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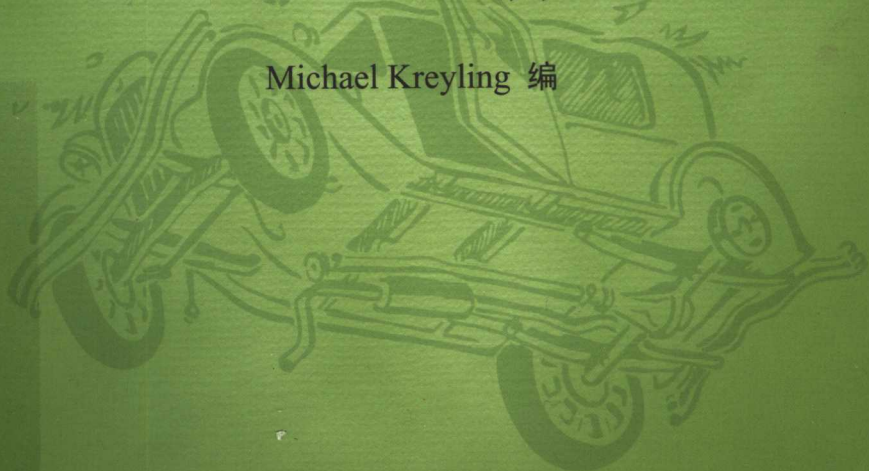
剑桥美国小说新论·9
(英文影印版)

New Essays on

Wise Blood

《慧血》新论

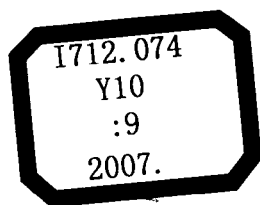
Michael Kreyling 编



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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Introduction

MICHAEL KREYLING

ABOUT fifteen years ago, opening his review of *The Habit of Being* (1979 [henceforth *HB*]), a selection of Flannery O'Connor's letters, Robert Towers was startled "to recall that Flannery O'Connor would be only in her mid-fifties if she were alive today" (3). It is only a little less startling today, almost three decades after the writer's death in 1964, to realize that she would be "only" seventy this year, quite young enough to enjoy (if enjoyment is in fact a plausible description for what O'Connor might have felt) the veneration, awe, controversy, and simple hoopla that swirls around her life and work. I think she would have enjoyed it all. She wrote to one of her friends: "I seem to attract the lunatic fringe mainly" (*HB* 82).

You can, for example, buy a coffee mug with a cartoon of O'Connor baked into the glaze. She stares out at you with heavy-lidded seriousness, holding a Christian Bible and backed by the spread tail of a peacock – her trademarks. Text on the mug ticks off the major points of the O'Connor myth. She died young of a particularly sinister disease, systemic lupus erythematosus. She lived most of her thirty-nine years (1925–1964) in Milledgeville, Georgia, with her mother, Regina Cline O'Connor, on a farm called Andalusia. "Her stories [are] violent, bizarre, and teeming with metaphor and symbolism," the mug continues. One of them, unnamed on the mug but well known to her many readers, has to do with "a reluctant atheist who puts his eyes out with lye [sic] and walks around with gravel in his shoes." It's lime Hazel Motes rubs into his eyes – but the myth can tolerate small errors of fact.

It is characteristic of our *fin de siècle*, this smothering of the real with licensed merchandise "tie-ins." O'Connor was just a few



decades early with Haze Motes and *Wise Blood* (1952). If she were alive today, a 40th Anniversary Edition of the novel, complete with a marketing package, might well have brought her wealth she would not have been too old to enjoy. Her mother survives. If Flannery O'Connor had inherited her blood instead of her father's, carrying the susceptibility to lupus. . . .

As a sort of commemoration of the nonevent, this volume of "New Essays" on *Wise Blood* appears. It has been assembled not to reinforce the consensus on O'Connor's literary reputation, but to shake it a little out of complacent habits. In his indispensable essay on the state of O'Connor criticism, Frederick Crews ruefully predicts that in "the current iconoclastic mood of academic trend-setters . . . , O'Connor's stock is due for what Wall Street calls a correction" (146). Crews does not undertake the correction himself, and he assesses those who do (some of the contributors to this volume) with a skeptical eye. But it is my belief that methodological and theoretical experimentation does more good for the life of literary discourse than the repetition of a certain set of formulaic phrases that merely impersonate understanding. Without innovations in reading her work, O'Connor would become so familiar as to disappear, leaving only coffee mugs and a few tired phrases.

But the establishment of this monolithic O'Connor industry is instructive in its own right, and it is useful to read the novel with some sense of the canonical reputation it seems to have launched. In general two causes seem uppermost in the list of reasons. The first is that O'Connor's fiction is so rewardingly teachable. As Crews points out, O'Connor was taught to write fiction in the New Critical tradition, and it is therefore no surprise that the rest of us also taught to read that way should find her fiction so accessible (145). O'Connor herself never made a secret of her methods. She recommended the foundational New Critical textbook, Brooks and Warren's *Understanding Fiction* (1943), as a "book that has been of invaluable help (HB 83, 283) whenever she was asked for advice. Moreover, O'Connor sent virtually everything she wrote (including every draft of *Wise Blood*) to Caroline Gordon for editorial approval. Gordon, a novelist herself, was also one of the underacknowledged builders of practical criticism

out of the general tenets of New Criticism. The editorial apparatus in *The House of Fiction* (1950), which she co-edited with her husband Allen Tate, is almost all Gordon's work. O'Connor was in thrall to Gordon's counsel, and Gordon undertook, in a few critical comments, to direct critical responses to O'Connor along New Critical (and Christian) lines. The reading, teaching, and learning of O'Connor's fiction is stuck in the New Critical gear, and the essays in this volume aim to wrest our habitual response into unfamiliar rhythms.

The second reason why O'Connor's fiction is interpreted with such solid consensus is that almost no one doubts her own testimony as to its Christian meaning. Crews again puts his finger on the problem. One of the earliest critics to point out and dissent from the stringent religious message in O'Connor's work was the novelist John Hawkes, who suspected in 1962 that O'Connor was rather too enamored of the Devil she professed to warn her readers against. His essay triggered several responses defending the writer (of which more later in this introduction) and, quoting Crews, "The Hawkes-O'Connor debate has not subsided in the quarter-century since O'Connor's death. It is the vortex into which nearly every other question about her work gets inevitably drawn, and there is never a shortage of volunteers to replace the original antagonists" (156).

The result of these serial autos-da-fe is nearly five decades of repetitive affirmations of the theological message believed to inform O'Connor's work, reinforced by the tacit belief that her considerable suffering crowned her word with a special truth status. Interestingly, early reviewers of *Wise Blood*, those who read it as a first novel by a young, unknown woman from Georgia, were quite skeptical of the religious power of its characters and message. As the O'Connor persona gained greater circulation, the prestige of *Wise Blood* has grown until it looms as one of the most significant religious novels in American literary history.

Wise Blood, and all of O'Connor's other work (a surprisingly slight oeuvre for such a reputation: *A Good Man Is Hard to Find* [short stories], 1955; *The Violent Bear It Away* [a novel], 1960; and *Everything That Rises Must Converge* [short stories], 1965) are usually seen as instances of the same metaphysical "vision." As Chris-

tian tradition interprets the Bible as expressing one Word in each and all of its many parts, so is O'Connor's fiction given a similar unity, wholeness, and transcendental authority. The essays in the current volume tend to question this process and accretion.

"Fiction doesn't lie, but it can't tell the whole truth"

Flannery O'Connor, through her control of her own image as writer, as Southerner, as Catholic, as woman, and so on, still controls our understanding of her life and that life's connections with the work. She was not unaware of the critics' hunger for biographical detail. In 1956 she wrote to "A," her anonymous correspondent:

Fiction doesn't lie, but it can't tell the whole truth. What would you make out about me just from reading "Good Country People"? Plenty, but not the whole story. Anyway, you have to look at a novel or a story as a novel or a story; as saying something about life colored by the writer, not about the writer colored by life. (HB 158)

Even that conceded "plenty" has been underappreciated by her readers and critics.

Mary Flannery O'Connor was born in Savannah, Georgia, in 1925, the only child of Edward Francis and Regina Cline O'Connor. The writer's father died of lupus in 1938. O'Connor remembered her father's death with a sort of tight-lipped stoicism. To the poet Robert Lowell, she wrote: "My father had it [lupus] some twelve or fifteen years ago but at that time there was nothing for it but the undertaker" (HB 57). The family was in Milledgeville, Georgia, at the time, the hometown of her mother's family, where they had moved to take advantage of job opportunities during the Depression. O'Connor completed high school and college in town, showing a talent for drawing cartoons and a penchant for mordant commentary on the social rigors of growing up. She wrote to "A":

This pride in the tin leg comes from an old scar. I was, in my early days, forced to take dancing to throw me into the company of other children and to make me graceful. Nothing I hated worse than the company of other children and I vowed I'd see them all in

hell before I would make the first graceful move. The lessons went on for a number of years but I won. In a certain sense. (HB 145–46)

Flannery O'Connor took a Master of Fine Arts in creative writing at the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop. For several months in late 1948 and early 1949, she worked at Yaddo on her novel, *Wise Blood*, which had won the Rinehart-Iowa Fiction Award in 1948. From her letters in these early years of professional writing, it seems that O'Connor was determined to make that life in New York. After Yaddo she lived in New York apartments and in rural Connecticut with Robert and Sally Fitzgerald. After a falling out with Rinehart, which was committed to publish the novel, O'Connor took the manuscript to Harcourt Brace. While awaiting publication, in the winter of 1950–1, she came down with the symptoms later diagnosed as lupus. She returned to Milledgeville and, except for short trips away from home, lived there for the rest of her life.

I am doing fairly well these days, though I am practically bald-headed on top and have a watermelon face. I think that this is going to be permanent. (HB 55)

No one denies the significance of systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) on O'Connor's life and work; few hazard a guess at what the particular pathology of the disease (and the treatment) did to O'Connor's fiction. In most critical statements, we seldom get beyond the obvious: living with a terminal disease made O'Connor more sensitive to the meanings in life. "What you have to measure out," she wrote to Robert Lowell, "you come to observe closer, or so I tell myself" (HB 57). One of those meanings must have impressed O'Connor, who was a connoisseur of irony: she had become one of her own grotesques.

When she learned that she had SLE, the most virulent form of a spectrum of lupus conditions, O'Connor must also have learned that she had a 40 percent chance of surviving three years after the diagnosis. She must also have known that she was in for a particularly painful and disfiguring disease. Her first symptoms were the fatigue and arthralgia (aching in the joints) common to SLE. She had also to worry about the characteristic butterfly lesions across

the bridge of the nose and cheeks, and additional sores on the arms, back, neck, and other parts exposed to light. Like AIDS, which it resembles in some general ways, SLE makes a public spectacle of its victims, turning the body into a vivid display of illness. The figuring on Parker's back, in the last story O'Connor was to work on before she died, might owe something to the Kaposi sarcoma-like lesions some lupus sufferers have endured.

There was also hair loss (caused by the disease and by some forms of treatment), problems with blood chemistry, kidney problems and the possibility of renal failure (this was to be, in fact, the immediate cause of death in August 1964), and the specter of psychiatric and psychological problems. The treatment – in the first years of O'Connor's life with lupus – could be as bad as the disease itself. The state of the art in the early 1950s called for treatment with ACTH (adrenocorticotrophic hormone, derived from the pituitary glands of pigs). The side effects of ACTH, a steroid, were unwelcome: swelling of the fatty tissues of the body (often in the face); deterioration of bone; loss of muscle tone; tumors (O'Connor went to the "cutting table" just before her death [HB 567]); insomnia; fatigue.

At one time or another in her life with lupus, O'Connor suffered all of these pains. While her dosage of ACTH was still being adjusted, O'Connor suffered severe joint pain and muscle loss in her legs. She wrote to "A" about her acquaintance with crutches:

I am learning to walk on crutches and I feel like a large stiff anthropoid ape who has no cause to be thinking about St. Thomas [Aquinas] or Aristotle. (HB 104)

One thinks of the paternal wise blood of which Enoch Emery boasts; it also led him into an apesuit. Six months later, x-rays revealed what appeared to be permanent loss of bone in the hip joint.

I'm informed that it's crutches for me from now on out. Putting a cap on it [the bone] won't be possible because the bone is diseased. So, so much for that. I will henceforth be a structure with flying buttresses. . . . (HB 151; ellipsis in original)

Although there was remission in 1958, after a trip to Lourdes (post hoc, propter hoc O'Connor did not decide), she continued

to suffer bone problems: she broke a rib coughing too strenuously (HB 306) and two years later, in 1960, the bone deterioration resumed in her jaw.

Like that of many AIDS sufferers, O'Connor's suffering was acute and acutely public; her body wore its disease for all to see. She could hope for no happiness through the body. For many critics within the consensus, to argue that O'Connor's use of the body means the flesh in general, and is part of her religious vision, seems only part of the issue. The new essay here, by Patricia Yaeger, explores the condition of the female adult body as one of the preconditions of meaning in *Wise Blood* – without the religious or metaphorical escape hatch.

Flannery O'Connor died in an Atlanta hospital on August 4, 1964; she was thirty-nine. In the thirty years since her death, her life and work have fueled an industry that rivals that of William Faulkner. When the Library of America published her *Complete Works* (1988), she became the first woman and only the second resident of this century (Faulkner had preceded her) to be so publicly canonized. There are now several dozen booklength studies of her work in print – as yet there is no biography – and several hundred articles. National and international conferences meet to discuss her work. No Southern writer (possibly no other American writer of this century) is the subject of so many masters theses and doctoral dissertations. A first French edition of *La sagesse dans la sang* is quoted at \$175. And, of course, there is the collectible merchandise.

If we know so much, why do we need more? Isn't *Wise Blood*, the first of O'Connor's two novels, so well known that a good percentage of literate Americans, reading of the "reluctant atheist" who did penance by filling his shoes with rocks, could accurately identify the protagonist of the novel, Hazel Motes? The problem is precisely that familiarity. There has been so much criticism of O'Connor and of *Wise Blood* in so relatively brief a time (as literary reputations go) that the orthodox line is narrow, deep, and resistant to revision. This volume of four "new essays" exists to open new ways of seeing and understanding the novel, and the critical establishment that guards the meaning. We assume that you have read the novel, so we engage in no plot synopsis.