

## RACCONTI DEL SUD

Col Sud dei romanzi fiume e dei film tutti più o meno sono familiari; ma c'è tanto di mito e di finzione romantica in codesto cavalleresco Sud a cui vanno le simpatie del pubblico medio, che vien quasi fatto di ricordarsi dei lontani tempi medievali in cui i vinti Troiani erano esaltati al di sopra dei perfidi Greci. È soprattutto in questa regione che si è venuto a poco a poco creando per l'America un passato leggendario che rappresenta quello che per noi europei sono le epopee, Omero, Artù e Carlomagno. Poiché l'America è stata così poco soddisfatta della sua beata assenza di passato magnificata da Goethe (che inneggiava all'America come a Terra Promessa, sgombra da rovine del passato, non turbata da inutili ricordi e futili contese: «E se una volta i vostri figli comporranno poesie», concludeva, «li guardi una sorte benigna dalle storie di cavalieri, di briganti e di fantasmi!»), che appena ha avuto uno spunto nazionale per creare leggende di cavalieri e di fantasmi, si è buttata avidamente sopra questa *Schauerromantik*: la Guerra di Secessione è stata la sua leggenda omerica, e ne ha tratto ispirazione non solo l'autrice di *Gone with the Wind*, ma lo stesso Faulkner. Forse, quando l'avrà abbastanza ammobilata di passato, l'americano non sentirà più l'eco della sua voce in quella gran camera vuota che è stato fino a ieri il suo continente, e non sarà più roso dal tarlo della solitudine. Le rovine e i ricordi possono essere una zavorra che talora conviene buttare, ma che d'altronde è indispensabile al volo.

C'è dunque il Sud dei romanzi di Faulkner in cui echeggiano squilli lontani dell'epopea della Guerra di Secessione; ma in cui c'è pure tanto del vero Sud squallido e poetico: senonché il Faulkner vi ha poi tessuto sopra e intorno l'aggrovigliata allucinazione del suo stile, e anche quel Sud lì è finito per diventare irricognoscibile, come un relitto caduto in fondo al mare e rivestito da successive stratificazioni di fauna e di flora marina. Poi c'è il Sud fiabesco e perverso di Truman Capote, il Sud isterico di Tennessee Williams,

quello che tutti conoscono dal *Tranvai che si chiama Desiderio*, ma se domandate a un americano del Sud (di quel Sud che è un paese di un'estensione assai maggiore di quanto non s'immaginerebbe, poiché comprende anche il Tennessee e di fatto ogni stato a mezzogiorno di Washington), se domandate a questo americano quali autori gli sembrano veramente rappresentativi del Sud, che rendano la atmosfera e gli ambienti di laggiù in modo adeguato e fedele, vi farà i nomi di Eudora Welty (nata nel 1909) e delle più giovani Carson McCullers (nata nel 1917) e Flannery O' Connor. Eudora Welty viene dal Mississippi, i suoi racconti s'imposero presto ai lettori delle riviste letterarie verso il 1935; la sua prima raccolta, *A Curtain of Green*, ebbe gran successo nel 1941; seguirono *The Robber Bridegroom*, 1942, *The Wide Net*, 1943; nel 1946 pubblicò il suo primo romanzo, *Delta Wedding*, nel 1949 *The Golden Apples*, nel 1954 *The Ponder Heart*, nel 1955 *The Bride of Innisfallen*. Giustamente di lei ha osservato un professore svizzero, Heinrich Straumann, in *American Literature in the Twentieth Century* (Londra, Hutchinson's University Library, 1951), che le sue fantasie appaiono del tutto naturali, perché la Welty possiede il dono di passare impercettibilmente dal mondo della fantasia alla vita ordinaria e viceversa. Flannery O' Connor è di famiglia irlandese stabilitasi nella Georgia, e i suoi racconti son cominciati ad apparire nella *Partisan Review*, nella *Sewanee Review*, e nella *Kenyon Review* poco prima del 1950; la scrittrice ha ora ventott'anni. Una raccolta di novelle, *A Good Man Is Hard to Find*, e un romanzo, *Wise Blood*, entrambi pubblicati da Harcourt Brace, sono a tutt'oggi il suo bagaglio.

Chi, avendolo letto, può dimenticare il racconto di Eudora Welty<sup>1</sup>, *The Petrified Man*, della comare che identifica nell'« uomo pietrificato » che fa mostra di sé in un baraccone, un criminale ricercato dalla polizia, e guadagna la taglia, con gran dispetto dell'amica che le ha prestato un vecchio giornale dov'era la fotografia che è servita all'identificazione? *L'humour* del racconto ha qualcosa di

<sup>1</sup> Sulla Welty ha scritto tra noi Angela Bianchini Fales, in *Letteratura* 8-9 (marzo-giugno 1954): « Le cittadine tranquille di Eudora Welty ».

*uncanny*, di sinistro e di grottesco insieme (c'è anche un gioco di parole sul nome del criminale, ch  questo *petrified man* si chiamava effettivamente Mr. Petrie); e nella stessa vena sono episodi di altri racconti: *The Key*, con la coppia di sordomuti che si recano alle cascate del Niagara, la cui infermit    rivelata dal cadere d'una chiave che fa voltare tutti gli altri viaggiatori in una sala d'aspetto, fuorch  loro; *Clytie*, la povera zitella mezzoscema ossessionata dalle facce che incontra, che finisce per annegare in un serbatoio d'acqua piovana dove ha visto riflesso il suo volto; *Lily Daw*, una ragazza deficiente che sul punto d'essere internata in una casa di cura risulta provvista d'un innamorato pronto a sposarla... Ambienti e personaggi che sconfinano continuamente dalla realt  nella leggenda, dal particolare minutamente osservato all'allucinazione, con un'aria di famiglia, come d'una strana cugina transatlantica, con Yeats e Virginia Woolf. L'accoglienza entusiastica della critica a *The Curtain of Green* si   andata attenuando nei libri successivi, via via che l'autrice, ricalcando i suoi tomi, fissava la sua maniera. Ecco per esempio ci  che Theodore Hoffman osservava a proposito dell'ultimo libro della Welty nella *Parisian Review* dell'autunno 1955:

Her themes are familiar by now... Miss Welty is always delineating the character of the empty, or the insane. In another story, two Southern ladies, made for nothing but ante-bellum life, hang themselves grotesquely when Sherman burns their home, but this one is that old Faulkner tale with the hot-house atmosphere, the compulsive but agonizingly deliberate action that is supposed to take on the significance of eternity, and was very good the first eight times Southern writers dit it<sup>2</sup>.

L'ultima parte del racconto *Clytie*, nella prima raccolta, pu  dare un'idea del tipo d'ambiente e di personaggi che la Welty ama de-

<sup>2</sup> Il critico conclude con queste considerazioni personali: «I don't much enjoy Miss Welty's work. She keeps evoking things as if I had experienced them and relish them. I tire of her endless descriptions of clothing and furniture. I enjoy the talky dialogue only to a point. I don't find passionate people as incomprehensible as she does, nor do I go for the unshakeable quiet frustration her characters are inflicted with. In short, life doesn't seem as difficult to get at as all *that*». Anche il recensore del *Times Literary Supplement* dell'11 novembre 1955, p. 669, osserva nell'ultimo libro una decadenza «particularly sad because Miss Welty's talent showed as so plainly fresh and original in her early work».

scrivere, e insieme della sua virtù evocativa, e delle sue limitazioni:

At nine Mr. Bobo, the barber, knocked at the front door.

Without waiting, for they never answered the knock, he let himself in and advanced like a small general down the hall. There was the old organ that was never uncovered or played except for funerals, and then nobody invited. He went ahead, under the arm of the tiptoed male statue<sup>3</sup> and up the dark stairway. There they were, lined up at the head of the stairs, and they all looked at him with repulsion. Mr. Bobo was convinced that they were every one mad. Gerald, even, had already been drinking, at nine o' clock in the morning.

Mr. Bobo was short and had never been anything but proud of it, until he had started coming to this house once a week. But he did not enjoy looking up from below at the soft, long throats, the cold, repelled, high-relieved faces of those Farris. He could only imagine what one of those sisters would do to him if he made one move. (As if he would!). As soon as he arrived upstairs, they all went off and left him. He pushed out his chin and stood with his round legs wide apart, just looking around. The upstairs hall was absolutely bare. There was not even a chair to sit down in.

« Either they sell away their furniture in the dead of night », said Mr. Bobo to the people of Farr's Gin<sup>4</sup>, « or else they're just too plumb mean to use it ».

Mr. Bobo stood and waited to be summoned, and wished he had never started coming to this house to shave old Mr. Farr. But he had been so surprised to get a letter in the mail. The letter was on such old, yellowed paper that at first he thought it must have been written a thousand years ago and never delivered. It was signed « Octavia Farr », and began without even calling him « Dear Mr. Bobo ». What it said was: « Come to this residence at nine o' clock each Friday morning until further notice, where you will shave Mr. James Farr ».

He thought he would go one time. And each time after that, he thought he would never go back — especially when he never knew when they would pay him anything. Of course, it was something to be the only person in Farr's Gin allowed inside the house (except for the undertaker, who had gone there when young Henry shot himself, but had never to that day spoken of it). It was not easy to shave a man as bad off as Mr. Farr, either — not anything like as

<sup>3</sup> Si tratta di un « bronze cast of Hermes holding up a gas fixture », probabilmente un'ennesima riproduzione del Mercurio di Giambologna.

<sup>4</sup> Paese del Sud che non contava più di centocinquanta abitanti, compresi i negri.

easy as to shave a corpse or even a fighting-drunk field hand. Suppose you were like this, Mr. Bobo would say: you couldn't move your face; you couldn't hold up your chin, or tighten your jaw, or even bat your eyes when the razor came close. The trouble with Mr. Farr was his face made no resistance to the razor. His face didn't hold.

« I 'll never go back », Mr. Bobo always ended to his customers. « Not even if they paid me. I've seen enough ».

Yet here he was again, waiting before the sickroom door.

« This is the last time », he said. « By God! ».

And he wondered why the old man did not die.

Just then Miss Clytie came out of the room. There she came in her funny sideways walk, and the closer she got to him the more slowly she moved.

« Now? » asked Mr. Bobo nervously.

Clytie looked at his small, doubtful face. What fear raced through his little green eyes! His pitiful, greedy, small face — how very mournful it was, like a stray kitten's. What was it that this greedy little thing was so desperately needing?

Clytie came up to the barber and stopped. Instead of telling him that he might go in and shave her father, she put out her hand and with breath-taking gentleness touched the side of his face.

For an instant afterward, she stood looking at him inquiringly, and he stood like a statue, like the statue of Hermes.

Then both of them uttered a despairing cry. Mr. Bobo turned and fled, waving his razor around in a circle, down the stairs and out of the front door; and Clytie, pale as a ghost, stumbled against the railing. The terrible scent of bay rum, of hair tonic, the horrible moist scratch of an invisible beard, the dense, popping green eyes — what had she got hold of with her hand! She could hardly bear it — the thought of that face.

From the closed door to the sickroom came Octavia's shouting voice.

« Clytie! Clytie! You haven't brought Papa the rain water! Where in the devil is the rain water to shave Papa? ».

Clytie moved obediently down the stairs.

Her brother Gerald threw open the door of his room and called after her, « What now? This is a madhouse! Somebody was running past my room; I heard it. Where do you keep your men? Do you have to bring them home? ». He slammed the door again, and she heard the barricade going up.

Clytie went through the lower hall and out of the back door. She stood beside the old rain barrel and suddenly felt that this object,

now, was her friend, just in time, and her arms almost circled it with impatient gratitude. The rain barrel was full. It bore a dark, heavy, penetrating fragrance, like ice and flowers and the dew of night.

Clytie swayed a little and looked into the slightly moving water. She thought she saw a face there.

Of course. It was the face she had been looking for, and from which she had been separated. As if to give a sign, the index finger of a hand lifted to touch the dark cheek.

Clytie leaned closer, as she had leaned down to touch the face of the barber.

It was a wavering, inscrutable face. The brows were drawn together as if in pain. The eyes were large, intent, almost avid, the nose ugly and discolored as if from weeping, the mouth old and closed from any speech. On either side of the head dark hair hung down in a disreputable and wild fashion. Everything about the face frightened and shocked her with its signs of waiting, of suffering.

For the second time that morning, Clytie recoiled, and as she did so, the other recoiled in the same way.

Too late, she recognized the face. She stood there completely sick at heart, as though the poor, half-remembered vision had finally betrayed her.

«Clytie! Clytie! The water!» came Octavia's monumental voice.

Clytie did the only thing she could think of to do. She bent her angular body further, and thrust her head into the barrel, under the water, through its glittering surface into the kind, featureless depth, and held it there.

When Old Lethy found her, she had fallen forward into the barrel, with her poor ladylike black-stockinged legs up-ended and apart like a pair of tongs.

Se molta letteratura degli Stati Uniti è sotto il segno puritano della Nuova Inghilterra, quella del Sud si direbbe sotto il segno d'una Nuova Irlanda: un'Irlanda tropicale, dove la natura è melanconica ma calda e lussureggiante, e i coboldi sono negri, e in ogni famiglia di bianchi (bianchi di solito decaduti) c'è lo scheletro nell'armadio; un clima dove il surrealismo non è più una pianta di serra, ma cresce naturalmente all'aria aperta. Di questa Irlanda dei Tropici Flannery O'Connor è una delle voci più originali. Nulla in lei dell'esasperazione frenetica di Faulkner, che adatta a personaggi spesso rudimentali il delicato movimento d'orologeria d'una psicologia decadente, non diverso in questo da Robert Penn Warren, un altro

scrittore del Sud, che in *Brother to Dragons*, che ha per argomento il dilemma di Jefferson dinanzi all'uccisione di un negro perpetrata da un suo congiunto, ha soffocato sotto una superstruttura lirico-psicologica un motivo da cronaca nera; e tutt'e due, Faulkner e Warren, lontanamente imparentati col Browning dell'*Anello e il libro* per questa tendenza che si potrebbe chiamare di psico-elefantiasi, intesa a trasfigurare complicandoli e liricizzandoli i dati d'una realtà elementare, sovente brutta: tendenza a cui mi pare si possa contrapporre il metodo semplice e diretto, molto più aderente al vero, della *Beatrice Cenci* di Moravia.

La O' Connor, piuttosto che nello psicologismo, potrebbe cadere in un altro difetto, nel macchiettismo, nell'aneddoto regionale, ma non ha nulla della compiaciuta e superficiale bravura d'un macchiettista, sebbene meglio che nel romanzo riesca nella novella che, come è risaputo, è un genere che si presta a una costruzione epigrammatica. Anche il suo romanzo, *Wise Blood*, si risolve in episodi, quegli episodi che come racconti esemplari sono stati pubblicati nelle riviste: Enoch Emery, il giovinetto solo al mondo e randagio, che invano elemosina umana simpatia, e ruba la spoglia di gorilla in cui si maschera un artista da baraccone, e recatosi nella foresta, seppellisce i suoi vestiti da uomo, indossa la pelle di scimmia, e sembra ritrovare la felicità in quel grottesco ritorno alla natura; e l'altro episodio di Emery e Hazel Motes che incontrano un propagandista evangelico cieco, e Hazel è combattuto tra impulso sacrilego e fanatismo religioso; e nella presentazione di questa tormentata psicologia la O' Connor rivela la sua origine irlandese: si pensa a certe pagine del *Ritratto dell'artista giovane* di Joyce. A questo stesso mondo ci richiama l'episodio di torbida sensibilità che la *Partisan Review* pubblicò nel 1949 col titolo *The Heart of the Park*, con quei giovani, Enoch e Hazel, che vanno nel parco per spiare le donne che fanno il bagno. Predomina in tali episodi e nei racconti un'atmosfera pesante e melanconica, non priva d'una certa sua disperata poesia: l'atmosfera che, per quel poco che vi sostammo, ci parve di respirare a Savannah nella Georgia, patria della O' Connor, città di decadute eleganze ottocentesche, di casu-

pole di negri, di afa, di grandi e lugubri alberi drappeggiati di « muschio spagnolo », e di zanzare innumerevoli. I personaggi sono vagabondi, poveri bianchi, ragazze idiote, discoli, e la gente più ordinaria possibile, l'umile plebe insomma d'una terra in parte ancora rozzamente agricola, in parte contaminata dalla civiltà industriale. *A Circle in the Fire*: in una campagna remota tre ragazzacci s'installano in una fattoria e terrorizzano la proprietaria, una maniaca, e la figlia di costei, una brutta ragazzina occhialuta che vorrebbe sterminarli: finalmente dan fuoco al bosco. *The Life You Save May Be Your Own*: un vagabondo monco capita nella fattoria d'una donna che ha una figlia scema e sordomuta, e la donna lo alletta a sposare questa disgraziata, e quello, rimessa in sesto una vecchia automobile, parte pel viaggio di nozze e poi pianta la sposa, una bambola di carne, a un posto di ristoro, e si reca in città, non senza aver prima provocato, con il suo sermoneggiare di persona che crede d'aver « un'intelligenza morale », la violenta reazione d'un ragazzo a cui ha dato un passaggio:

The next day he began to tinker with the automobile and that evening he told her that if she would buy a fan belt, he would be able to make the car run.

The old woman said she would give him the money. « You see that girl yonder? » she asked, pointing to Lucynell who was sitting on the floor a foot away, watching him, her eyes blue even in the dark. « If it was ever a man wanted to take her away, I would say, 'No man on earth is going to take that sweet girl of mine away from me!' but if he was to say, 'Lady, I don't want to take her away, I want her right here', I would say, 'Mister, I don't blame you none. I wouldn't pass up a chance to live in a permanent place and get the sweetest girl in the world myself. You ain't no fool', I would say ».

« How old is she? » Mr. Shiftlet asked casually.

« Fifteen, sixteen », the old woman said. The girl was nearly thirty but because of her innocence it was impossible to guess.

« It would be a good idea to paint it too », Mr. Shiftlet remarked, « You don't want it to rust out ».

« We'll see about that later », the old woman said.

The next day he walked into town and returned with the parts he needed and a can of gasoline. Late in the afternoon, terrible noises issued from the shed and the old woman rushed out of the house,



thinking Lucynell was somewhere having a fit. Lucynell was sitting on the kitchen crate, stamping her feet and screaming, « Burrddtt! bddurddtttt! »<sup>5</sup> but her fuss was drowned out by the car. With a volley of blasts it emerged from the shed, moving in a fierce and stately way. Mr. Shiftlet was in the driver's seat, sitting very erect. He had an expression of serious modesty on his face as if he had just raised the dead.

That night, rocking on the porch, the old woman began her business at once. « You want you an innocent woman, don't you? » she asked sympathetically « You don't want none of this trash ».

« No 'm, I don't », Mr. Shiftlet said.

« One that can't talk », she continued, « can't sass you back or use foul language. That's the kind for you to have. Right there », and she pointed to Lucynell sitting cross-legged in her chair, holding both her feet in her hands.

« That's right », he admitted. « She wouldn't give me any trouble ».

« Saturday », the old woman said, « you and her and me can drive into town and get married ».

Mr. Shiftlet eased his position on the steps.

« I can't get married right now », he said. « Everything you want to do takes money and I ain't got any ».

« What you need with money? » she asked.

« It takes money », he said. « Some people'll do anything anyhow these days, but the way I think, I wouldn't marry no woman that I couldn't take on a trip like she was somebody. I mean take her to a hotel and treat her. I wouldn't marry the Duchesser Windsor », he said firmly, « unless I could take her to a hotel and give her something good to eat. I was raised thataway and there ain't a thing I can do about it. My old mother taught me how to do ».

« Lucynell don't even know what a hotel is », the old woman muttered. « Listen here, Mr. Shiftlet », she said sliding forward in her chair, « you'd be getting a permanent house and a deep well and the most innocent girl in the world. You don't need no money. Lemme tell you something: there ain't any place in the world for a poor disabled friendless drifting man ».

The ugly words settled in Mr. Shiftlet's head like a group of buzzards in the top of a tree. He didn't answer at once. He rolled himself a cigarette and lit it and then said in an even voice, « Lady, a man is divided into two parts, body and spirit ».

The old woman clamped her gums together.

<sup>5</sup> Mr. Shiftlet aveva cercato d'insegnarle a pronunziare la parola « bird ».

« A body and a spirit », he repeated. The body, Lady, is like a house: it don't go anywhere; but the spirit, Lady, is like a automobile: always on the move, always... ».

« Listen, Mr. Shiftlet », she said, « my well never goes dry and my house is always warm in the winter and there's no mortgage on a thing about this place. You can go to the courthouse and see for yourself. And yonder under that shed is a fine automobile ». She laid the bait carefully. « You can have it painted by Saturday. I'll pay for the paint ».

In the darkness Mr. Shiftlet's smile stretched like a weary snake waking up by a fire. « Yes 'm »; he said softly.

After a second he recalled himself and said, « I'm only saying a man's spirit means more to him than anything else. I would have to take my wife off for the weekend without no regards at all for cost. I got to follow where my spirit says to go ».

« I'll give you fifteen dollars for a weekend trip », the old woman said in a crabbed voice. « That's the best I can do ».

« That wouldn't hardly pay for more than the gas and the hotel », he said. « It wouldn't feed her ».

« Seventeen-fifty », the old woman said. « That's all I got so it isn't any use you trying to milk me. You can take a lunch ».

Mr. Shiftlet was deeply hurt by the word « milk ». He didn't doubt that she had more money sewed up in her mattress but he had already told her he was not interested in her money. « I'll make that do », he said and rose and walked off without treating with her further.

On Saturday the three of them drove into town in the car that the paint had barely dried on and Mr. Shiftlet and Lucynell were married...

. . . . .

He had painted the car dark green with a yellow band around it just under the windows. The three of them climbed in the front seat and the old woman said, « Don't Lucynell look pretty? Looks like a baby doll ». Lucynell was dressed up in a white dress that her mother had uprooted from a trunk and there was a panama hat on her head with a bunch of red wooden cherries on the brim. Every now and then her placid expression was changed by a sly isolated little thought like a shoot of green in the desert. « You got a prize! » the old woman said.

Mr. Shiftlet didn't even look at her.

They drove back to the house to let the old woman off and pick up the lunch. When they were ready to leave, she stood staring in

the window of the car, with her fingers clenched around the glass. Tears began to seep sideways out of her eyes and run along the dirty creases in her face. «I ain't ever been parted with her for two days before», she said.

Mr. Shiftlet started the motor.

«And I wouldn't let no man have her but you because I seen you would do right. Goodbye, Sugarbaby», she said, clutching at the sleeve of the white dress. Lucynell looked straight at her and didn't seem to see her there at all. Mr. Shiftlet eased the car forward so that she had to move her hands.

The early afternoon was clear and open and surrounded by pale blue sky. The hills flattened under the car one after another and the climb and dip and swerve went entirely to Mr. Shiftlet's head so that he forgot his morning bitterness. He had always wanted an automobile but he had never been able to afford one before. He drove very fast because he wanted to make Mobile by nightfall.

Occasionally he stopped his thoughts long enough to look at Lucynell in the seat beside him. She had eaten the lunch as soon as they were out of the yard and now she was pulling the cherries off the hat one by one and throwing them out of the window. He became depressed in spite of the car. He had driven about a hundred miles when he decided that she must be hungry again and at the next small town they came to, he stopped in front of an aluminium-painted eating place called The Hot Spot and took her in and ordered her a plate of ham grits. The ride had made her sleepy and as soon as she got up on the stool, she rested her head on the counter and shut her eyes. There was no one in the Hot Spot but Mr. Shiftlet and the boy behind the counter, a pale youth with a greasy rag hung over his shoulder. Before he could dish up the food, she was snoring gently.

«Give it to her when she wakes up», Mr. Shiftlet said. «I 'll pay for it now».

The boy bent over her and stared at the long pink-gold hair and the half-shut sleeping eyes. Then he looked up and stared at Mr. Shiftlet. «She looks like an angel of Gawd», he murmured.

«Hitch-hiker», Mr. Shiftlet explained. «I can't wait. I got to make Tuscaloosa».

The boy bent over again and very carefully touched his finger to a strand of the golden hair and Mr. Shiftlet left.

*The Artificial Nigger*, uno dei racconti più belli, narra di un nonno che conduce in città il nipotino per la prima volta, e lui pure non conosce la città bene, ma vuole conservare il suo prestigio

davanti al ragazzo che lo sfida, e finisce per umiliarsi agli occhi di lui smarrendo il cammino e rinnegando il nipote quando questo s'è cacciato in un guaio facendo cadere in terra una donna. Qui e altrove si sente che l'antenato di tutta questa narrativa grottesco-patetica, e in fondo assai pessimista, è l'autore di *Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain. Ciò che della O'Connor s'indugia nella memoria del lettore, oltre alle situazioni e all'atmosfera, son certe sue icastiche precisazioni d'uno stato d'animo, d'un ambiente. La ragazza scema: «Di tanto in tanto la sua espressione placida si mutava per un piccolo, isolato, furtivo pensiero, come un filo d'erba nel deserto». Il riso d'un cieco: «La risata risuonava come se venisse da qualcosa legato dentro un sacco». Lo sguardo del ragazzo già stanco alla soglia della vita: «Lo sguardo del ragazzo era antico, come se egli già sapesse tutto e desiderasse dimenticarlo». Un paesaggio serale: «Dinanzi a loro il cielo era grigio, ed essi eran rivolti verso una luna grigia, trasparente, poco più marcata del segno d'un pollice, e completamente priva di luce». Gli editori italiani, così solleciti a tradurre i vari Steinbeck e Caldwell, non hanno ancora pensato a darci i racconti della Welty e della O'Connor. Ray B. West, nella sua rassegna del *Racconto in America, 1900-1950* (versione italiana pubblicata da Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1955) chiama la Welty «la migliore scrittrice della sua generazione». *Nozze sul Delta*, pubblicato da Longanesi nel 1954 in versione italiana, non è certo la sua cosa migliore.

MARIO PRAZ