

In an anticlimactic final chapter Seed attempts to place Pynchon in context by glossing all the novels about which Pynchon has made promotional statements, including Tom Robbins's *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*. In a brief appendix Seed reproduces Pynchon's 1969 letter on his use of Southwest African material to Thomas F. Hirsch who had written the author while researching a graduate paper on the Bondelzwarts.

No doubt Seed, a regular contributor to *Pynchon Notes*, is extremely familiar with Pynchon scholarship (although even here there are several notable exceptions, such as Steven Weisenburger's and Kathryn Hume's work on *Gravity's Rainbow*), and at its best *The Fictional Labyrinths of Thomas Pynchon* is a lucidly and level-headedly written theme and influence study which will surely serve both as a solid introduction to one of America's most important contemporary writers and as a strong shoring up of much of the most important criticism on him.

John F. Desmond

RISEN SONS: FLANNERY O'CONNOR'S VISION OF HISTORY

Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1987. Pp. 135 \$18.00

Reviewed by Melvin J. Friedman

Frederick Asals's *Flannery O'Connor: The Imagination of Extremity* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1982) features words like "inherent dualism," "dualistic imagination," and "ironic duality" and goes to the point of suggesting: "Psychologically, at least, Flannery O'Connor seems to have been an inveterate 'Manichean.'" Five years later the same publisher issues a book which dissents from this dualistic view and Manichean vision. John F. Desmond's *Risen Sons* argues for "coherent wholeness" (13) and unity.

Desmond's title seems to suggest a play on the words "risen sun" from William F. Lynch's *Christ and Apollo* ("Thus Christ is water, gold, butter, food, a harp, light, medicine, oil, bread, arrow, salt, turtle, risen sun, way, and many things besides"). *Christ and Apollo*, along with Claude Tresmontant's *A Study of Hebrew Thought*, Brian Wicker's *The Story-Shaped World*, and David Tracy's *The Analogical Imagination*, are central texts and help determine the contours of Desmond's investigation. These, as well as other books by Maritain, Gilson, Voegelin, Eliade, and Jaspers, offer him the theoretical underpinnings for his readings of O'Connor's fiction.

The first chapter of *Risen Sons* wanders across the theological terrain as Desmond tries to set up a meeting ground between the aesthetic and the ontological. He does very little with literature in chapter one although he does manage an interesting confrontation between a passage from O'Connor's "A Temple of the Holy Ghost" and one from Faulkner's *A Fable*. In the O'Connor text "the action moves forward to dramatize meaning" (23) while in the Faulkner novel rhetoric takes over and seems to stand in for "concrete dra-

matic movement" (23). We are told that "the sense of *mystery*" (23) O'Connor manages is completely absent from the Faulkner passage.

The remaining chapters concentrate more on O'Connor's fiction although Desmond never quite abandons those texts I mentioned above. One difficulty with *Risen Sons* is that the author seems occasionally to get lost in Dantean "dark forest" theological and historical commentary. Lynch's *Christ and Apollo*, for example, performs curiously heavy duty even when stories and novels are being examined. Lewis P. Simpson's *The Brazen Face of History* is a dominant and controlling presence in chapter five.

Desmond's third chapter, one of the most persuasive in his study, is given over entirely to *Wise Blood*. He offers these revealing sentences in his opening paragraph: "To impute a simple Manichean vision to O'Connor in *Wise Blood*, however, seems to beg the question of the book's complex dimensions. In its totality *Wise Blood* does not, I believe, argue for a Manichean view of reality; but this is not to say that the Manichean view is not a central issue in the novel" (51). At first this seems to equivocate, to offer a compromise with Desmond's seeming rejection of the Manichean vision in his introduction. But it is in fact merely an acknowledgment of O'Connor's "oblique" strategy and her presentation of "Haze's quest obliquely as a *via negativa*" (55) in her first novel. Desmond views *Wise Blood* as an early, sometimes tentative step toward the "unification of historical vision and analogical technique" (67) achieved in the later stories and in *The Violent Bear It Away*. Critics have always seemed to have difficulty accounting for *Wise Blood*. Asals, for example, characterized it as "an odd, angular book," which goes its own disruptive "Manichean" way almost in defiance of its author's widely advertised Catholicism. Desmond's contribution to the dialogue is a useful one.

Toward the end of his sixth chapter Desmond offers several thoughtful pages on *The Violent Bear It Away*, which he feels offers "the fullest development of her analogical vision and the most complete identification of thought and technique" (111). (Analogical is a crucial part of the vocabulary of *Risen Sons*.) This novel realizes the ideal convergence of history and craft, with Christ's Incarnation occupying the nerve center of the vision as well as the technique.

It should be mentioned also that Desmond systematically makes his way through the shorter fiction, going back to the master's thesis stories written at Iowa and commenting in detail on the final stories, such as "Parker's Back" and "Judgement Day."

Although *Risen Sons* sets a high standard for accuracy Desmond does occasionally nod. On p. 33 he speaks of "the Hazel Wickers/Hazel Motes material." He seems to ignore the fact that in "The Heart of the Park" Hazel's surname appears as Weaver. On p. 36 the footnote number, which refers to Frederick Asals, should be 3 instead of 4. In "Everything That Rises Must Converge" the family name is Chestny, not Chestney (see p. 69). On p. 75 Desmond speaks of "Stephen Daedalus, whose concept of the epiphany in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*." First of all, Stephen's last name appears as Dedalus in *Portrait*. Secondly, the concept of the "epiphany" occurs only in *Stephen Hero*,

not in the finished *Portrait*. (It is in *Stephen Hero*, by the way, that the surname of the protagonist is spelled Daedalus!) In the Bibliography (130) the publisher and date of John R. May's *The Pruning Word* are given as Vanderbilt University Press and 1969; the correct information should be University of Notre Dame Press and 1976. Finally, "Judgement Day" appears inaccurately as "Judgment Day" in the index (134).

Despite these lapses there is much to praise in *Risen Sons*. However, I do not feel that it is of the same importance as two books which pursue the *via negativa* and flirt with the Manichean view: Asals's *Flannery O'Connor: The Imagination of Extremity* and Martha Stephens's *The Question of Flannery O'Connor*.

Gerald Clarke

CAPOTE: A BIOGRAPHY

New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988. Pp. 632

Reviewed by Harold E. Lusher

Truman Capote's genius for publicity, which did so much to promote and enhance both his personal life and his professional career, does not seem to have vanished with the death of the author himself. Capote died on August 25, 1984, presumably of a cardiac-rhythmic disorder induced by a drug overdose. "In the hours and days before his death he had consumed great quantities of drugs: Valium, Dilantin, Codeine, Tylenol and two or three barbiturates" (546). Since his death, however, curiosity about both his personal life and his writing continues to flourish. In response to the undiminished demand for more of his written work—unfinished or hitherto unpublished—Random House has issued *Three by Truman Capote* (1985), the extant chapters of the widely heralded *Answered Prayers: The Unfinished Novel* (1987), and in the same year a judicious sampling of his prose in *A Capote Reader*. The increasing interest in the details of his background and private life—which, ironically, was often played out on an all too public stage—has now been satisfied by a fascinating and carefully documented account of his career: Gerald Clarke's *Capote: A Biography*.

If the task of a biographer is to give a full and faithful account of the career of an exceptional human being, Mr. Clarke has succeeded magnificently in meeting the challenge he has set himself. Although this is his first book, he learned his craft exemplarily as a senior writer for *Time* magazine, to which he still contributes from time to time. His work here is complete, without suffocating the interest of his reader in a mass of irrelevant detail; it is written with grace and clarity; and it is blessedly free of moral prejudice in its depiction of Capote's recreations and emotional involvements. The overwhelming impression that the reader is left with at the close of its 547 pages is of a biographer who clearly appreciates the person and achievement of his subject, but who is also aware of his obligation to recount as candidly as possible the self-destructive extravagances that marred and finally destroyed so promising a career.