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Antecedents and Trajectories of Two Twentieth-Century Writers from Georgia in Europe

Among Southern fiction writers of the second generation after the Southern Renaissance the fictional works of Flannery O'Connor and Carson McCullers, née Lula Carson Smith, show strikingly different trajectories in terms of their reception in Europe. Originally frequently associated with each other as practitioners of the 'Southern Grotesque' due to their privileging of misfits and to the role of violence in their fiction, they both show a preference for relatively narrowly defined, recurrent themes. Some of these are linked to their perception of Europe and their responses to European culture. Both reception and perception merit our consideration in this report on work in progress.

There are some uncanny parallels in their lives: one cannot help comparing McCullers' long suffering following a stroke at thirty and O'Connor's prolonged struggle with lupus, an inherited disease, which struck her when she was 26. Both their mothers played major roles in their lives. Margarita G. Smith first tried to boost the career of her daughter as a *Wunderkind* pianist and later moved north to Nyack to keep house and care for the invalid Carson. Similarly Regina O'Connor ruled over the household in Milledgeville to which Flannery permanently retired.¹

Research for two biographies in progress on O'Connor by Brad Gooch and William Sessions, following the demise of the official biographer, Sally Fitzgerald, who was thus sadly unable to complete her long-expected biography, as well as recent discoveries about O'Connor's private relationships, and the additional biographical insights into McCullers' contacts in France through Josyane Savigneau's investigations together with the 1999 publication of Carson's unfinished autobiography edited by Carlos Dews (including her wartime correspondence with Reeves McCullers) have shed further light on their lives.²

These studies reinforce the idea that the patterns of behavior of the two writers could hardly have been more different. Carson McCullers' embracing of a bohemian lifestyle, her notorious alcoholism and her painful relationship with her suicidal husband Reeves McCullers, whom she divorced and later remarried, all stand in stark contrast to the seemingly complete social conformity of O'Connor, and her regular habits of taking her Sunday lunch with her mother in Sanford House in town after attending mass in the parish church of the Sacred Heart in Milledgeville. When Maryat Lee, a close friend, suggested in April 1959 that O'Connor meet James Baldwin, she felt that in Georgia she could not invite and mix socially with him.³ By way of comparison, Carson's articulation of social criticism reflected her keen awareness of injustice and racial discrimination, and puts her into the 'progressive camp.' Her exposure of the injustice rampant in the segregated South, which began with her first novel *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (1940), contrasts strongly with Flannery's 'accommodationist' attitude, which has continued to be a contentious issue.

Their lives also took them in strikingly different directions. While Carson moved away from Georgia and the region when she was 17, thereafter only rarely paying short visits to her state and to Columbus, in particular, O'Connor returned to Milledgeville as a young graduate, after a few years in New York, to stay until her death at 39. As authors, however, both stuck throughout their writing careers to graphically depicted settings of their sub-region, which for Flannery primarily meant the landscape of the Piedmont area in Georgia (and in the neighboring state of Tennessee), and for Carson small towns resembling Columbus, GA, where she had grown up.⁴

Their spheres of activity and their interaction with acquaintances and friends were, of course, worlds apart. Initially both Georgia writers were early in their careers invited to Yaddo, the artist colony in New York State. Carson was to be a regular guest there in the 1940s, while living in a bohemian household in Brooklyn with many émigré writers and artists such as Klaus and Erika Mann, Wystan Hugh Auden, Jane and Paul Bowles, Richard Wright, Benjamin Britten and Gipsy Rose Lee. For her part, Flannery O'Connor, after a brief stay at Yaddo⁵ and her sojourn with Robert and Sally Fitzgerald, was forced by her sickness to return home and her world shrunk due to her severe illness. In spite of various engagements to speak at colleges in and outside her state, her physical sphere merely encompassed the farm Andalusia, where she reared peacocks, and the Cline mansion in

Milledgeville, the former capital of Georgia. This was the territory she closely observed, with its large penitentiary and the biggest lunatic asylum of the state offering interesting human material.

Of course, O'Connor's intellectual world extended much further through her indefatigable reading of many philosophers, theologians and, of course, fiction writers from Europe and the United States.⁶ She also kept up a remarkably active and well-disciplined practice of reviewing.⁷ Even more important was her extensive correspondence with numerous close friends, ranging from Catholic theologians to Northern sceptics and agnostics, such as novelist John Hawkes. Her contacts, which gave her many a stimulus and prompted a remarkable modulation of her voice to fit the various addressees in hundreds of letters, extended from serious inquiries into belief or debates of religious crises (as shown in her correspondence with 'A' = Betty Hester) to witty exchanges in a playful mood displaying her remarkable sense of humor, e.g. with Maryat Lee. The latter allowed her to share vicariously the adventures of unorthodox, flamboyant and rebellious artists,⁸ including a number of lesbians (Maryat Lee, Betty Hester, Cecil Dawkins).⁹ The publication of her correspondence in *The Habit of Being*, which revealed a different, very engaging side of her character, gave a considerable boost to her fiction, e.g. in Britain, where reception had been slow,¹⁰ and led to a surge in academic interest as reflected in reviews.

Flannery undertook only one transatlantic journey when she was invited to join a Catholic group from Savannah on a pilgrimage to Rome and Lourdes in April 1958, but even this experience was affected by her infirmity so that she had to cut out planned side trips. Afterwards she commented in a letter to Betty Hester: "Now for the rest of my life I can forget about going to Europe, having went" (*Habit of Being* 282).¹¹

Carson, by comparison, could not get enough of Europe. Though her long fiction continued to be rooted in her immediate region, she spent significant amounts of time in Europe and returned there repeatedly in spite of some disastrous personal experiences. The period of her second Guggenheim Fellowship in 1946-47 in France and Italy brought her great professional success but ended discouragingly when she and her husband had to be put on a plane on stretchers for their return to America, with Reeves suffering from 'delirium tremens.' Undaunted she returned to Paris with Reeves for their second extended stay in France in 1952. Their being marooned in the ancien

presbytère in Bachivillers, a French village some distance from Paris, however, in 1952-53 led to a catastrophe: it ended with her abrupt departure and Reeves' drifting ever deeper into alcoholism and towards eventual suicide.¹²

In view of her regular transatlantic visits and the various friendships with Europeans McCullers cultivated (cf. Carson's intense homoerotic relationship with Annamarie Clarac-Schwarzenbach, the emotionally unstable daughter of a Swiss industrialist family in 1940-41)¹³ but especially in view of her childhood dreams of achieving fame as a pianist it comes as no surprise that Carson McCullers populated her short fiction with musicians of European extraction and frequently evoked the memory of European composers (Bach, Mozart, Beethoven etc.). Several German or German-Jewish musicians make their appearance in her early stories, the work of her apprenticeship. In "Wunderkind" Mr. Bilderbach and his wife are of German descent and Cincinnati, with its many German immigrants, provides the setting for Bienchen's story.¹⁴

In the short story "Poldi" the stocky cellist Poldi Klein is in love with Kurt, a concert pianist of German background, whom she praises with German phrases ("So gemuetlich he is. Ein Edel Mensch!", *The Mortgaged Heart* 35). In "The Aliens," a story for which there are extensive drafts, Felix Kerr, an elderly Jew and a refugee from Munich, whose mood is at times captured through musical imagery, is traveling south to find employment as a musician in (La)Fayetteville.¹⁵ Together with the various adolescents in McCullers' fiction who dream of European travel or immerse themselves in classical music, these and other stories¹⁶ provide further evidence that in Carson McCullers' imagination Europe is 'saturated' with music and musicians.

As a teenager deprived of many opportunities Mick Kelly in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* can thus escape from the restrictions of the small town of pre-air-conditioning days with its boring atmosphere, frustrating conditions and monotonous, trivial events. She can begin to live more intensely and experience vicariously moments of 'elevation'¹⁷ through the strains of music from the symphonies to which she listens ecstatically at the open windows of the homes of the (more) affluent who possess a radio.¹⁸

After the sensational success of her early masterpiece *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, which in her persuasive rendition of the full range of human types demonstrated Carson's precocious awareness of the intricacies of feelings and her sharing of the talent labeled 'negative

capability,' her empathy with the downtrodden in society, she had an eager following throughout the 1940s and early 50s. The culmination of her reputation was reached with the publication of *The Ballad of the Sad Café and Other Works* (1951) and the dramatization and successful run on Broadway of *The Member of the Wedding* in 1950 and 1951, which was followed by the lucrative sale of the screen rights for this novel.¹⁹ Her status in the front rank of young American writers seemed uncontested for a while and it was then that European publishing houses began to compete for the translation rights. As the royalty statements by her agents in her papers in Austin HRC show, her income from book club editions, mass printings of paperback editions by Bantam Books in North America, as well as from contracts for her books in France, Germany, Italy, and Scandinavia, was significant.²⁰ Even more financially rewarding were the productions of the stage version of *Member*. But hopes of repeating this success with the theater treatment of her tragic private relationship with Reeves in *The Square Root of the Wonderful*, which had only a short run on Broadway in 1957, did not materialize. In spite of the loyalty of friends and admirers such as Tennessee Williams, McCullers' reputation gradually waned²¹ and eventually fell behind that of her younger fellow writer from Milledgeville, Flannery O'Connor, who had meanwhile brought out a first novel and a collection of stories (*Wise Blood*, 1952, and *A Good Man is Hard to Find*, 1955). When McCullers' long-awaited novel *Clock Without Hands* appeared in 1961, despite mixed reviews, new interest flared up and contracts with many publishing houses followed. Soon afterwards the dramatization of "The Ballad" by Edward Albee (in 1962) and later its film version,²² appealed to a wider public. The film adaptation of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (1968) and of John Huston's *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, starring Marlon Brando and Elizabeth Taylor, similarly attracted attention in 1966-67. They helped briefly to restore Carson's status as a prominent creative writer in spite of her constant health problems, seeming loss of control over her creative talent, and then her terminal illness.

The adverse criticism of her last novel, in which the majority of reviewers noted a hybrid blending of realism and allegory in a character such as Sherman Pew, suggested that Carson was no longer able to match her earlier successes. Her former forte, the persuasive rendition of the haunting atmosphere of a claustrophobic milieu, the depiction of monotonous days and the trivial repetitiveness of lives in small towns as experienced by teenagers yearning for freedom, was not

fully evident in her last novel. The depiction of lingering illness (Mr. Malone) and of reactionary political projects and plots in the civil rights' era (the old Judge Fox Clane) were no compensation for this loss. The presence of homoerotic attraction in her book and of gender anxieties besetting adolescents on the threshold of maturity, which had been a significant element in her earlier books, was not enough to hold the readers' interest in the novel then. It was only in the 1990s that these concerns found much resonance and the preoccupation with issues of race, gender and class triggered a new wave of essays on McCullers.²³

Meanwhile Flannery O'Connor had rapidly acquired enough admirers to achieve the status of a canonical writer, a process which was finally confirmed by her inclusion in the Library of America in 1988, 13 years before Carson McCullers received such recognition. While their fictions were rooted in the same subsection of the South, there were significant differences in the dramatis personae inhabiting them. In the fictional worlds O'Connor created, dubious or fanatical (country) preachers, who combat rationalists and agnostics, abound and self-complacent citizens are shocked out of their smugness. The rendition of liminal experiences evokes an atmosphere of mystery and acts of conversion play a central role in O'Connor. In contrast, functionaries and rituals of organized religion are practically absent from Carson McCullers' oeuvre, with the exception of a superficial minister who fails to respond to the needs of the terminally sick Mr. Malone in *Clock Without Hands*. However, this does not mean that there are no religious references as Christ-like or crucified figures occur in her books.

The deliberate assault on her readers (to use Shirley Foster's phrase) which O'Connor also accounted for in her lectures as the need to shock the blind or the hard of hearing into an awareness of spiritual afflictions and of the distortions in modern life²⁴ has met with some harsh criticism in the still unevenly divided academic readership of her stories. This situation continues today with the debate about whether it is possible to read her stories and decipher her narrative voice in the light of Bakhtin's concept of the dialogic imagination.²⁵ This is an as yet unresolved dispute as is the controversy about gender issues in O'Connor's work. In recent years the integrity of O'Connor's art has been questioned from a feminist angle, culminating in Sarah Gordon's charge – from the inner circle of O'Connor scholars – that the author showed “obedience to white patriarchal social and religious orders” to the detriment of her art and humanity.²⁶ Still, the ‘concrete particu-

lars' of her settings and the precision of her depiction have provided at least in the eyes of a majority of American critics (most of the contributors to the *O'Connor Bulletin*, less so the writers for the new *O'Connor Review*) in the evolution of her art a sufficiently firm basis for her ulterior goals, the evocation of a transcendent realm of mystery.²⁷ While Brad Gooch recently labeled O'Connor "a thirteenth-century lady," and she herself humorously and self-deprecatingly described herself as a "hillbilly Thomist" (*Collected Works* 934),²⁸ O'Connor's coordinates remained anchored in the 20th century Bible Belt in the South, which she once described as "Christ-haunted" (*Collected Works* 818).²⁹

Though her fictional work mirrored many traits of Southern society from the Piedmont, she also engaged in a dialogue with late 19th and 20th century European novelists, showing great respect for Joseph Conrad, and accepting the generous advice given by Henry James' disciple Caroline Gordon, who served as a kind of mentor to O'Connor.³⁰ Whilst O'Connor stressed the unique situation of a Southern writer and, unlike some Agrarian thinkers around 1930, did not dwell on the elective affinity between the South and Europe, she was inspired by the fiction of François Mauriac and Georges Bernanos, rather than by Evelyn Waugh or Graham Greene, among European fiction writers concerned with religious questions, with sin and expiation. By publishing his monograph 25 years ago, Frederick Asals firmly established a shift in O'Connor's orientation from a quasi-Manichean anthropology to a sacramental view, reflecting her receptivity to the ideas of the French palaeontologist Teilhard de Chardin; earlier she had responded to the theological and philosophical ideas of the French neo-Thomist Jacques Maritain. Recently William Sessions has argued for the comparable importance for her work of German philosophers and theologians, such as Romano Guardini or Friedrich von Huelgel. There is reason to assume that in her conception of her role as a Christian writer she was influenced by some of their ideas, while her acknowledged lack of true familiarity with German authors severely limited the impact of fictional models from that country, though Franz Kafka figures in her correspondence and conversations.³¹

What she included of the transatlantic scene in her fiction so firmly rooted in the American South, however, were allusions to the horrors of the concentration camps (one remembers the vision Mrs. Shortley has of piles of corpses as recollected from newsreels) and the fate of European refugees, for instance, in "The Displaced Person." Sev-

eral of her characters also allude to their military service overseas, as Mr. Shortley does, who absurdly claims to have “bled and died” there while fighting enemies bespectacled like the Pole Mr. Guizac (*Collected Works* 323); some are veterans and invalids like Hazel Motes, who has returned to the Tennessee backwoods after four years of overseas service. In early drafts of *Wise Blood* a visit to a French brothel, from which he escaped by jumping out of the window, provides a humorous glimpse into Hazel’s lack of initiation,³² antedating his experience with the fat prostitute Leora Watts, and at the same time draws on notorious aspects of the Old World. The ‘unenlightened’ religious heritage of Europe is also included in the persistent intervention of the Irish Catholic priest, Father Flynn, in “The Displaced Person,” while “Parker’s Back” culminates in the revelation of a stern-looking Byzantine Christ (“the haloed head of a flat stern Byzantine Christ with all-demanding eyes,” *Collected Works* 667) tattooed onto the back of the protagonist O. E. Parker in O’Connor’s last story.

On another level – that of the genesis of the story – Europe may arguably also lurk behind Manley Pointer, the devilish conman, seemingly one of the eponymous “Good Country People,” who poses as a bible salesman and dupes Hulga before retreating with his spoils, her wooden prosthesis and her spectacles. In spite of Flannery’s prompt denial this traveling salesman may be the result of the metamorphosis of a cosmopolitan European friend of Flannery’s, whose identity and importance to the writer was long unknown. Biographical research undertaken by Marc Bosco, who followed up brief comments by the late Sally Fitzgerald about “the handsome and affable Dane named Eric Langkjer” (Fitzgerald 1998 and 2005), revealed a strong personal involvement on the part of the author after 1953. Over the next two years Flannery spent much time with him during his regular visits to Andalusia, but also on long rides in his car through the countryside. Her relationship with this son of a Dane and a Russian artist might have moved beyond the platonic if he had not returned unexpectedly to Denmark late in 1954. This is suggested by her personal letters to Mr. Langkjer, who is now in his 80s and has made these letters accessible to Marc Bosco. In the light of this discovery Flannery’s desire to mediate her fiction to a Danish public gains in significance.³³ When *En god mand er svoer at finde* was published posthumously in Copenhagen in 1965, it contained the story “A Late Encounter With the Enemy,” the text alluded to in O’Connor’s letter to Elizabeth McKee.³⁴

Meanwhile, of course, her stories and novels had become accessible in various European languages though the trajectories of their reception showed considerable differences, especially if one compares the long range impact in German-speaking countries and in France. How complex the factors are which shape the reputation and recognition of individual writers in another culture can here only be briefly suggested through a comparison of the fortunes of the two Georgia writers in the two neighboring language communities (France, Switzerland and Germany plus Austria). In France, whose elective affinity with the American South is an inevitable topic in this colloquium, Flannery O'Connor had the inestimable advantage of attracting the attention of the distinguished mediator Maurice Edgar Coindreau, who translated both her novels, while competent younger translators provided French versions of her stories and essays.³⁵ Coindreau also became a personal friend who visited her in Andalusia for conversations on the task at hand.³⁶ Eleven years after her death O'Connor was included in the agrégation list in France (in 1975-76)³⁷ and retained the respect both of 'orthodox' readers and of those reading her texts against the grain and her own authorial comments.³⁸ On the other hand, McCullers, who had had many contacts with French writers during her residence there, was less fortunate though her books were all marketed, and several French writers such as Michel Mohrt in 1961 claimed a special place for her in contemporary American literature.³⁹

However, both Flannery O'Connor and Carson McCullers had the benefit of an accomplished German translator in the person of Elisabeth Schnack, who was responsible for the publication of eight of the ten stories contained in Flannery O'Connor's first collection.⁴⁰ Schnack, who mediated to a German readership part of Faulkner's oeuvre, especially his short stories and the Snopes trilogy, did not, however, work on Flannery's other texts, and the second novel in the translation by Leonore Germann failed to appeal to German critics and readers alike. This apparently discouraged publishers from commissioning further translations. It was only in the late eighties that Diogenes, Zurich, a major mediator of American, especially Southern, fiction to German readers, (re)published her short fiction and the second novel in German (1987).⁴¹ The positive publicity resulting from the appearance of *Habit of Being* in 1979 and enhanced by John Huston's congenial filming of *Wise Blood*, had earlier offered an additional stimulus to make this novel accessible.⁴² Unfortunately the German publishing house which

brought it out went bankrupt, thus preventing a successful marketing of O'Connor's book. By contrast, McCullers' papers in Austin show that Schnack developed a very personal relationship with Carson, whom she also visited in Nyack and with whom she shared some of Carson's delight and relief at her temporary respite from her numerous illnesses.

This privileged relationship strengthened Schnack's resolve to give pride of place to the work of McCullers in the program of the Swiss publishing house Diogenes. Carson's letters to Schnack (May, June, and July 1963) with the hint that Carson would like to visit her translator at her cottage near Vevey / Switzerland in turn suggest that the memory of Annamarie Clarac-Schwarzenbach was a significant factor in the personal relationship between the author and her congenial translator.⁴³

Yet it was not only the dedication of a personal friend as a mediator but also the readiness of German readers to appreciate the themes, such as the initiation of adolescents, and the narrative perspective, the empathy with adolescents, predominant in Carson's fiction that ensured its success with German creative writers, critics and academics alike.⁴⁴ When her reputation was already waning, the quality paper *Die Welt* gave Carson "The Prize of the Young Generation" for speaking "along with very few writers of our present day . . . to this young generation."⁴⁵ Meanwhile Flannery O'Connor's work, which in the *New World* and in France was more highly regarded, failed to win a sufficient number of readers in Germany for her books to remain in print. The difficulties of the German readership to comprehend the regional manners and realize the authenticity with which O'Connor depicted the literalism and fundamentalism of the Bible Belt were certainly one complicating factor. German readers had also found other Anglophone writers who provided them with stories satisfying their spiritual needs after the disasters of World War II. Those of Graham Greene's books which seemed to focus on sin, grace and salvation had literally reached millions of readers in Central Europe and the demand for texts concerned with theological issues was now on the wane.⁴⁶ European readers had also become intensely aware of racial tensions in the USA. Yet certain stereotypes about the American South with an awareness of communal rather than individual violence were not catered to in O'Connor's fiction, though they were in the fiction of several of her competitors from Dixie, such as Carson McCullers, and later Harper Lee.⁴⁷ So while O'Connor expressed scorn for Carson's last

book,⁴⁸ it – rather than O'Connor's fiction – found resonance among certain European audiences.⁴⁹

Current trends in scholarship, such as concerns with race, class and gender, would seem to reinforce this current imbalance. It could be called a kind of see-saw between the two writers amongst European readers.

It was no coincidence that the rendition of the backward South, rather than individual issues of salvation, made McCullers very popular in Eastern Europe. O'Connor, for her part, was reluctant to allow her texts to be used as evidence for the evils of Capitalism in Dixie. In O'Connor's correspondence with her agent in 1956 Elizabeth McKee refers to a request concerning a possible publication of *Wise Blood* in Polish and Czech.⁵⁰ After consulting with Denver Lindley about the feasibility of such a project (letter of April 13, 1956) Flannery accepts his advice not to give permission but rather to “drop the matter of publication in any Russian-occupied country” (as she put it in a letter to Lindley, April 19, 1956), as “they would probably use the Misfit to represent the Typical American Businessman” (*Habit of Being* 151), and she instructs McKee accordingly. Though several translations published in the Soviet Bloc countries are held in Milledgeville,⁵¹ their antecedents are unknown. That O'Connor was not far off the mark in her suspicions is apparent in a German anthology published in the GDR edited by Hans Petersen: *Moderne amerikanische Prosa* (1967), where O'Connor's is represented by “A Late Encounter with the Enemy.” The stories selected are said to offer symptoms of the negative side of American society, which is characterized by loneliness, anxiety, racial segregation, destruction of human relationships, and alienation.

The potential ideological usefulness of Southern fiction may have been a factor in the trajectories of reception. O'Connor's relative neglect of class and social issues helps to account for her lack of popularity in East Germany and elsewhere behind the Iron Curtain, in contrast to McCullers, who had a mass market there.⁵² As Judith G. James adduces, 115,000 copies of *Clock Without Hands* were published in the U.S.S.R. and appreciative comments (for instance, by Inna M. Leviodova) certified the quality of this controversial book in the eyes of the beholder (James 155).⁵³

The different transatlantic receptions of the two writers from Georgia have thus revealed, and confirmed, the assumption that the exchange between the two cultures is not a simple, neutral process but

a highly complex development that includes an ideological dimension, while also reflecting trends and fashions in scholarship. It is linked to preconceived notions and selective perceptions of the other country with its various regions. It depends on the availability of selective information and the presence of engaged observers and mediators (who have a stake in the interaction) and on very complicated operations of filtering out relevant texts, which ostensibly mirror significant aspects of the other culture. The two writers had themselves to very different extents included certain facets of the European reality, and appropriated only certain segments of its cultural and literary heritage in their renditions of their own Georgia landscapes. Their European readers have acted in a similar fashion. Readers in different European countries have given unequal credit to the challenging fictionalization of very different individual perceptions of reality and of the human condition.

Notes

- ¹ For Carson McCullers' life see especially Virginia Spencer Carr, *The Lonely Hunter* (1975), for Flannery O'Connor, see Jean W. Cash, *Flannery O'Connor: A Life* (2002).
- ² Both Brad Gooch and William Sessions reported on their projects at the recent "O'Connor and Other Georgia Writers" conference (Milledgeville, March 29-April 1, 2006); for O'Connor's private relationships see below.
- ³ See her letter of April 25, *The Habit of Being* 329-30.
- ⁴ The precision with which McCullers depicted her native town in her fiction has been demonstrated in the still unpublished dissertation by Margaret S. Sullivan, "Carson McCullers: The Conversion of Experience, 1917-1947," Duke University, 1966.
- ⁵ Young Flannery O'Connor's short visit to Yaddo was terminated when she followed Robert Lowell's guidance: he involved her in the abortive attempt to oust Yaddo's director, Elizabeth Ames, for alleged communistic activities and her role as a 'fellow-traveler.' See O'Connor's correspondence with Betty Boyd Love in June 1949, in which Flannery offers an account of the suspicions of collusion between Elizabeth Ames and Communist guests (Flannery O'Connor Collection at Georgia College & State University in Milledgeville). The author gratefully acknowledges permission to study and use the materials in this collection.
- ⁶ O'Connor's reading is analyzed in the catalogue of her library by Arthur Kinney, which also transcribes her annotations and markings in her books. The material still at Andalusia awaits further study.
- ⁷ Leo J. Zuber and Carter W. Martin have made the book reviews accessible in their publication *The Presence of Grace and other Book Reviews by Flannery O'Connor* (1983).

- ⁸ See also the unpublished correspondence in the Flannery O'Connor Collection, Milledgeville. For a survey of O'Connor's multiple friendships see the biography by Cash, for the holdings of her correspondence see *Postmarked Milledgeville* (2002).
- ⁹ A point made by Sarah Gordon in her review, "Ralph C. Wood. *Flannery O'Connor and the Christ-Haunted South*," *O'Connor Review* 3 (2005): 102-09.
- ¹⁰ See the reviews by Harold Beaver in *TLS*, Nov 21, 1980, and Lorna Tracey, *London Review of Books*, Sept. 3-16 (1981): 13-14, following the re-publication of several of her books by Faber&Faber.
- ¹¹ See also her letter to Elizabeth Bishop, *Collected Works*, 1073, June 1, 1958, ". . . my capacity for staying at home has now been perfected, sealed & is going to last me the rest of my life."
- ¹² On the tragic failure of this project see Josyane Savigneau, *Carson McCullers* 222-40; see also the unpublished letters of the author to various friends (for instance, to John and Simone Brown in Paris, who had assisted her before) and her appeal to them to help her retrieve property which she had left behind in the French village (Carson McCullers Collection, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, box 25). The author gratefully acknowledges a fellowship granted by the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center and is grateful for permission to study and quote from the relevant materials in the McCullers Collection.
- ¹³ See Savigneau 68-70, 73-75, 96-97. See also Annamarie's correspondence with Carson (box 24) and Carson's untitled essay on Annamarie Clarac-Schwarzenbach, Carson McCullers Collection, Harry Ransom Center, box 48.
- ¹⁴ See Carson McCullers, *The Mortgaged Heart*, ed. Margarita G. Smith (1971) 74-87. There are obviously merely thinly veiled parallels to Carson's personal experience, as she had a very close relationship with her piano teacher, Mrs. Tucker, whose move away from Columbus, GA, in 1934 young Carson felt very deeply and regarded as a kind of desertion.
- ¹⁵ See the various drafts for a longer fiction focusing on this German Jew who had been "born in a small town and near to the city of Rostock on the Baltic Sea" (box 1, folder 8). These drafts tell the reader much about Kerr and his family, but especially about his relationship with his older daughter Karen, and give more concrete contours to his Central European background. The published story merely hints at his 'flight from Germany' two years previously (*The Mortgaged Heart* 9) while the drafts dwell on his residence in Munich and his married life there. But they also stress the unpredictable nature of his daughter Karen's emotional behavior and his deep love for her. Felix Kerr's concern is reflected in the fact that somebody's spontaneous gesture painfully reminds him of Karen, whose whereabouts are said to be unknown to him. In the published story his grief is rendered through elaborate musical metaphors, see *The Mortgaged Heart* 96.
- ¹⁶ See, for instance, similar references to European music and the cadences of its composers in "Untitled Piece," or in "The Sojourner" which also briefly evokes scenes in Paris. See *The Mortgaged Heart* 98-123 and *Collected Stories of Carson McCullers* 138-47.
- ¹⁷ See Barbara Nauer Folk, "The Sad Sweet Music of Carson McCullers," *Georgia Review* 16 (Summer 1962): 202-09. Cf. also Mick's strong interest in composers, especially "a fellow who had lived in some country in Europe, Motsart!", or Beethoven (*Complete Novels* 33, 96, 100).

- ¹⁸ In the film version directed by Robert Ellis Miller and released in 1968 the actress Sondra Locke as Mick climbs on to a scaffolding to be able to listen to a performance of Mozart's Jupiter symphony. Music thus serves as a symbol of the ideal.
- ¹⁹ For this and the following discussion see Judith Giblin James, *Wunderkind: The Reputation of Carson McCullers* (1995) 127-36 on the success of the stage version. Earlier compilations reflecting McCullers' reception by critics are Robert F. Kiernan's reference guide devoted both to Katherine Anne Porter and Carson McCullers, *Katherine Anne Porter and Carson McCullers: A Reference Guide* (1976), and the comprehensive annotated bibliography on studies of Carson McCullers by A. M. Shapiro, J. Bryer, and K. Field, *Carson McCullers, A Descriptive Listing and Annotated Bibliography of Criticism* (1980).
- ²⁰ See Carson McCullers Collection, Harry Ransom Center, esp. box 27 and box 38 for royalty statements.
- ²¹ On the failure of the stage version see Savigneau 260-65. Academic critics such as Ihab Hassan nonetheless continued to praise Carson as a significant voice reflecting existentialist trends, see "Carson McCullers: The Alchemy of Love and Aesthetics of Pain," *Modern Fiction Studies* 5.4 (Winter 1959/60): 311-26.
- ²² In a letter to Carroll Reed of May 10, 1958 (box 24) Carson had wanted him to be the director and Anna Magnani and Marlon Brando the two antagonists in the confrontation, while Truman Capote was to be cast as Cousin Lymon.
- ²³ See the articles by Thadious Davis and Lori Kenschaft, which were specially written for *Critical Essays on Carson McCullers*, ed. Beverly Lyon Clark and Melvin J. Friedman (1996) 206-23. Davis takes McCullers to task for giving in to the expectations and prejudices of white bourgeois audiences: "McCullers resorted to the specific race ideology and class politics she wrote into her play," which now appears "conformist" (211).
- ²⁴ See Foster's essay of 1986. Cf. O'Connor's memorable phrases in her essay "The Fiction Writer and His Country": "to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost-blind you draw large and startling figures" (*Collected Works* 806).
- ²⁵ See the contrasted views of Marshall Bruce Gentry (1986), Robert Brinkmeyer (1989), and recently Ralph C. Wood (2004). See also Wood's essay "Flannery O'Connor's Preachers and Mikhail Bakhtin's Dialogical Understanding of Truth," *Flannery O'Connor Review* 1 (2001-2002): 56-73.
- ²⁶ See Sarah Gordon's monograph (2000).
- ²⁷ On O'Connor's conception of how the precise depiction of an actual countryside must serve an author's ulterior goals, see "The Fiction Writer and His Country" (*Collected Works* 801-02). Her fictional practice becomes particularly clear in her story "The Displaced Person," when Mrs. Shortley in her death agony is said "to contemplate for the first time the tremendous frontiers of her true country" (*Collected Works* 305).
- ²⁸ Cf. her letter to Robie Macauley, May 18, 1955: "Everybody who has read *Wise Blood* thinks I'm a hillbilly nihilist, whereas I would like to create the impression over the television that I'm a hillbilly Thomist" (*The Habit of Being* 81).
- ²⁹ See her essay "Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction" (*Collected Works* 813-21).
- ³⁰ See especially Gordon's comments on *Wise Blood*, as published by Sally Fitzgerald in "A Master Class: From the Correspondence of Caroline Gordon and Flannery

O'Connor," *Georgia Review* 33.4 (Winter 1979): 827-46. That Gordon continued to comment on Flannery's fiction is reflected in further exchanges selectively included in *The Habit of Being* and partly contained in the Caroline Gordon Collection in Princeton University.

- ³¹ For Sessions' reflections on O'Connor's response to these thinkers and his own formative experience see his contribution in Gretlund/Westarp (2006), 56-67. O'Connor was, of course, dependent on translations many of which are marked and annotated as Arthur Kinney has shown in his study of Flannery O'Connor's library. O'Connor's own acknowledgement of her lack of proficiency in German is also apparent in her dedication of a copy of the (partial) German translation of *A Good Man Is Hard to Find*, entitled *Ein Kreis im Feuer*, which she seems to have given to the wife of a Dean at Georgia College ("For Gertrude who can read this from Flannery O'Connor who can't," Flannery O'Connor Collection, Milledgeville). – On O'Connor's reading of Kafka in her correspondence with Maryat Lee, Flannery mentions the discussion of existentialist writers such as Kierkegaard and Kafka in an informal reading club (undated letter, presumably from 1958), and Kinney 33, 129-30, 158, and 180-81.
- ³² See various drafts of the novel in the Flannery O'Connor Collection in Milledgeville (folders 40 and 91) and a variant of this episode of his ludicrous escape from a brothel (folder 91).
- ³³ See O'Connor's remark in a letter to Elizabeth McKee, Nov. 22, 1958: "I am still trying to imagine General Tennessee Flintrock Sash of the Confederacy on the Danish radio." (Flannery O'Connor Collection, Milledgeville).
- ³⁴ *En god mand er svær at finde*, København: Grafisk Forlag, 1965.
- ³⁵ Coindreau's translation of *Wise Blood* appeared as *La sagesse dans le sang* (1959), *The Violent Bear It Away* as *Et ce sont les violents qui l'emportent* (1965). The two collections of short stories received the attention of Henri Morisset. *A Good Man Is Hard to Find* was published as *Les braves gens ne courent pas les rues* (1963) and *Everything That Rises Must Converge* as *Mon mal vient de plus loin* (1969).
- ³⁶ See Flannery's references to his forthcoming visits in 1959 (*Habit of Being* 325, 401) and letters of March 29, 1959, and May 20, 1960, Flannery O'Connor Collection, Milledgeville.
- ³⁷ Melvin J. Friedman, "Flannery O'Connor in France: An Interim Report," (1977) rpt. in *Critical Essays on Flannery O'Connor* (1985) 130-37.
- ³⁸ Among this latter group André Bleikasten has eloquently presented his unorthodox reading of O'Connor's fiction in his essay "The Heresy of Flannery O'Connor" (1978, rpt. in *Critical Essays on Flannery O'Connor* 138-58). On the division generally between groups of readers see Robert E. Golden in R. E. Golden and Mary C. Sullivan, eds., *Flannery O'Connor and Caroline Gordon: A Reference Guide* (1977). The different responses elicited by O'Connor in her fiction are also considered by Arno Heller in "'Experienced Meaning': Wirkungsästhetische Betrachtungen zur Kurzprosa Flannery O'Connors" (1979) 165-79.
- ³⁹ Of her texts *The Heart* was first translated by Marie-Madeleine Fayet, *Le Coeur est un chasseur solitaire*; *Reflections in a Golden Eye* as *Reflets dans un œil d'or* by Charles Cestre, while Marie-Madeleine Fayet translated *The Member of the Wedding* as *Frankie Addams* (1949) and *The Ballad of the Sad Café* as *La Ballade du café triste* (1985), whereas Colette M. Huet translated *Clock Without Hands* as *L'horloge*

sans aiguilles (1985). Michel Mohrt made claims for a prominent position for McCullers in his monograph on *Le nouveau roman américain* (1955).

- ⁴⁰ This collection, which appeared in German as *Ein Kreis im Feuer* (1961), excluded the stories "A Stroke of Good Fortune" and "A Temple of the Holy Ghost." The omission of these stories puzzled both O'Connor and Robert Giroux, her agent. See her correspondence about the contract which allowed the German publishing house to select from among the stories contained in her first collection those "most suitable for a German readership." Giroux and Flannery O'Connor wondered which of her stories might be "too shocking for German sensibilities." See the former's introduction, p. xiv in *Complete Stories* and Flannery's letter to Elizabeth McKee, in which she remarked, "I did not think I was *that* vicious" (July 5, 1958, *Habit of Being* 289).
- ⁴¹ Germann's translation (*Das brennende Wort*) published in 1962 went out of print and the new translation with the revised title *Die Gewalt tun* (1987) was undertaken by Cornelia C. Walter.
- ⁴² Houston's film (*Wise Blood* 1979), in which Flannery's close friends, Sally Fitzgerald and her children Michael, Benedict and Cathy, were fully involved, while Brad Dourif appeared in the role of Hazel Motes, was true to the spirit of the novel and strikingly different from the pathetic Schlitz Playhouse production of "The Life you Save May be Your Own" with Gene Kelly as Tom Triplet, a penitent version of Mr. Shiftlet, and a happy ending (1957). However, the artistically successful film reached only a limited audience. On O'Connor's disappointment with the trivialization in the early film version of the story see, for instance, her letter to Denver Lindley, March 6, 1957 (*Habit of Being* 206).
- ⁴³ See their correspondence accessible in the Carson McCullers Collection, Harry Ransom Center (box 24,10 with Carson's three dictated typed letters, and box 29,4 with Schnack's replies from Corsaux). Schnack also sent McCullers a replacement of the photo of Annamarie Carson McCullers had lost. Schnack presumably urged the publishing house to give pride of place to McCullers' novel in a flyer promoting the publisher's program.
- ⁴⁴ One of the earlier analytical essays was a long article by Klaus Lubbers (1963), which offered a study of theme and structure in Carson McCullers' fiction (*Jahrbuch für Amerikastudien* 1963: 187-204), and the responses of several German writers (Martin Walser, Hans Magnus Enzensberger and Heinrich Böll) were collected by Gert Haffmans and brought out by Diogenes, the Swiss publishing house (1974). Several German scholars followed suit but Lubbers' essay has remained the most significant German contribution to the debate on McCullers' achievement.
- ⁴⁵ See Carr, *The Lonely Hunter* (1975) 522.
- ⁴⁶ Cf. my more extensive observations in "Flannery O'Connor Among Creative Readers Abroad" (1987) esp. 55-57.
- ⁴⁷ At the same time authors such as Truman Capote, William Styron and also William Goyen rivaled Flannery O'Connor in absorbing the attention of a German-speaking reading public.
- ⁴⁸ See her dismissive comment on *Clock Without Hands*: "This long-awaited-by-the-faithful book will come out in September. I believe it is the worst book I have ever read. It is incredible . . . It must signal the complete disintegration of this woman's

- talent" (*Habit of Being* 446). Houghton Mifflin had sent a pre-publication volume to O'Connor.
- ⁴⁹ The situation in Spain resembles that in German-speaking parts of Europe. O'Connor's fiction is not in print in these two languages. See Gretchen Dobrott, "Promising Future: Flannery O'Connor in Spain," *Flannery O'Connor Review* 3 (2005): 73-75.
- ⁵⁰ See Flannery O'Connor Collection, Milledgeville and *Habit of Being* 151.
- ⁵¹ The Flannery O'Connor Collection in Milledgeville includes a Polish translation of both collections of her short stories, which appeared in 1970, and a Slovak version of the second collection, which came out in Bratislava in 1974. There is no evidence of any negotiations with the Estate, but publications in Warsaw Pact countries not infrequently appeared without prior permission.
- ⁵² The injustices in capitalist American society were an obvious topic in the German Democratic Republic: Irene Skotnicki offered a Marxist reading of McCullers in "Die Darstellung der Entfremdung in den Romanen von Carson McCullers," *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik* (1972): 24-45, and Utz Riese (1982) read McCullers' fiction along similar lines.
- ⁵³ Inna M. Levidova, head bibliographer at Moscow's Library of Foreign Literatures, positively reviewed this last book in 1966 when it was published in a Russian translation. Levidova's assessment of "Carson McCullers and Her Last Book" was published in an English translation in 1972 (James 208). Levidova also offered a reading of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* from the perspective of socialist realism, though, according to James, this reading was relatively free of ideological considerations.

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