirth underscored these earlier judgments but also added another dimension to its reception – its Jewishness. Themselves the children of immigrants, Irving Howe, Leslie Fiedler, and Alfred Kazin were all moved by the novel as a document of cultural passage, the one that they had made from Eastern European Yiddish-speaking homes to the American university and the last stronghold of Protestant culture, the Department of English. Fiedler designated *Call It Sleep* a “specifically Jewish book, the best single book by a Jew about Jewishness written by an American certainly through the thirties and perhaps ever.”<sup>14</sup> For Kazin it is “the most profound novel of Jewish life that I have ever read by an American.”<sup>15</sup> Irving Howe acknowledged that although “structured according to the narrative strategies of modernism . . . Henry Roth’s *Call It Sleep* draws its substance, the whole unfolding of socioethnic detail, from the Jewish immigrant experience.”<sup>16</sup> A whole new generation of readers seized upon the book as quintessentially representative of Jewish-American literature.

The ever-increasing interest in *Call It Sleep* throughout the 1960s and 1970s coincided with a rise in ethnicity studies, with the ideological shift from the melting pot to what we have come to call multiculturalism. Along with the book’s impeccable credentials as a modernist masterpiece it now acquired the added dimension of ethnic chronicle. As a new wave of university students two generations removed from immigration participated in a nationwide search for national roots beyond the Atlantic, *Call It Sleep* became a staple of Jewish literature and Jewish studies curricula.<sup>17</sup>

The life of the author of *Call It Sleep* is no less dramatic than the story of its reception. Roth was two when his parents immigrated to the United States from the Austro-Hungarian province of Galitzia to join masses of Eastern European Jewish immigrants on New York’s Lower East Side. In 1914 the family moved to Harlem, away from what he remembered as a homogeneous, protected Jewish environment, and he was suddenly “plunged



into an Irish Catholic neighborhood."<sup>18</sup> By 1925 he was a student at City College reading English (and Irish) modernist literature while still living in his Yiddish-speaking Harlem home. Two years later he met Eda Lou Walton, a New York University literature instructor and poet who transformed his life by encouraging him to write. In her Greenwich Village apartment he composed *Call It Sleep* on university examination booklets, completing a whole booklet in pencil every day. She also introduced him to *Ulysses*, which she had smuggled into the country from France; reading Joyce taught Roth "that I could talk about urban squalor and develop it into a work of art."<sup>19</sup> But despite the security that saw him through the writing of a successful first novel, Roth was uneasy about his relationship with Walton and the Bohemian Village life she represented. The comforts he had been enjoying as a young writer at a time when other artists and Americans generally were enduring the hunger and despair of the Depression years brought with them a guilty conscience. His growing commitment to Communism, moreover, made him acutely sensitive to rebukes such as that of the anonymous *New Masses* reviewer who bemoaned the fact that "so many young writers drawn from the proletariat can make no better use of their working class experience than as material for introspective, febrile novels."<sup>20</sup>

In a futile attempt to integrate his moral and political commitments with his artistic ambitions, he embarked on a novel commissioned by Maxwell Perkins of Scribner's about a midwestern factory worker which he abandoned despite Perkins' encouragement. What followed was Roth's legendary writer's block, a sixty-year spell of silence broken only in 1994 with the publication of *A Star Shines Over Mt. Morris Park* and *A Diving Rock on the Hudson*, the first two volumes of a multivolume autobiographical fiction entitled *Mercy of a Rude Stream*.<sup>21</sup> In those sixty years he worked as a precision tool grinder, an attendant at a psychiatric hospital, a Latin tutor, and a waterfowl breeder on a farm which he and his wife, Muriel Parker, purchased in Maine. During the McCarthy years, he burned his journals and other literary papers that might have contained incriminating information about himself and his friends. When *Call It Sleep* was reissued in paperback