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剑桥美国小说新论·10
(英文影印版)

New Essays on

*Winesburg,
Ohio*

《小镇畸人》新论

John W. Crowley 编



北京大学出版社
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著作权合同登记 图字: 01-2006-7215 号

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

《小镇畸人》新论 = New Essays on *Winesburg, Ohio* / 克劳利 (Crowley, J. W.) 编. — 北京: 北京大学出版社, 2007. 1

(剑桥美国小说新论·10)

ISBN 978-7-301-11389-9

I. 小… II. 克… III. 长篇小说-文学研究-美国-现代-英文
IV. I712.074

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2006) 第 153879 号

Originally published by Cambridge University Press in 1990

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 *Winesburg, Ohio*
《小镇畸人》新论

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责任编辑: 张 娜

标准书号: ISBN 978-7-301-11389-9/I·0859

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: 三河市新世纪印务有限公司

经销者: 新华书店

650 毫米×980 毫米 16 开本 9 印张 148 千字

2007 年 1 月第 1 版 2007 年 1 月第 1 次印刷

定 价: 20.00 元

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导 读

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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

JOHN W. CROWLEY

WINESBURG, *Ohio*, it is sometimes said, appeals most directly to young readers. Its author, however, was a literary late bloomer whose first book appeared only after he had turned forty. Sherwood Anderson, like the old writer in "The Book of the Grotesque," nurtured something inside him that was "altogether young."¹ As he wrote to the critic Van Wyck Brooks in 1919, "when in speaking of *Winesburg* you use the word 'adolescence,' you struck more nearly than you know on the whole note of me. I am immature, will live and die immature. A quite terrible confession that would be if I did not represent so much."²

The conditional phrasing of this "terrible confession" has been overlooked by those who would use it against Anderson,³ for he was claiming in his "immaturity" to be nothing less than "representative" in the Emersonian sense, a Whitmanian seer and sayer of heartland America in its cultural adolescence. "My head is filled with fancies that cannot get expressed," he complained to a confidante at the time he was writing the *Winesburg* stories. "A thousand beautiful children are unborn to me. Sustained flights of thoughts break up and pass away into nothingness because I am full of the spirit of my times." His sharing "the very blood and spirit of all this aimlessness," however, was precisely what made him representative: "My struggle, my ignorance, my years of futile work to meaningless ends – all these are American traits. If I fail to get at anything approaching real beauty so have my times and the men of my times failed."⁴ Anderson read his own writing, insofar as it did capture real beauty, as a representative triumph over the failures of his times.

Once, when asked by a Chicago newspaperman to summarize



his background, he reduced it to a narrative that was formulaic but potentially archetypal as well:

About the biography matter. It is simple enough. Born at a place called Camden, Ohio, September 13, 1876 – I nearly wrote 1776 – spent most of my youth in the village of Clyde, Ohio, near Cleveland. Town poor family, village news-boy peddling papers, cheating people out of change etc. – all that stuff.

Came to Chicago at eighteen – no work – common laborer until Spanish War broke out. Went into that.

Stumbled into advertising writing and have been there ever since except for five years when I got the great American idea of getting rich. Started a factory – got all my friends to put money in – bright young businessman, etc.

Scheme didn't work. Went nutty – had nervous breakdown – slight suspicion have been nutty ever since.

Started writing for the sake of the salvation of my soul and except for one or two slips – when I fancied I might by some chance hit on a popular note – have been writing for that end ever since.⁵

This outline, in a staccato style that points ironically to the triteness of its details (“all that stuff,” etc.), recalls the opening chapter of W. D. Howells's *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), in which the slick reporter Bartley Hubbard, exemplar of a new school of vulgar journalism, is pumping Lapham for the details of his emergence from poverty and obscurity to a state of affluence and some degree of reputation in the world. This self-made man, the putative king of the paint industry, knows what is expected of him for this interview, which will lead to Hubbard's fulsomely flattering profile for the “Solid Men of Boston” series in a newspaper pitched to popular curiosity about the newly rich:

“[S]o you want my life, death and Christian sufferings, do you, young man?”

“That's what I'm after,” said Bartley. “Your money or your life.”

“I guess you wouldn't want my life without the money,” said Lapham.⁶

Certainly not, for as the reporter's satirical promptings show, he has already cast the life in terms of the traditional success story, extending from Ben Franklin through Abe Lincoln and Horatio Alger to the Great Gatsby and beyond, that is the most enduring in American culture:

"Worked in the fields summers and went to school winters: regulation thing?" Bartley cut in.

"Regulation thing," said Lapham, accepting this irreverent version of his history somewhat dryly.

"Parents poor, of course," suggested the journalist. "Any barefoot business? Early deprivations of any kind that would encourage the youthful reader to go and do likewise?"⁷

Hubbard and Lapham are agreed in their tailoring the biographical facts to the rags-to-riches formula, which begins, in Hubbard's retelling, with the hero's devoted parents (especially his self-sacrificing mother), simple people of "sterling morality" who live for their children's advancement and instill in them "the simple virtues of the Old Testament and Poor Richard's Almanac."⁸ But the men differ in their attitudes toward this account. Whereas the cynical reporter yawns over his notebook, the paint king warms to the tale of his own success, revealing his reverence for what strikes Hubbard as ridiculous.

For Sherwood Anderson, whose early life in Ohio bore uncanny resemblances to Howells's experience two generations earlier,⁹ the rise of Silas Lapham foretold his own success just as Bartley Hubbard's mockery anticipated his own disillusionment with that success. The autobiographical letter quoted earlier may be understood as a self-interview in which – as if he were playing the roles both of Hubbard and of Lapham – Anderson parodies, even as he takes seriously, the familiar story he has inherited from the nineteenth century. But he is also transvaluing, and thereby recuperating, the nineteenth-century idea of success.

In Howells's novel, Lapham's rise turns out, ironically, to be what he gains morally from financial and social *failure*. Alarmed by the corrosive effects of industrial capitalism on the human spirit, Howells faced the possibility that morality and success were incompatible, indeed mutually exclusive. Anderson, who shared Howells's abhorrence of industrialism, sought to write a narrative of moral rejuvenation in which success could be rewedded to morality. In his numerous and variant retellings of the rise of Sherwood Anderson, the literary artist supplanted the entrepreneur as hero; or, in Howells's terms, the man of letters redeemed the man of business.¹⁰

The “simple” facts of Anderson’s biography, then, expressed a myth that was at once personal and cultural: not the nineteenth-century myth of success, but a modern reimagining of its terms. In his own eyes and in those of his admirers, his career became “the symbol of an epoch.”¹¹ In a sense, Anderson became most truly himself when he was completely dissolved into symbol, when his life became indistinguishable from the myth of the artist-hero into which he wrote himself. As his biographer has remarked, “other writers draw on their experience, compose, so as to recreate, illuminate their lives, but always, apart from the perfection, or imperfection, of the work, there is the life. In the case of Sherwood Anderson one is never sure, one never knows which is which, or rather one knows that Anderson was never sure himself.”¹²

Born in the centennial year of the American Revolution, Anderson was the child rather of the Industrial Revolution that transformed, during the very years of his youth, the agricultural, small-town Midwest. The second son in a family of five boys and one girl (another died in infancy), young Sherwood grew up in Clyde, Ohio, a town of about 2,500 that was to serve as the model for his fictional Winesburg. The family was among the poorest in town, largely because of the improvidence of Irwin Anderson, a sometime harness-maker and housepainter, a jack-of-no-trade, whose penchant for idleness and alcohol made him a thin provider. Enamored of military posturing and spinning tall tales – in Irwin’s imagination, the Civil War, in which he had fought, was never ending – he, like Tom Willard in *Winesburg*, “swaggered and began to dramatize himself as one of the chief men of the town” (p. 44). In truth, he was a windbag who mortified his son and tormented his wife, the stoical Emma Anderson, for whom Sherwood, like George Willard for his mother, felt a largely unarticulated sympathy.

This sympathy, however, was copiously expressed – as if in compensation for childhood silence – in Anderson’s later writings, where he sainted Emma by exaggerating her martyrdom to Irwin’s vagaries. This mother-ideal, firmly established in Anderson’s youth, governed his later relationships with women, including his four wives. He would never be entirely at ease with his own sexuality. Like some of Sigmund Freud’s male patients during that same

period, he tended to dissociate the "affectionate" current from the "sensual" current of erotic feeling and to divide womankind into madonnas and whores. "Where such men love they have no desire," Freud observed, "and where they desire they cannot love."¹³

In boyish rivalry with his father, Sherwood tried to distance and distinguish himself from Irwin not only by his sensitivity to Emma's misery but also by his attempts to relieve it through his own hustle and enterprise. In his desire to serve as the family provider, his zeal for odd jobs was indefatigable, his prowess as a newsboy unsurpassed. The villagers dubbed him "Jobby." Like Silas Lapham, Anderson imbibed the Franklinesque saws that passed for folk wisdom in nineteenth-century America: "Get on. Make money. Get to the top. A penny saved is a penny earned. Money makes the mare go."¹⁴ These were the values that Anderson the writer would spend his creative life disavowing, but only after Anderson the businessman had pursued them to the edge of his sanity.

Ambitious beyond the limits of the small town, Sherwood migrated to Chicago soon after his mother's early death in 1895. The city had been booming since the Civil War; its population grew exponentially as its boundaries expanded and its industrial economy burgeoned. Hub of the Midwest, gateway to the Far West, Chicago challenged eastern cultural supremacy by erecting the White City of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, a showcase of the artistic and commercial aspirations of the emergent American imperium. Headquarters of the new captains of industry – the millionaires of meat packing (Swift, Armour) and manufacturing (Pullman, McCormick) and retailing (Marshall Field) – Chicago beckoned to immigrants and provincials alike, who, like Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie, flocked to a city enchanted by their visions of fabulous wealth. For the dreamers of success the sky was the limit, as it was for the architects of the skyscrapers that soon towered above the new business district, the Loop.

Anderson at nineteen (not eighteen, as he recalled) was understandably bewildered by the sheer magnitude of Chicago, and his upward climb was blocked by his inexperience and haphazard schooling. While he roomed in a boardinghouse owned by former Clyde neighbors, and later in a tenement with his brothers and

sister, Anderson subsisted as a warehouse laborer at two dollars per day. Escape from the grinding ten-hour shifts arrived in 1898 with the Spanish-American War. Anderson eagerly rejoined the Clyde unit of the Ohio National Guard in which he had enlisted before going to Chicago; later he basked in a homecoming hero's welcome, although his unit had served in Cuba only after hostilities had ceased. During 1899–1900, he enrolled in the Wittenberg Academy in Springfield, Ohio; on graduation, with the equivalent of a high school education, he was offered a position as advertising solicitor with the Crowell Publishing Company in Chicago. Within months he moved to the Frank B. White Advertising Agency, later to merge with the Long-Critchfield Agency. Intermittently for the next twenty years, Anderson would retain his affiliation with this firm, even after he had achieved a literary reputation. His first writing, aside from ad copy, appeared in such trade journals as *Agricultural Advertising*, for which he produced a regular column under the titles "Rot and Reason" and "Business Types."

At this stage of his career Anderson was an unabashed booster of the mission of American businessmen, those who "sleep and eat and live with the desire to get on in the world tingling through their whole beings."¹⁵ When, in 1903, he married Cornelia Platt Lane, the refined and attractive daughter of a prosperous Cleveland merchant, young Anderson appeared to have the world before him. Having shown a flair for advertising, he left the Long-Critchfield agency in 1906 to become president of the United Factories Company of Cleveland, a combine of small manufacturers. Anderson's task, less glorious than his title, was to organize direct-mail ad campaigns.

This was merely a step toward becoming head of his own sales operation, the Anderson Manufacturing Company of Elyria, Ohio, which was capitalized by believers in his promise as a bright young businessman. Through the clever promotion of a patent product for leaky roofs – "Roof-Fix" was guaranteed to cure every ill known to shingles – Anderson raked in the profits and ascended the business and social ladders of Elyria, a town with get-up-and-go worthy of Zenith in Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt* (1922). Sherwood and Cornelia nestled into a comfortable house in a trig neighborhood, joined the golf club, and started a family (two boys and a

girl by 1911). Anderson became a notable member of the Elks chapter and also the Round Table Club, a sociable discussion group drawn from the young married set.

Outwardly content, Anderson was inwardly restive. He began, in fact, to lead a double life: The gregarious man-about-town was also a recluse in his own home. Anderson installed a spartan workroom in the upstairs back wing, where he retreated to write – not the public musings he had penned for *Agricultural Advertising*, but the private visions of an inchoate artist. Far into the night and sometimes during business hours, Anderson wrote page after page, possessed by the stories quickening in his mind. He worked both on short pieces and on several different novels, two of which would appear in revised form as *Windy McPherson's Son* (1916) and *Marching Men* (1917). Through such autobiographical characters as Sam McPherson and Beaut McGregor, Anderson confronted his past and his profound uncertainties about the success he had so assiduously courted, a success that was being imperiled by the neglect of his business, which was sliding toward ruin.

Anderson's inner crisis had deep roots. Some part of him had always felt compromised by the advertising razzle-dazzle and the sharp business practices. His occasional lapses from marital fidelity – one-night stands with fancy women – were also symptomatic of an urge to be other than a respectable family man. In earlier years he had made fleeting contact with artists and intellectuals through his brother Karl, a painter, and he had been attracted to the openness of their lives and minds. Always a voracious (and indiscriminate) reader, Anderson sometimes flaunted ideas he knew deviated from those of his Elyria friends, who were incomprehending, for instance, of his enthusiasm for the radical philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. Through his own writing, Anderson unleashed a self at odds with those conventional values to which he was still tightly bound. He began to write, as he said, for the salvation of his soul.

Wound tighter and tighter by self-doubt and discontent with his career, his marriage, everything, Anderson finally came unsprung in November 1912. He later published several versions of what had happened one day in his Elyria factory: an exit that became as legendary in its way as Nora's slamming the door on her stultifying