

Sample Annotated Bibliography

Aarons, Victoria. "A Perfect Marginality: Public and Private Telling in the stories of Grace Paley." Studies in Short Fiction 27.1 (1990): 35-41.

Aarons examines how Paley, a "master of the construction of dialogue in the short-story form," uses narratives and conversation as a way to create a "community of shared belief and experience" for the characters in her stories. Aarons also stresses that "storytelling" is a "life-affirming force" in Paley's work because it places her characters "in the context of a wider human history."

Budick, Emily Miller. "The Graceful Art of Conversation: Grace Paley." Engendering Romance: Women Writers and the Hawthorne Tradition, 1850-1990. New Haven: Yale UP, 1994. 219-45.

Budick argues that Paley, McCullers, O'Connor, and Morrison are four twentieth-century women writers who "have inherited and adapted the classical tradition of American romance fiction." In a separate chapter on Paley, Budick shows how Paley combines "romantic skepticism" with her "feminist" desire to "reaffirm and revise [the society of white, male domination] from her own distinctive (female, Jewish) position."

Charters, Ann. "A Conversation with Ann Charters: Grace Paley." 1986. Major Writers of Short Fiction: Stories and

Commentaries. Ed. Ann Charters. Boston: Bedford Books of ~~St. Martin's Press~~, 1993. 1156-60.

In this interview, Paley explains why she made the switch from writing poems to writing short stories. She also answers some questions concerning the theme of "A Conversation with My Father."

DeKoven, Marianne. "Later and Elsewhere." Rev. of Later the Same Day, by Grace Paley. Partisan Review 53 (1986): 315-318.

---. "Mrs. Hegel-Shtein's Tears." Partisan Review 48 (1981): 217-223.

in this critical essay, Dekoven praises two aspects of Paley's "innovative form": 1) her ability to use "structural open-endedness" to make her fiction "true-to-life" and 2) her ability to use "startling, comic-bizarre language and imagery to make a profound literary moment which we experience simultaneously as a unity beyond pathos and language and also as a concatenation of the two separate elements."

Greiner, Hoke. "The Question of Chronology in Paley's 'Two Short Sad Stories from a Long and Happy Life.'" Studies in Short Fiction 29.4 (1992): 583-86.

In this article, Greiner examines why Paley reverses the chronological order of "A Subject of Childhood" and "The Used-Boy Raisers," the two narratives within "Two Short Sad Stories from a Long and Happy Life." In his discussion of possible explanations, he notes the importance of Diaspora, the "historical frustration of Jewish desire for a stable home and homeland," in both narratives and concludes that the chronological reversal "emphasizes [the] historical antecedents" of the main character, Faith.

Halfmann, Ulrich and Philipp Gerlach. "Grace Paley: A Bibliography." Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature 8.2 (1989): 339-54.

This article provides a list of both primary and secondary sources from 1959 to 1988. In addition to print materials, it provides a list of audio-visual materials and mentions one stage adaptation of her short stories. Halfmann and Gerlach also include French and German translations of Paley's work as well as French and German "items of critical import."

Klinkowitz, Jerome. "Constraint: Gender." Structuring the Void: The Struggle for Subject in Contemporary American Fiction.

Durham: Duke UP, 1992. 119-34.

After stating that "subject matter has been declared nonexistent" by deconstructive philosophy, Klinkowitz examines how Paley and other contemporary fiction writers deal with the problem of writing "as a structuring act that becomes its own reality." In this chapter, he notes how Paley's "understanding of gender roles" is a "generative force" that sustains the structure of her narratives.

Barnes, Linda Adams. "The Freak Endures: The Southern

Grotesque from Flannery O'Connor to Bobbie Ann
Mason." Since Flannery O'Connor: Essays on the

Contemporary American Short Story. Ed. Loren

Logsdon and Charles W. Mayer. Macomb: Western
Illinois U, 1987. 133-144.

Barnes sees Mason as the contemporary inheritor of
Flannery O'Connor's mantle, "keeping alive" (137)
the tradition of the Southern grotesque in fiction.
Comparing Mason's Shiloh and Other Stories (1982) to
O'Connor's works, Barnes notes that, like O'Connor,
Mason's grotesque "has an instructional purpose, . . .
reflects the tenor of the times, and is often quite
comic" (137). As Mason's Southern characters confront
"incongruities resulting from . . . encroaching modern
life" (139), they do what they must to survive.
"Mason's ultimate message," writes Barnes, "is 'Do the
best you can.'" (139).

Bates, Milton J. "Men, Women, and Vietnam." America

Rediscovered: Critical Essays on Literature and

Film of the Vietnam War. Ed. Owen W. Gilman, Jr.

and Lorrie Smith. New York: Garland, 1990.

27-63.

Bates, who declares that for many writers the
essential Vietnam War story . . . [is] a story of
emasculatation" (36), uses Mason's In Country to
launch an analysis of the effect of the Vietnam
War on sexual roles. While acknowledging that
In Country "declines the easy solution" (29) of
a sentimental romantic ending, Bates also believes
that Mason's choice of a teenage female protagonist
limits the novel: "Mason . . . cannot realistically
venture a more mature critique of the War or sexual
roles" (29); therefore, "In Country's chief strength,
its convincing representation of a particular
character's point of view, remains its chief weakness"
(30).

Lidoff, Joan. "Clearing Her Throat: An Interview with Grace Paley." Shenandoah 32.3 (1981): 3-26.

~~in this~~ interview, Paley reveals the close connection between her life and her "storytelling art." She also discusses writers who have influenced her work and comments on several contemporary women writers.

Meyer, Adam. "Faith and the 'Black Thing': Political Action and Self-Questioning in Grace Paley's Short Fiction." Studies in Short Fiction 31.1 (1994): 79-89.

Meyer begins this critical essay by examining how Paley questions her own political beliefs on racism and civil rights through the "fictional persona of Faith Darwin Asbury, a recurring personality" in such stories as "Faith in a Tree," "Long-Distance Runner," and "Zagrowsky Tells." However, he concludes this essay with an analysis of "Zagrowsky Tells" that praises Zagrowsky's ability "to challenge [Paley's] political assumptions."

Booth, David. "Sam's Quest, Emmett's Wound: Grail Motifs in Bobbie Ann Mason's Portrait of America after Vietnam." Southern Literary Journal 23.2 (1991): 98-109.

Tracing "symbols, motifs, and narrative structures of the grail legend" (99) throughout In Country, Booth presents a convincing analysis of the novel in terms of waste land mythology. Although Booth sees "social criticism . . . and prophetic warning" throughout the text, he spies hope of redemption in Mason's spunky female protagonist, Sam: "If Mason's waste land is the ordinariness and uniformity of American culture, then Sam's heroic gift is her relentless curiosity . . . [and her] breathtakingly fertile, restless mind" (105).

Durham, Marilyn. "Narrative Strategies in Recent Vietnam War Fiction." America Rediscovered: Critical Essays on Literature and Film of the Vietnam War. Ed. Owen W. Gilman, Jr. and Lorrie Smith. New York: Garland, 1990. 100-109.

Durham's essay contrasts the narrative strategy of Mason's In Country with Larry Heinemann's Paco's Story and Philip Caputo's Indian Country. Analyzing Mason's focal character, Durham writes: "Living in Sam's mind allows us to participate in her learning process and forces us to recognize our own difficulties in sorting out Vietnam Her move toward insight replicates our own epistemological journey" (105).

Krasteva, Yonka. "The South and the West in Bobbie Ann Mason's In Country." Southern Literary Journal 26.2 (1994): 77-94.

Krasteva reads In Country as a deliberate reversal and rejection of the traditional American literary myth of the West. Sam's attempt to close the gaps between her present and her past is simultaneously

"a female rite of initiation" (85), a "search for identity and community" (82), and an "ironic reversal" (79) of the typical journey undertaken by [male] heroes in American fiction--the "pursuit of individual freedom and flight from social responsibility" (78). Krasteva supports this thesis in an essay both illuminating and provocative.

Logsdon, Loren and Charles W. Mayer, eds. Introduction.

Since Flannery O'Connor: Essays on the Contemporary

American Short Story. Macomb, Western Illinois

U^P, 1987. 5-8.

Introducing their selection of essays on contemporary short fiction, Logsdon and Mayer locate Mason in the tradition of American female writers who made their mark in the short story. Describing Mason as "significantly influenced by Flannery O'Connor" (7), they place her with "new writers whose major works are perhaps yet to be written" (8), yet whose existing oeuvre already merits "serious scholarly treatment" (8).

Muliarchik, Alexandr. "Neoconservatism and American

Literature of the 1980s." Russian Eyes on American

Literature. Ed. Sergei Chakovsky and M. Thomas

Inge. Trans. Lise Brody. Jackson: U P of

Mississippi, 1992. 251-271.

Russian critic Muliarchik, surveying alternative literary responses to the neoconservative ethos of the Reagan-Bush years, praises Mason's In Country for its "realistic social criticism" (267) and its humane outlook. Although Muliarchik sees Sam's reflective nature and determination to recover her history as inspiring, he writes that Mason's "lack of writing experience and the sharply didactic quality of the book's central thesis prevent the author from creating a full, psychologically convincing portrait of her heroine" (268).

Pollack, Harriet. "From Shiloh to In Country to Feather

Crowns: Bobbie Ann Mason, Women's History, and
Southern Fiction." Southern Literary Journal 28.2
(1996): 95-116.

Pollack builds a surprising case for consideration of Mason as primarily a historical novelist whose "deep interest in the historical has been . . . obscured by her use of the contemporary" (96). Citing Mason's "abiding interest . . . in periods of cultural/historical change" (97), Pollack sketches similarities between Mason and Hawthorne, Mason and Sarah Orne Jewett, and particularly Mason and Edith Wharton. Both women, Pollack says, write "fiction that captures a specific culture . . . evoking the details, habits, conflicts, and anxieties of a historical moment" (95).

Ryan, Maureen. "Stopping Places: Bobbie Ann Mason's
Short Stories." Women Writers of the Contemporary
South. Ed. Peggy Whitman Prenshaw. U P of
Mississippi, 1984. 283-294.

Ryan's article does little more than describe Mason's early stories by means of plot summaries and abundant quotations. She does note that Mason's characters struggle to cope with "rapid and frightening changes in their lives" (294) which elicit "contradictory impulses, the temptation to withdraw into the security of home and the past . . . [or to take] to the road in search of something better" (294).

Zverev, Aleksei. "The Prose of the 1980s: Three New
Names." Russian Eyes on American Literature.
Ed. Sergei Chakovsky and M. Thomas Inge. Trans.
Lise Brody. Jackson: U P of Mississippi, 1992.
272-283.

Calling Mason "the most striking writer of her generation" (277) and one who "quickly found her own theme and style" (277), Zmerez takes issue with critics who label Mason a minimalist. Her "lyrical intonation" (278), rejection of "the passive mood" (278) and creation of characters who "strive for . . . genuine freedom" (278), all defy the minimalist style. Rather, because of Mason's ability to convey both "the sense of everyday life" (280) and "the attitude toward life most typical of mass consciousness" (280), Zmerez reads in her work "a continuation of the lessons of Henry James" (280).