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## Understanding Pat Conroy

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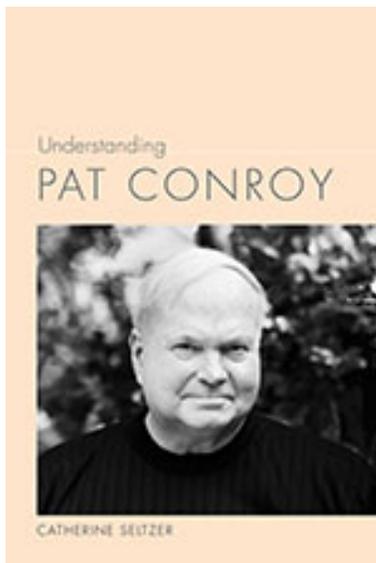
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“The Rememberer”, an interview by Katherine Clark. The conversational style is intriguing and deeply moving as family members interact with each other—one saying “It was worse than Pat says it was”. Nikky Finney closed the book with her synopsis, “Translating Love”.

A wonderful selection of black and white original photographs, featuring scenes across the years from Pat’s baby photos to full family depictions. They bring the conversations to life. A book well worth collecting for a personal library and having in a public and academic library collection.

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**Understanding Pat Conroy.** Catherine Seltzer. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2015. ISBN 978-1-61117-516-5. 160 p. \$39.95.



Catherine Seltzer introduces us to young Pat Conroy: As a high school student Conroy accompanies his teacher, Eugene Norris, to Thomas Wolfe’s home in Asheville, North Carolina. Seltzer recounts the story that Norris took an apple from one of the trees on the grounds and said, “Eat it boy.” (p.1) Reflecting on taking the first bite, Conroy said, “I was given the keys to go out and try to write.” Conroy’s explanation of Norris’ comment goes on to show how “from the very beginning I wrote to explain my own life to myself”. From uncovering Conroy’s tree of knowledge and his tree of life, Seltzer recounts the many ways in which Conroy has brought sensitive and intellectual inspirations to his writings.

Through five novels and five books, Seltzer says Conroy returns to his life experiences and says “Only rarely have I drifted far from the bed where I was conceived.” (p.2) His comments on his family life that appear in his writings includes this comment, “One of the greatest gifts you can

get as a writer is to be born into an unhappy family I could not have been born into a better one.” (p.2)

Reading Seltzer’s book, I am reminded of the one bit of advice any student hears from a mentor or teacher, “write what you know about, write what you have experienced.” I don’t think many English teachers are so clever as to give an apple to a talented student but I thank Catherine Seltzer for recounting the tale.

For students and faculty who might want to recommend Seltzer’s book for a reference or for supplemental reading, the author provides Chapters 2-8 as an individual commentary on “The Water is Wide”, “The Great Santini”, “The Lords of Discipline”, “The Prince of Tides”, “Beach Music”, “My Losing Season”, and “South of Broad”. Notes, Bibliography and Index cover pages 119 to 135.

Recommended for school and college libraries.

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**Understanding Ron Rash.** John Lang. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2014. ISBN 978-1-61117-411-3. 152 p. \$39.95



My search for understanding Ron Rash began a few months ago when someone said, “You know Ron’s first writings were funny, not so filled with “depressed and depressing characters living depressing lives and rarely inspiring laughter” (my colleague’s description). My colleague went on to say, “You should read those first stories, “The Night the New Jesus Fell to Earth” or “Badeye”.

Going from reading and having heard Ron read from “Saints at the River”, “Serena” and “The Cove”, I was eager to take the journey into those short stories that might provide laughter and clever twists in the characters—away from “evil Serena”( Serena) and into “hustler Larry (The