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剑桥美国小说新论·32
(英文影印版)

New Essays on

*The Crying
of Lot 49*

《拍卖第49号》新论

Patrick O'Donnell 编



北京大学出版社
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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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Introduction

PATRICK O'DONNELL

THOMAS Pynchon's second novel, *The Crying of Lot 49*, was published in 1966; that same year, the Manila Summit on America's increasing involvement in Vietnam took place, "Hogan's Heroes," "Green Acres," and "Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C." were top-rated television situation comedies, and *Esquire* published an article entitled "Wake Up America, It Can't Happen Here: A Post-McCarthy Guide to Twenty-Three Conspiracies by Assorted Enemies Within."¹ Such is the contemporary cultural context out of which Pynchon's enigmatic, conspiracy-ridden novel emerged – a novel which, in many ways, easily seduces us into linking an article in a popular magazine, television programs, and an historical event to the fortunes of a fictional character named Oedipa Maas. But it would be a mistake to assume that there is any definitive connection to be made between "fiction" and "history" by comparing the novel – in its moment of production – to the selected particularities of its cultural milieu. For *The Crying of Lot 49* speculates upon the whole idea of "connection," or the activity of connecting, as the characteristic human endeavor, whether it be in writing and reading literary works, or in articulating ourselves – our identities – as historical beings. We need to narrate, Pynchon's novel argues; we feel the necessity to create and perceive significant patterns in all that we read and do; we are driven to see the connections between the events of our own lives and the larger, external events of that unfolding story we call "history." However, in the familiar dilemma posed in all of Pynchon's novels, but never so dramatically as in *The Crying of Lot 49*, this need to make sense and perceive patterns of significance in text, life, and history can easily become the activity of the para-

noid, who is poised between the fear that, in the end, nothing makes sense and the desire to see plots, connections, significance everywhere.

Chaos or totalitarian order; meaninglessness or paranoia; void or dark design – these are the polarities of Thomas Pynchon's *oeuvre*, which in 1991 numbers four novels, several short stories, and a scattering of essays and reviews. With the publication of *V.* in 1963, Pynchon arose almost immediately as a major postwar writer who had tapped into the fantasies and fears of a generation just emerging from the McCarthy era and about to embark upon a long nightmare of presidential assassinations, social violence, and the Vietnam War. *V.* garnered a number of laudatory reviews upon its appearance and won the prestigious Faulkner Foundation award for the best first novel of 1963. This labyrinthine assemblage of puzzles, plots, and counterplots immediately brought to its author a public recognition which has grown with the appearance of each succeeding novel, and which Pynchon has successfully parried (and, perhaps unintentionally, nourished) with his notorious reclusiveness – matched only in the annals of contemporary American literature by that of J. D. Salinger.² The details of Pynchon's biography are, accordingly, sparse, and one might well have the paranoid sense that, given the control the author has maintained over the projection of his public image (or lack of it), the few available details that do exist are only the ones Pynchon has allowed to leak out or those of little consequence. But their very scarcity has made them of special interest to many of Pynchon's readers, who search in vain for any straightforward manifestation of the autobiographical presence of the author in his fiction. Recognizing, then, as Peggy Kamuf argues, that "[b]iographical narrative appears . . . to be the most economical means of gathering, with some semblance of coherence, the disparate marks left by the practice of writing," we offer these scattered facts about Pynchon's life in order to place his work – a work most clearly concerned with the limits of writing and the illusory, dangerous power of coherent plots – within the useful, but partial and suspect, framework of Pynchon's "biography."³

Thomas Pynchon was born on May 8, 1937, and grew up in the middle-class suburbs of Long Island.⁴ His earliest authorial efforts

are recorded in his frequent contributions to the Oyster Bay *Purple and Gold*, his high school newspaper, most notably in a column entitled "The Voice of the Hamster" written under various pseudonyms: "Boscoe Stein," "Roscoe Stein," and "Bosc." Pynchon graduated from high school in 1953, began his university studies at Cornell University as an engineering physics major, interrupted his college career with a two-year tour of duty in the Navy, apparently serving as a signal corpsman, then completed his studies at Cornell (where he took a class from Vladimir Nabokov), earning a B.A. degree in English. Pynchon began writing stories during his undergraduate days (his first two, "The Small Rain" and "Mortality and Mercy in Vienna," were published in 1959) and worked on the campus literary journal with Richard Fariña, who wrote about Pynchon in his series of reminiscences about the late 1950s and early 1960s, *Long Time Coming and a Long Time Gone*.⁵ In a satirical remembrance Fariña recalls Pynchon as being lanky, taciturn, and in search of tacos after a brief absence from Mexico, where he lived for much of the early 1960s.⁶ Pynchon's affinities with Fariña's sensibilities and work are recorded on the dust jacket of Fariña's 1966 novel, *Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up To Me*, where he writes, "[t]his book comes on like the Hallelujah Chorus done by 200 kazoo players with perfect pitch. . . . In spinning his yarn [Fariña] spins the reader as well, dizzily into a microcosm that manges to be hilarious, chilling, sexy, profound, maniacal, beautiful and outrageous all at the same time."⁷ Pynchon's own fiction shows some resemblance to what he perceives to be the paradoxical rhetorical effects of Fariña's work and its ability to "spin the reader" (combining euphoria and chaos) into a world which is hyperbolic and fantastic and yet, composed as it is of contemporary materials, familiar.

In 1960, after graduation from Cornell and a short respite in Greenwich Village, Pynchon went to work as a technical writer for Boeing Aircraft in Seattle. During his two years at Boeing, Pynchon worked on a number of guided missile projects and wrote an article for *Aerospace Safety* entitled "Togetherness" which described safety techniques for the airlifting of IM-99A missiles. Certainly his experience as an engineering physics major at Cornell and a technical writer at Boeing gave Pynchon the background necessary to

incorporate as metaphors the numerous scientific concepts which pervade his work. The title of "Togetherness," however, suggests the ironic attitude that Pynchon must have taken towards his work at Boeing, as is suggested in these headlines from the article: "One mistake and a lot of money has been wasted when you're moving a missile to its new home. It's a job requiring detailed safety on all sides. Togetherness, then, is the word."⁸ The merging in these phrases of nostalgic domesticity with the sinister reality of what missiles are for (disguised by the homeliness of the language) prefigures the typically parodic intonations of Pynchon's fiction, where "reality" is packaged in metaphors that reveal the fantasies and romanticized desires of a culture bound over to deathly designs beneath the camouflage of utility, community ("togetherness"), and domesticity (the missiles' "new home").

While at Boeing, Pynchon continued writing fiction, publishing "Low Lands" and the widely anthologized "Entropy" in 1960, and "Under the Rose" in 1961. He most certainly must have been working on *V.* during those years. He completed *V.* in Mexico after he left Boeing, and with its publication in 1963 Pynchon's career as novelist begins, along with his virtual disappearance from the public scene. We might speculate endlessly on the reasons for this disappearance – shyness, xenophobia, paranoia, a mania for privacy, or, as David Seed suggests, a desire to imitate poets from the goliards to the Beats by becoming a nomad, "a writer at large."⁹ But whatever personal motives lie behind his reclusiveness, Pynchon has been satisfied to let his writing stand as the signature and representation of his public life.

Accorded the Faulkner Foundation Award for his first novel, loudly acclaimed at the age of twenty-six as a major new figure in contemporary letters, Pynchon apparently receded into unknown regions – possibly rural Northern California, the anonymity of Southern California, or self-exile in Mexico. In 1964, his story "The Secret Integration" was published, and two sections from *The Crying of Lot 49* came out in popular magazines – *Esquire* and *Cavalier* – before that novel was published in 1966. David Seed has suggested that at least three versions of *The Crying of Lot 49* exist: an early manuscript (accepted for publication by J. P. Lippincott) from which the two excerpts in *Cavalier* and *Esquire* came; a review

copy version, which reflected minor revisions from the original manuscript; and the published version, which reflects more (mostly minor) revisions. Seed states that a comparison of these versions "sheds a fascinating light on Pynchon's compositional methods and on his scrupulous care over the smallest details of phrasing."¹⁰ The various editions of the novel since its original publication continue to reflect this scrupulosity in the many minor changes between editions.

The Crying of Lot 49 won the Richard and Hilda Rosenthal Foundation Award of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, although critical acclaim for the novel, as we shall see below, was less enthusiastic than it was for *V*. In 1966 Pynchon also published his most important piece of nonfiction, "A Journey into the Mind of Watts," an evocative description of the black ghetto in Los Angeles, then torn by race riots and, in Pynchon's words, "impacted in the heart of this [Los Angeles'] white fantasy . . . a pocket of bitter reality."¹¹ *Gravity's Rainbow*, published in 1973 and widely considered to be Pynchon's major work, is an encyclopedic, epic novel that, in Scott Simmon's phrase, purveys an "historical and cultural synthesis of Western actions and fantasies."¹² Pynchon's third novel received an abundance of critical praise and won the National Book Award (shared with Isaac Bashevis Singer's *A Crown of Feathers and Other Stories*, and accepted for Pynchon by a comedian, "Professor" Irwin Corey). After the publication of *Gravity's Rainbow* Pynchon won the Howells Medal of the National Institute of Arts and Letters for his collective body of work, but he rejected the prize. *Gravity's Rainbow* was also nominated for the Pulitzer Prize by the judges of the prize committee, but the committee was subsequently overruled by the Pulitzer advisory board.

Since the publication of *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon had been working on a fourth novel and his work had rarely been seen in print: occasional book blurbs for such works as Peter Matthiessen's *Far Tortuga*, Tom Robbins' *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, Laurel Goldman's *Sounding the Territory*, and Steve Erickson's *Days Between Stations*; the "Introduction" to *Slow Learner*; a remembrance of Richard Fariña in the *Cornell Alumni News*; and a laudatory review of Gabriel García Márquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera*.¹³ In 1988, at the age of 51, he won a MacArthur Foundation award, an

extraordinary grant which gives recipients \$1,000 times their age per year for five years, potentially renewable for life. Pynchon's fourth novel after a seventeen-year hiatus, *Vineland*, was released in December 1989. Touted as a novel that combines "elements of daytime drama and the political thriller," *Vineland* begins among the redwoods and small logging towns of northern California.¹⁴ It portrays a group of 1960s hippies, radicals, and drug agents living in the conservative 1980s, with a plot revolving around various relationships and conspiracies embracing government agencies, spies, ex-"sting" specialists, and revolutionaries. Fellow novelist Salman Rushdie proclaimed *Vineland* a portrait of a "crazed patch of California" standing for "America itself," in which "one of America's great writers has, after long wanderings down his uncharted roads, come triumphantly home."¹⁵ Here Pynchon continues his fascination with the way in which personal lives are intertwined with political movements and actions as part of an ongoing plot only partially revealed by the narrative of "history" and contemporary life.

Coming after the relatively spectacular success of *V.*, *The Crying of Lot 49* was greeted with mixed reviews. Sandwiched between two longer, seemingly more elaborate and complex works, it has often been regarded as Pynchon's "minor," if most accessible, novel. That first adjective is challenged by the mere presence of this collection; the second is partially confirmed (perhaps, to a large extent, because of the novel's brevity) by the novel's frequent appearance in the syllabi of college and university courses in contemporary American fiction and by the fact that it is the most frequently translated of Pynchon's works: so far, versions of *The Crying of Lot 49* exist in Swedish, Italian, Danish, German, French (two translations), Spanish, Norwegian, Dutch, Japanese, and Polish.

Most early reviewers of *The Crying of Lot 49* insisted upon comparing it unfavorably to the more massive *V.* One strongly negative commentator remarked upon *Crying's* "crampedness" in relation to the earlier novel, expounded upon its emerging patterns of significance becoming "progressively smaller, and refus[ing] to respond to the reader's (or the novelist's) efforts to inflate them other than by going limp with a modest hiss," and concluded by stating

that “*Crying* is a step backwards to the art of the emblem books, a patchy collection of images propped up by claims of significance in terms which the artist hasn’t proved the right to use.”¹⁶ The anonymous reviewer for *Time*, evaluating *The Crying of Lot 49* along with Leonard Cohen’s *Beautiful Losers* and Fariña’s *Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up To Me*, described Pynchon’s novel as “a meta-physical thriller in the form of a pornographic comic strip,” then lumped all three novels together as examples of “the gibberish literature that is currently being published as fast as it can be gibbered.”¹⁷ Less reductively, Roger Shattuck cited *The Crying of Lot 49* as “a short, crisp afterthought to *V.*”; Granville Hicks described *Crying* as “a tenth as long as *V.*, . . . considerably easier to follow, and . . . just as funny”; and the reviewer for *Newsweek* stated that *Crying* “seems to be an outgrowth of *V.*” – like *V.*, a quest novel, but “the seeker and the specific object of the search are quite different in ‘*Lot 49*,’ simpler, clearer – and a lot funnier.”¹⁸

Though negative or reductive views of *The Crying of Lot 49* seemed to prevail, some reviewers found the novel more than just an “afterthought” to, or a more popular (“funnier,” “simpler”) version of, *V.* Richard Poirier, perhaps Pynchon’s most incisive critic, wrote in the *New York Times* that in *The Crying of Lot 49* Pynchon evidences “a tenderness, largely missing from our literature since Dreiser, for the very physical waste of our yearnings, for the anonymous scrap heap of Things wherein our lives are finally joined. The Pynchon who can write with dashing metaphorical skill about the way humans have become Things, can also reveal a beautiful and heartbreaking reverence for the human penetration of the Thingness of this country, the signatures we make on the grossest evidence of our existence.”¹⁹ Yet even with this laudatory description of what he felt to be the novel’s strongest aspect – its ability to capture the sheer materiality of American life in its “tryst with America” – Poirier had reservations about the role given to Oedipa Maas, arguing that “it is impossible to divorce from her limitations the large rhetoric about America at the end of the novel. This is unfortunate simply because Oedipa has not been given character enough to bear the weight of this rhetoric.”²⁰ Perhaps the most laudatory review of the novel was that of Stephen Donadio, who reviewed *The Crying of Lot 49* along with Fariña’s