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剑桥美国小说新论·17
(英文影印版)

New Essays on

*The Catcher
in the Rye*

《麦田里的守望者》新论

Jack Salzman 编



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电子邮箱: fd@pup.pku.edu.cn

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》,也有我们还不太了解的他的《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 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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I

Introduction

JACK SALZMAN

I

IN 1959, eight years after the publication of *The Catcher in the Rye*, Arthur Mizener began a *Harper's* magazine essay about J. D. Salinger by noting that he was “probably the most avidly read author of any serious pretensions of his generation.” There were good reasons why this should be the case, Mizener commented. Whatever limitations the work might have had – either of technique or of subject matter – within these limitations it was “the most interesting fiction that has come along for some time.”¹ Although, as we will see, there was little critical agreement about what the limitations of *The Catcher in the Rye* may have been, there was little disagreement with Mizener’s contention that Salinger was the most avidly read “serious” writer of his generation. Soon after *Nine Stories* appeared in April 1953, it made the *New York Times* best-seller list. By 1961 sales of *Catcher* were reported to have reached one and a half million copies in the United States alone.²

But Salinger’s popularity did not go unquestioned. Although numerous scholarly articles appeared during the 1950s, and continued into the early 1960s, by 1959 at least one eminent critic, George Steiner, had attacked what he referred to as “The Salinger Industry”; and two years later Alfred Kazin joined in criticizing the author he called “Everybody’s Favorite.”³ At the same time, voices very different from those of Steiner and Kazin continued to denounce Salinger’s work, especially *Catcher*. In one of the earliest reviews of *Catcher*, T. Morris Longstreth, writing in *The Christian Science Monitor* for July 19, 1951, offered a view that continues to haunt Salinger’s novel. It is a story, Longstreth began, “that is not

fit for children to read." For although Holden is alive and human, he is also "preposterous, profane, and pathetic beyond belief." It is a matter to be feared and not taken lightly: given wide circulation, a book like *Catcher* might multiply Holden's kind – "as too easily happens when immorality and perversion are recounted by writers of talent whose work is countenanced in the name of art or good intentions."⁴ It was not long before *The Catcher in the Rye* began to be banned from high school reading lists. And more than thirty-five years later, an editorial in the *New York Times* would call attention to the force of Longstreth's warning: parents in Boron, California, had persuaded the school board to ban *Catcher*, a not unusual occurrence. "That sort of stuff is forever happening to 'Catcher'," the editorial noted; according to an officer of the American Library Association, it is "'a perennial No. 1 on the censorship hit list.'"⁵ Yet, removed from reading lists, banned from libraries, and increasingly ignored by critics who seem uneasy with both its technique and its subject matter in a postmodern literary world – critics who at times seem more interested in Salinger's whereabouts than in his writings⁶ – the novel remains one of the most popular, and more importantly one of the most read, of all works of modern fiction.

II

For some, Salinger's popularity may have to do with his elusiveness and silence. He has, after all, published no fiction since 1966, and he has steadfastly refused to talk or write about his life (and, indeed, apparently has done all he can to keep others from invading his privacy). But the autobiographical enterprise, the need to find the writer in his or her work, to see fiction not as fact or history but as autobiography, is always of dubious value. There may well be, as one critic has written, "a public hungry to possess the famously elusive J. D. Salinger."⁷ But surely the public that continues to read *The Catcher in the Rye*, even that part of the public which demands that the book not be read, is more concerned with the fiction written than with the man in New Hampshire who may or may not be writing more stories.

Just how much of Salinger one can find in his fiction – that is,

how many scenes and characters have cognates in actual events and people in Salinger's own life – is at best unclear. (How much of Salinger is in Holden – or in Seymour or Buddy Glass?) What is clear is that well before the publication of *Catcher* on July 16, 1951, Salinger was thinking about the type of character who would become Holden. Just how far back the origins of Holden can be traced is hard to determine. Although Salinger did some writing at Valley Forge Military Academy and later at Ursinus College (where he enrolled in 1938 but stayed only nine weeks), there is nothing of any consequence in that work. Not long after he left Ursinus, however, Salinger enrolled in Whit Burnett's short-story writing class at Columbia University. There, as a class assignment, he wrote a short story called "The Young Folks." There is nothing in this work that anticipates Holden either (although at least one critic sees in one of the characters a "thinly penciled prototype of Sally Hayes in *The Catcher in the Rye*");⁸ but Burnett, who also was the editor of the literary magazine *Story*, offered to publish it. Salinger was paid twenty-five dollars, and "The Young Folks" appeared in *Story* in the spring of 1940.

In November of the following year – after stories had appeared in the *University of Kansas City Review* ("Go See Eddie") and *Collier's* ("The Hang of It") – Salinger sold what seems to have been his first story about Holden Caulfield to *The New Yorker*. However, the entry of the United States into World War II delayed publication of the story until 1946, when it appeared as "Slight Rebellion off Madison" in the December 21 issue. In the meantime Salinger had been drafted into the army, where he was trained for counterintelligence, landed in Normandy on D-Day, took part in five campaigns in Europe, and was discharged in 1945.

Several stories were published during those years, but none is of much substance. Even "I'm Crazy," which appeared in the December 22, 1945, issue of *Collier's*, is really of consequence only because it is the first published story to contain material that is actually used in *Catcher*. Nor were the stories published immediately after Salinger's discharge from the army significantly more interesting. A ninety-page manuscript about Holden Caulfield was accepted for publication by *The New Yorker* in 1946, but for reasons that remain obscure it was subsequently withdrawn by Salinger.

One of the two stories published in 1947, "The Inverted Forest" – the other was "A Young Girl in 1941 with No Waist at All" – is of interest now mostly because the story's central figure, Ray Ford, seems to foreshadow Seymour Glass in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish."

But it was not until the publication of "Bananafish" itself, in *The New Yorker* on January 31, 1948, that Salinger's stories began to show the consummate artistry that would make his fiction among the most significant produced by a writer in the post-World War II generation. In 1948, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" was quickly followed in the pages of *The New Yorker* by "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut" (March 20) and "Just Before the War with the Eskimos" (June 5). The following year "The Laughing Man" appeared in *The New Yorker* (March 19) and "Down at the Dinghy" in the April issue of *Harper's*. In 1950, perhaps the best known if not the best story by Salinger was published, "For Esmé, With Love and Squalor" (*New Yorker*, April 8); and earlier in the year, on January 21, Samuel Goldwyn Studios released *My Foolish Heart*, its disastrous version of "Uncle Wiggily." A year and a half later, on July 14, 1951, the *New Yorker* published Salinger's intriguing story of infidelity and self-deception, "Pretty Mouth and Green My Eyes." Two days later, on July 16, Little, Brown brought out *The Catcher in the Rye*.

III

The earliest critical responses to Salinger's first – and what increasingly seems likely to be his only – published novel were, as noted earlier, somewhat mixed. Some of the reviewers were clearly impressed. S. N. Behrman wrote a lengthy and very favorable review in *The New Yorker*, and Clifton Fadiman, on behalf of the Book-of-the-Month Club, which had selected *Catcher* as its main selection for July, wrote, "That rare miracle of fiction has again come to pass: a human being has been created out of ink, paper, and the imagination." In a review that appeared in the *New York Times* on the day of the novel's publication, Nash K. Burger called *The Catcher in the Rye* "an unusually brilliant first novel," and Paul Engle, in a review that appeared on the previous day in the *Chicago*

Tribune, found it "engaging and believable," a novel "full of right observation and sharp insight." Other critics were equally enthusiastic: Harvey Breit, in the August 1951 issue of the *Atlantic*, commented that Salinger's novel "has sufficient power and cleverness to make the reader chuckle and – rare indeed – even laugh aloud"; Harold L. Roth, writing in *Library Journal*, noted that Salinger's novel "may be a shock to many parents who wonder about a young man's thoughts and actions, but its effect can be a salutary one. An *adult* book (very frank) and highly recommended"; James Yaffe, in the autumn issue of *Yale Review*, commented that "Salinger has written a book, with life, feeling, and lightheartedness – very rare qualities nowadays"; the critic for *Time* praised Salinger for being able to "understand the adolescent mind without displaying one"; Harrison Smith, in the pages of *Saturday Review*, called the novel "remarkable and absorbing . . . a book to be read thoughtfully and more than once"; and Dan Wickenden, in a review titled "Clear-Sighted Boy" showed his own clear-sightedness by calling *Catcher* a modern picaresque novel similar to *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and suggesting that it too might become a classic.⁹

Other reviewers were less enthusiastic. In *The New Republic*, Anne L. Goodman called *Catcher* "a brilliant tour-de-force," but felt that in a writer of "Salinger's undeniable talent one expects something more." Similarly, Ernest Jones, writing in *The Nation*, found that although *Catcher* was always lively in its parts, the book as a whole was "predictable and boring." Virgilia Peterson, writing in the *New York Herald Tribune*, expressed misgivings about Salinger's language: the novel "repeats and repeats, like an incantation, the pseudo-natural cadences of a flat, colloquial prose which at best, banked down and understated, has a truly moving impact and at worst is casually obscene." In England, where *Catcher* was published in August by Hamish Hamilton, the critic for the *Times Literary Supplement* also had a mixed response: Holden is "very touching," but "the endless stream of blasphemy and obscenity in which he talks, credible as it is, palls after the first chapter."¹⁰

Even less enthusiastic were the notices that appeared in *Catholic World* and *Commentary*. Riley Hughes, in *Catholic World*, adopting a position not unlike that of T. Morris Longstreth in *The Christian*

Science Monitor, condemned the novel's "excessive use of amateur swearing and coarse language," which he argued made Holden's iconoclastic character "monotonous and phony." Even more critical was a review by William Poster that appeared in the January 1952 issue of *Commentary*: "The ennui, heartburn, and weary revulsions of *The Catcher in the Rye*," Poster wrote, "are the inevitable actions, not of an adolescent, however disenchanted, but of a well-paid satirist with a highly developed technique, no point of view, and no target to aim at but himself."¹¹

IV

The initial critical response to *Catcher in the Rye*, then, certainly was not remarkable. The few critics who regarded the novel as "a brilliant performance and in its own way just about flawless"¹² were more than offset by reviewers who had serious reservations about the novel's worth. But the book sold well, if not remarkably so. Within two weeks of its publication, *The Catcher in the Rye* made its way on to the *New York Times* best-seller list, where it remained for almost thirty weeks. During this time, however, it never moved higher than fourth place, and failed to attain the success of Herman Wouk's *The Caine Mutiny*, James Jones's *From Here to Eternity*, James Michener's *Return to Paradise*, or Nicholas Monsarrat's *The Cruel Sea*. On March 2, 1952, *Catcher* made its last appearance on the list, in twelfth place.¹³

Even after *The Catcher in the Rye* lost its position on the best-seller list, Salinger was not long out of the public eye (though he would try to become so by moving from Westport, Connecticut, to the more private surroundings of Cornish, New Hampshire). On April 6, 1953, a little more than a year after *Catcher's* disappearance from the best-seller list, Little, Brown brought out the first collection of Salinger's short fiction, *Nine Stories* (all previously published, and all but two — "Down at the Dinghy" and "De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period" — having originally appeared in *The New Yorker*).¹⁴ Again, the critical response was somewhat uneven. A few critics complained that however great their insight, the stories were "little more than specialized reporting" or thought Salinger guilty of "a dodging of issues." But, in an important review in the *New York*

Times, Eudora Welty praised the collection, noting especially Salinger's ability to honor with a loving heart "what is unique and precious in each person on earth." Welty's endorsement was joined by such highly regarded literary critics as Gilbert Highet ("There is not a failure in the book; I would rather read a collection like this than many a novel which is issued with more fanfare.") and Arthur Mizener (unlike *Catcher*, *Nine Stories* has "a controlling intention which is at once complex enough for Mr. Salinger's awareness and firm enough to give it purpose"), as well as by critics for *Kirkus* and the *Chicago Sun Tribune*.¹⁵ It was not long before *Nine Stories* was on the best-seller list, where it stayed among the top twenty books for three months.

At the same time, *The Catcher in the Rye* was attracting new audiences. By 1954 the novel was not only available in translation in Denmark, Germany, France, Israel, Italy, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland, and the Netherlands; even more significantly, it was made available in paperback by the New American Library, thereby beginning *Catcher's* long involvement with high school and college students.¹⁶ Yet despite his increasing popularity – or perhaps because of it – Salinger continued to shy away from any encounter with his widening audience. He not only insisted that his picture be removed from the jacket of the Little, Brown edition of *Catcher*; he also refused to comment on either his marriage to Claire Douglas on February 17, 1955, or on the birth of their daughter, Margaret Ann, in December of that year.

What Salinger did do was write more stories. "Franny" and "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" both appeared in *The New Yorker* in 1955 (on January 29 and November 19, respectively). "Zooney" was published two years later (*The New Yorker*, May 4, 1957) and "Seymour: An Introduction" two years after that (*The New Yorker*, June 6, 1959). In 1960, a son, Matthew, was born to the Salingers. The following year, on September 14, *Franny and Zooney* was published. Within two weeks, 125,000 copies had been sold, and for six months the thin volume remained on the *New York Times* best-seller list. Yet, despite his popularity, Salinger's world was becoming increasingly unsettled.

For some, Salinger's obsession with Eastern philosophy was a clear indication of his troubled state; for others, the end of his