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Of Like Minds: The Shared Perspectives of Flannery O'Connor and the Vanderbilt Agrarians

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OF LIKE MINDS: THE SHARED PERSPECTIVES OF FLANNERY O'CONNOR AND THE VANDERBILT AGRARIANS

by

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VITA

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INTRODUCTION: THE SOUTHERN RENASCENCE TEMPERAMENT

Students of American literature continue to grapple with the nature and temper of what Wilbur Joseph Cash referred to as the Southern mind. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., a veteran scholar, overviews the course of Southern literature, up-dating his 1985 History of Southern Literature with an analysis of writers from what he calls "The Recent South," the years between 1951 and 1982. Rubin opens this chapter by asking scholars, "What does the adjective Southern mean when applied to a generation of writers now in their thirties and forties?" (History 464). Throughout his study, Rubin's aim is to characterize the ways in which Southern social and historical changes are manifested in its literature. We realize, as Rubin explains, that we cannot neatly categorize any body of literature. Whether we classify by time period, region or critical approach, we must recognize the biases that are inevitably placed on the fiction and its writer. When the adjective Southern is constricted by Rubin's delineations, "The Southern Renascence" or "The Recent South," or when Southern fiction is restricted by modern or postmodern approaches, over time, scholars begin to accept given contexts. In other words, an author's writing becomes pigeonholed.

Such is the case with Flannery O'Connor's fiction.

Rubin includes her fiction under "The Recent South," designating her as "one of the new, second generation of modern Southern writers" (History 464). Another recent scholar, Lewis A. Lawson, in his 1984 study Another Generation: Southern Fiction Since World War II, likewise places O'Connor in the company of post-war authors Walker Percy, Richard Wright, Harriette Arnow, Mitchell F. Jayne and William Styron. Both Rubin and Lawson categorize O'Connor's fiction primarily by dates of publication, roughly from 1948 until her death in 1964. Most collections of her short stories were published posthumously.

O'Connor's publishing history and her Southern contemporaries frame one important context for reading her fiction. Equally important is her biographical context. O'Connor was born in 1925 and died in 1964. From her correspondence, it is clear that her sensitivities and inspirations emerged during her experience in the rural South of the late 1930s, 40s, 50s, and to a lesser extent, the 60s. This places her literary impulses primarily in the sociological temperament of what Rubin considers the Southern Renascence, between the 1920s and the 1950s. Moreover, the Southern Renascence temperament supersedes the boundaries of her publishing dates, which allows a broader approach to understanding sociological influences appearing in her fiction.

Josephine Hendin is one of the few scholars

questioning O'Connor's literary and historical placement. In her 1970 study, The World of Flannery O'Connor, Hendin situates her fiction between the modernists and the New Novelists. Unfortunately, Hendin's analysis illustrates the consequences of overgeneralizing literary movements and pigeonholing an author's work. She provides this overview which, although lengthy, deserves a comprehensive citation here:

> She brought her career to a stunning climax at a rather comfortable interregnum in American letters. The deities of modernism were gone, with their tidily finished, neatly patterned, mythically ordered text. . . . The 'disruptive' gestures of the so-called postmodernists, who brought with their experiments an irreverence and uncertainty about even the function of print on the page, were not yet in focus. . . thus her career was managed with an immaculate avoidance of the 'interleckchul' maneuverings of the modernists, who wrote in wake of new theories about consciousness and time by William James, Henri Bergson, and Sigmund Freud, which produced an inward turning, personal fiction that accommodated the rough edges of the psyche and of 'human time.' She also sidestepped the increasing concern with a technological world and its dehumanizing consequences. . . . She wrote understated, orderly, unexperimental fiction, with a Southern backdrop and a Roman Catholic vision, in defiance, it would seem, of those restless innovators who preceded her and who came into prominence after her death (4-5).

There are a few misconceptions in Hendin's linear overview. We can certainly find evidence of O'Connor's concern with the potentially dehumanizing effects of technology. More important, those modern and postmodern "gestures" are not as clearly apparent as Hendin applies, either in authorial design or in critical inquiry. More detrimental

misconceptions lie in Hendin's claims that O'Connor's "career was managed with an immaculate avoidance of the 'interleckchul' maneuverings of the modernists," and that the postmodernists "were not yet into focus." In truth, O'Connor projects a strong modernism. It seems that Hendin upholds categorization and sees clearly demarcated lines between literary movements. Further, Hendin implies that O'Connor deliberately disregarded literary inclinations. Such claims are misleading since they perpetuate discrepancies within scholarship looking at O'Connor as a Southern writer. They also invite discrepancies in her literary and historical placement, which impacts subsequent criticism.

Hendin is correct in situating O'Connor's fiction in an interregnum (although I'm not sure how "comfortable") in American letters. We find that her fiction emerged during an interregnum--or perhaps a transpiration--in literary criticism as well. But it was an advantageous interregnum since it allowed her the freedom to write within a unique and specific Southern intellectual temperament. Although the temperament is unique, it is hardly vague; certainly not as vague as Hendin implies. Her temperament embraces primarily aspects of modern thought. Her temporal disposition embraces a modern inclination tempered by a larger humane (and of course, Catholic) experience. Her South is much more than a backdrop: her inspirations grow out of an organic and

enlightened Southern orientation. Most important, she embraces the same sociological temperament that inspired a regional literary and critical endeavor during O'Connor's time--The Southern Agrarian Movement. This is O'Connor's South.

This study purports to define O'Connor's germane historical and literary context by tracing her associations with the Fugitive and Agrarian leaders and exploring Rubin's delineations of Southern literary periods. It will also describe the social and moral issues that emerged when O'Connor and Tate were writing, and show how each came to similar resolutions. This study will then investigate how these considerations inform her fiction, concluding that O'Connor and the Agrarians are of similar Southern minds.

If O'Connor had lived until the time Rubin categorized as the "Recent South," she would have been sixty years old--older than Rubin's "generation of Southern writers now in their thirties and forties." The scholarship shows less confusion--and indeed, more of a consensus--about what Rubin means by this time period than it does about what he considers to be the Southern Renascence. Add to that time period which Richard King and Thomas Daniel Young (among others) term the Southern Renaissance, what has come to be known as the Southern literary tradition, it immediately becomes clear that the literary and cultural climate of the South from 1925 until even the 1970s is ever-changing and

not easily definable. Categorizing Southern authors during this time period proves equally precarious.

The popular critical strategy for Rubin and other scholars is to investigate recurrent thematic checkpoints in literature written by Southerners in relation to the sociological and literary persuasions of the time. What I mean by thematic checkpoints is essentially those cultural and ancestral beliefs and values that shape the Southern mind and a Southern people's communal life. Thomas Daniel Young's word for these checkpoints is "important tendencies in Southern letters" (Literature of the South xii). Both terms refer to convictions appreciated by Southern authors that in turn are incorporated in a systematic and therefore traceable way into their fiction.

These thematic checkpoints or important tendencies in a sense reflect the process and problems inherent in the changing culture of the pre-Civil War South and the South between the two world wars. Indeed the South in wartime provides the standard method of classification for anthologies, the most prominent being Rubin's The History of Southern Literature and Young's The Literature of the South. What is distinctive and characteristic in these anthologies is the evolution and representation of the South's struggle with its identity, its past and values during the Civil and world wars, and its subsequent self-appraisal and re-defining during restoration. Granted, other regions have

undergone similar processes. But the South, scholars believe, is unique in the way it is affected by war, and in the way it then rebuilds and reevaluates itself exclusive of Northern intervention. Wars' strife deeply permeates and influences the Southern mind, so that transition and confusion remain characteristic descriptors. This struggle seems to be one consistent subject that authors incorporate into their writing, which scholars in turn use to organize their anthologies. For a Southern culture, it may be a tacit and necessary restructuring of a people--I see it as almost redefinition--but it is always a reaffirmation of a separate South, and a life and values detached and autonomous from the rest of the American people. These particular and easily identifiable thematic checkpoints allow for the clear demarcation and classification of Southern literature we find in literary anthologies.

The South after the Civil War until the aftermath of the Second World War remained in a long-term transition. Southern scholars reflect great disparity in defining and classifying Southern literature within this time frame. Young's The Literature of the South resembles Rubin's categorizing as it broadly historicizes Southern writing from 1815 to 1968. Young echoes many of Rubin's classifications, "The Early South, The Confederate South, and The New South." Generally, Young concurs with Rubin's major temporal divisions based on social and political

events, but cites "The Modern Renaissance" in place of Rubin's "The Southern Renascence." Young's category includes literature spanning from 1918 to the present, while Rubin delimits his category from literature appearing between 1920 and 1950, appending another category, "The Recent South," to denote literature from 1951 to 1982. Young includes Flannery O'Connor under the category of The Southern Renaissance, while Rubin places her under "The Recent South."

Such disparity leads us to question both terminology and classification. Is the difference between the Southern "Renaissance" and "Renascence" simply orthographical, or does it reflect a critical preference and academic depiction of a regional and literary period? Webster's unabridged New International Dictionary denotes "renaissance" and "renascence," when lower cased, as interchangeable: whether from the French renaitre or the Latin renasci, both mean "to be born again, a rebirth or revival" (2108). References to a capitalized "Renaissance" connote an affinity to the sixteenth century Italian Renaissance:

> any period similarly characterized by enthusiastic and vigorous activity along literary, artistic, or other lines; strictly, such a period when distinguished by a revival of interest in the past or a return to the old masters for inspiration (2108).

A more consequential question, it seems to me, would be, is it more accurate to describe Southern literature of this period as a "birth," that is, an aesthetic "flowering" or a

surge (as the dictionary also defines it), or a sudden and long-overdue national recognition of Southern literature? Asked another way, is this renascence, as Tate argues in "The Profession of Letters in the South," (in Essays of Four Decades) a surge of regional pride and confidence in the face of Northern literary domination and therefore a rebirth of sorts? A close examination of the way seminal scholars and critics have employed the terms "renaissance" and "renascence" to refer to Southern literature in the period between the two world wars will help clarify both the cultural temperament and the academic connotations of what is meant by this renasci period.

It has come to be accepted usage in Southern literary scholarship (championed mainly by Rubin) that the Southern Renascence refers to literature appearing between 1920 and 1950. Allen Tate, perhaps the most prominent Fugitive and founder of the Agrarians, coined the term "Southern renascence" in his famous "backward glance" reference appearing in "The New Provincialism":

> With the war of 1914-1918, the South reentered the world--but gave a backward glance as it slipped over the border: that backward glance gave us the Southern renascence, a literature conscious of the past in the present (Essays 545).

"The New Provincialism" contains, more so than his other essays, Tate's original and boldly articulated thoughts on the Southern literary renascence. In it, he makes reference

to an earlier piece, "The Profession of Letters in the South," written at the height of the Southern literary renascence, which he situates in 1935. "The New Provincialism" was written therefore in hindsight: "That renascence [in 1945] is over; or at any rate that period is over" (535).

This hindsight stance, interestingly echoing the "backward glance" image, is important for Tate as well as for us in understanding his concept of renascence--a concept shared by O'Connor. The key lies in Tate's unconventional definition of two constructs, regionalism and provincialism, where a regional attitude is limiting--"limited in space but not in time"--and a provincial attitude is "limited in time but not in space" (Essays 539). Provincialism in Tate's conception, is desireable, indeed an aspiration. Tate's working formula is that regionalism implies narrowness, whereas provincialism implies self-identity always in relation to a larger, ideally in Tate, world-wide society. Specifically, the regional society can be primitive or highly cultivated, or at any stage in between. A provincial society provides a "form for the highest development of man's potentialities as man" (Essays 542). Tate identifies "form" as those factors organizing and defining a society (regional or otherwise) and world people: economy, technology, ancestry, religion. Tate explains that people develop communal attitudes--logically, different communities

develop different attitudes--about fundamental and life-defining principles, which is how we as humans create meaning in our lives. Communally, these attitudes become the guiding force in our lives and in our societies. The ideal is that our attitudes will be broadened and develop in light of the larger--that is, Tate's provincial--attitudes of a world society:

> When the regional man, in his ignorance, often an intensive and creative ignorance, of the world, extends his own immediate necessities into the world, and assumes that the present moment is unique, he becomes the provincial man. He cuts himself off from the past, and without benefit of the fund of traditional wisdom approaches the simplest problems of life as if nobody had ever heard of them before (Essays 539).

The difficulty in understanding this quote lies in Tate's use of negative and seemingly critical language to explain his model provincial man. Tate is criticizing the ignorant regional writer, but only as he writes within a constructed world which encourages him to remain ignorant. The provincial man is nascent and must be nascent in order to face fully the unique present moments of his life. An ignorant man (I distinguish this from a nascent man), Tate seems to be saying, depends on the past and that thinking which has gone before him to control his life. This results in a stunted advancement and absence of original thinking; in other words, a regional attitude and narrowness. Tate says cutting ourselves off from the past opens the way for original living, independence and provincialism. This is one

of Tate's concepts of what importance the past holds for the provincial man. Other facets of Tate's theorization illustrate that a society need not totally renounce its past as it embodies its ancestry; indeed, it is a region's ancestry which makes that region unique. Tate summarizes by arguing that a region must recognize the past's appropriate place and purpose in the present, and a provincial writer must place the past in a position which allows him to write within an enlightened vision of the present. The right interpretation of the past allows for a satisfying vision of the present and future.

What philosophically controls Tate's constructs is that he believes there is always a larger influence, whether in belief, time, situation or location for a regional people. Therefore, a regional people, according to Tate, must recognize the larger influence and define themselves within a larger context in order to fully participate in a new provincialism.

We find throughout Tate's explanations of his philosophy that he prefers the notion of a world-society instead of a universal society in his conception of provincialism. This is a subtle but important distinction in Tate's philosophy, one which deserves examination here. A provincial man or provincial society does not equate or suggest a universal man or society; such thinking would render Tate's characterization of the South ubiquitous and

therefore meaningless. It would be unfair and devaluing to regard his theoretical foundation as non-regional. Tate is a champion of the South--"a region with some special characteristics"--and champion of an individual South.

What is at stake for Tate is not a universal constitution but rather an accurate understanding of a particular region during a particular time period. He sought a comprehensive definition of renascence (anchored in his construct of provincialism) to fully understand its writers, its people and its struggles with identity. Moreover, Tate's conception of renascence discourages us from simplifying and classifying literature emerging from this period as reflecting solely a regional literary birth or rebirth.

Tate's intricate conception of a Southern renascence extended beyond literary contexts. He joined the other Agrarians in advocating an organic economic and societal constitution which transcended ignorant regionalism. We see this outlined in the "Statement of Principles" to the Agrarian manifesto I'll Take My Stand:

> an agrarian society is one in which agriculture is the leading vocation, whether for wealth, for pleasure, or for prestige--a form of labor that is pursued with intelligence and leisure, and that becomes the model to which the other forms approach as well as they may (xxiii).

The Twelve Southerners' concern for a humane and economically fulfilling social order found its theoretical realization in the agrarian tradition. In this context,

renascence is concerned with reviewing a region's vocation with the intent of retaining individuality--within a national context.

The social and economic climate of the South between the two world wars prompted a separate way of thinking. Andrew W. Foshee's "The Political Economy of the Southern Agrarian Tradition" traces the historical origins, specifically Northern industrial commercialism, which propelled the twelve intellectuals to promote an agrarian lifestyle. Foshee emphasizes that in response to the spiritual decadence of modern life culminating in a socially dehumanizing economic philosophy, the Twelve Southerners exemplified in I'll Take My Stand principles of political economy "in the Socratic tradition--the science of choosing ends conducive to the good life with an art of acquisition playing the subordinate role" (162). Moreover, John Crowe Ransom asserts in "Reconstructed but Unregenerate," his essay contribution to I'll Take My Stand, "The only remedy to this physical and spiritual decline of the South is to revive farming and undergo a moderate industrialization which will allow the spirit of the South to be preserved" (22). An agrarian lifestyle, the twelve argued, would essentially thwart the dehumanization of industrialism.

More important, the twelve constructed their Agrarian principles so that they would exhibit a Southern aesthetic humanism. Prompted by an economic turmoil and

devastation, still unstable after the Civil and First World Wars, the South, confused and struggling, sought an organizing and guiding principle to restore meaning--meaning that would satisfy and answer the specific needs of the South and offer a much needed national integration. This was the climate that welcomed the Agrarian enterprise. I'll Take My Stand was the manifesto, "a commentary on the nature of man--man as Southerner, as American, as human being" (xxix), that seemed to provide the guiding principle.

John Fekete's The Critical Twilight: Explorations in the Ideology of Anglo-American Literary Theory from Eliot to McLuhan examines the political and social climate of the interwar period in the South as it lead to the development of the New Criticism. It was precisely federal political disintegration (Communism, Marxism, the "invasions by Northern industrial monopolies," the 1929 stock market crash and resultant great depression, New Deal capitalism) that prompted the South's need for integration. The predominant cultural climate at the time, according to Fekete, can be characterized by conflict between the South's internal plight being threatened from the outside by impending scientism (46):

> The traditional reference systems of religion, morality, social mythology and ideals were disintegrating. Personal escape combined with social protest, and both cynicism and the search for an alternative, non-bourgeois future, were important determinants of the culture profile of the period, in literature as in literary theory (47).

As its recourse, the South assumed a defensive posture while it simultaneously yearned for re-identification. Fekete explains,

> Both sides of the convergence [the South's predicament] embody a contradiction between the inexorable magnet of integration and the cultural opposition to this integration--an opposition that cannot succeed in the absence of social forces that can bring about the supersession of the whole historical problematic (47).

Resisting cultural opposition while yearning for integration made it possible for agrarian principles to emerge as a significant influence. The nature of this yearning is implicitly a form of escapism as the twelve intellectuals sought a release from tenets of Northern industrialism. Fekete explains, "The Fugitives' work initiated the Southern Renascence. But they wrote without being at home in a South in transition, feeling no sympathy for the New South and rejecting the Old South" (52).

Ransom's concern that a traditional ontology was diminishing led to a search for a new ontology.[1] Championed by Ransom, the agrarian principles found their voice and sanction in academia. Here, on a conceptual level, the South could find its integration in societal economic, political,

[1] Fekete explains in his notes (to this chapter) that this dialectic, "the contradictory attitude to reality, the need for integration as well as the resistance to it, is expressed, for example, in the New Critical obsession with irony" (230).

and cultural ideologies. But as ideologies they are abstractions, not policies. The agrarian conception would find its ultimate usefulness and fulfillment in literary theory rather than in political implementation.

Foshee echoes this position, carefully pointing out that the Twelve Southerners were scholars, not economists, and their manifesto was a set of humanistic principles, not a political or economic solution. He asserts that the impulse to initiate an agrarian social ontology was based on the belief "that it was agriculture in particular that was of a special character and which served as a means to the good life" (Foshee 166). Foshee continues: "As an alternative to the unlimited acquisitiveness and servility to appetite, and external coercion and irreligion of industrial society, the Twelve Southerners assert the goodness of an agrarian society and the moderate wealth, freedom, and piety that it fosters" (163). This attitude finds its foundation in a long history of the agraria tradition (see M. Thomas Inge's Agrarianism in American Literature for a comprehensive examination of this tradition).

Richard Weaver, whom Foshee names the "heir to the agrarianism of the Twelve Southerners" (166), expands on the theoretical impulse of I'll Take My Stand as a set of what he calls metaphysical truths. What constituted the Southern Agrarians' initial effort to construct a normative system of

political economy and promote an agrarian society evolved into "a set of values, or better, a set of metaphysical truths which is the origin of those values" (Foshee 166). Weaver's study defends the motivation of the Agrarians as they provided a system of social philosophy--the restoring the use of "right reason" to political economy. Put another way, as C. Hugh Holman remarks, "the Agrarian way which the Fugitives adopted was, in a sense, a myth of the good order of the past used as a weapon of attack against what they believed to be the bad order of the present" (The Roots of Southern Writing 192). We find repeated here a reviewing and reaffirmation of those social values inherent in an agrarian vocation that would retain humanity and individuality.

Tate's theories on agrarianism significantly were formed at the time of and in response to the South during this critical period between the world wars. We find in his thoughts on the personal and economic benefits of agrarianism, and in his concept of provincialism, a reiteration of the need for integration of societal tenets informed by a vision of a separate national identification. Given this socio-historical framework, we can now reread Tate's "backward glance" reference with clearer understanding. Tate suggests that the backward glance marked that moment when the South transcended its regionalism for one unique and lasting moment. His backward glance served as a hindsight vision of a region's and a literature's

consciousness, both in time and place; that is, it was a vision allowing the South to break away from the constricting regional attitudes of its past and review itself and the past's importance to its present. The South "stepped over the border," Tate claims, and its people and literature joined the "national provincialism." The Southern renascence was the South's revision.

We find in the theories put forth by seminal scholars of the renascence period a linking of historical and cultural ideologies, political and economic circumstances, and agrarian principles to literary theory. C. Hugh Holman's "Literature and Culture: The Fugitive-Agrarians" focuses on this linkage as he investigates in light of the Agrarian critical and literary outcome, some of the ways "this three-part movement [artist, culture, literature] was a response to social and cultural change" (Holman, Roots 188). Obviously, we can find precedents for such linking. But for the purposes of this study, it is important to remember that the Agrarian endeavor is particularly exemplary of a confined and identifiable relationship between literature and the culture in which it was produced. Likewise, Flannery O'Connor and her fiction are exceptionally suited for such a study as both are exemplary of the renascence disposition. In many ways, Agrarianism provides a way into understanding her fiction because of the long tradition of agrarian philosophy in

American literature: a humanistic societal principle based on and incorporating aesthetic and economic convictions. As such, we can bring to a reading of her work a distinct literary history and an established tradition of agrarian themes.

M. Thomas Inge claims in his 1985 bibliographical essay "The Study of Southern Literature" (Appendix A, in Rubin's The History of Southern Literature) that a "full critically balanced survey of the Renascence remains to be written" (595). Inge emphatically endorses Rubin's numerous studies and anthologies, as he does Young's and Holman's anthologies of Southern literature. Inge likewise endorses Richard King's A Southern Renaissance: The Cultural Awakening of the American South, 1930-1955. He qualifies, however, that although King's study moves beyond the conventional historical and sociological analyses, King's "sympathy for the liberal tradition makes a balanced treatment of the literature impossible" (Rubin, History of Southern Lit. 595). Still, King's conceptualization of this renasci period is helpful to this examination since it is widely cited in criticism and scholarship as reliable.

King is definitive in situating the Southern Renaissance, locating its origins (as C. Vann Woodward does) with Thomas Wolfe's Look Homeward Angel in 1929, and marking its ending "somewhere around 1955" (King 3). King interestingly never uses the word "renascence," although his

observations about this historical and literary period strongly echo Tate, Rubin and the other scholars who favor that spelling. The role and purpose of the South's past in its present, for example, almost directly repeats Tate. King says, "the writers and intellectuals of the South after the late 1920s were engaged in an attempt to come to terms not only with the inherited values of the Southern tradition but also with a certain way of perceiving and dealing with the past" (7). Moreover, King cites the South's self-appraisal as forming the impetus for the literary and intellectual surge around 1930, as Tate, Woodward and Young had previously noted. It seems, therefore, that King's preference for the term "Renaissance" in describing this period is largely orthographical. Or, perhaps the alternative spelling better suits his cultural anthropological study as he means to suggest similarities to the Italian Renaissance.

King is just one example of recent scholarship employing the "Renaissance" spelling to refer to Tate's Southern renascence period. It would be as faulty to say that Tate was not intending an Italian Renaissance allusion in his statement as it would be simplistic to say that only recent scholars--that is, scholars researching decades after the renascence period--adapted the alternative spelling. To answer a previously posed question, is the difference between the Southern "Renaissance" and "Renascence" simply

orthographical or reflecting an academic preference, is the matter for another study. Our primary concern is how and in what ways this period can be considered renascent.

One determinant for criticism that seems important for this study is that implicit in the orthographical dilemma are scholars from different decades looking at and looking back on a given literary and historical period. Tate and a few before mentioned scholars responded to what was happening during the time period and have since asked, what was that time all about? This question poses an interesting critical stance as it points out the difference between literature and theory written during--that is in response to--social and cultural conditions, and literature and theory written and revised in hindsight. What seems to be going on here is a reviewing and redefining of the period between the world wars in the history of Southern literature--a change in viewpoint contributing to the disparity of understanding and writing about the Southern renascence.

On the other hand, such a revision often offers a clearer, if not more accurate, vision. Tate revised his "backward glance" notion in "A Southern Mode of the Imagination," written in 1959 (Essays 577-592). Here, he cautions against "placing" any Southern writers of the renascence period in what he says is now "somewhat misleadingly called the Southern Renaissance": "it was more

precisely a birth, not a rebirth" (Essays 577). Later, C. Vann Woodward gave "a qualified nod of approval" to Tate's "backward glance" thesis (qtd. in King 4), and in his efforts to add specificity, he consulted Cleanth Brooks, who offered this reflection on the renascence period:

> the Southern experience had been marked by a feeling for the concrete and specific, a familiarity with conflict, a sense of community and religious wholeness, a belief that the mystery of human nature defied rational explanation or manipulation, and a sense of the tragic. This was the fertile ground in which the South's artistic and intellectual promptings took root and flourished (King 4-5).

The outcome is that we have Tate, a leading Agrarian, Woodward, a Southern historian and scholar, and Cleanth Brooks, a New Critic, coming to terms with the sociological climate of the period, and in hindsight, revising and concurring on the renascence temperament. Moreover, we can identify a similar renascence temperament in which O'Connor's "artistic and intellectual promptings took root and flourished."

Andrew Lytle provides the most recent review of this renascence time period. His 1988 study, Southerners and Europeans: Essays in a Time of Disorder offers brief portraits of Ransom, Tate, Caroline Gordon and Flannery O'Connor in their respective heydays, and as their writings demonstrate European traits. He mimics Tate in his reevaluation of the renascence period:

> critics are saying that the Southern Renascence is over and the horizon bare of anything to succeed it. Well, renascence is a misnomer. The last half century in our letters, which comprised a large portion of American letters, demonstrates a birth, not a rebirth (Lytle, Southerners and Europeans 13).

Lytle acknowledges the period's surge of literature as its primary descriptor. Looking back, Tate discusses what the renascence meant for the generation and evolution of literature:

> the brilliant and unexpected renascence of Southern writing between the two wars is perhaps not of the first importance in the literature of the modern world; yet for the first time, the South had a literature of considerable maturity which was distinctive enough to call for a special criticism which it failed to get (Essays 543).

Holman's backward look likewise speaks to the literary climate at the height of the renascence. He states that many of the Agrarians have "been among the centers of the resurgence of excellence in southern writing which has carried it to greater heights than it has ever enjoyed before" (Roots 188). The nature of the Southern Renascence, shaped largely by these seminal scholars, is broadly and conventionally described in the scholarship as the period between the two world wars is known for its influential political, cultural, social and critical climate, reflected and culminating in the Agrarian movement, and subsequently, the New Criticism.

We now come full circle and try to answer Rubin's question, "What does the adjective Southern mean when applied to a generation of writers now in their thirties and forties?" Obviously, our answers will be largely speculative. We can, however, consult those scholars who have indirectly answered this question to help us discover what the adjective Southern means when applied to Flannery O'Connor's writing, and other fiction flourishing during and immediately after the renascence period.

If much of the Southern renascence is attributed to post World War I and its subsequent reconstruction and re-identification, how can we account, Woodward asks, for the literary productivity of Southern writers after World War II? He argues, "Surely history and memory, loss and absence, were central preoccupations in much Southern writing in the years after 1930s" (qtd. in King 7). Perhaps the difference lies not in specific literary themes or "central preoccupations," but rather in the particular (or put another way, regionally unique) manner those themes are addressed and made manifest in the literature of the period. Moreover, the difference may also lie in the sudden outpouring and unanimity of these similar manifestations and themes in the literature of Southern writers. These factors more clearly identify and attest to the way social conditions can influence an author, and in a broader way, the relationship between culture and a regional literature.

Young provides a better answer to Woodward's charge. He identifies the influence of the past on the Southern renascence psyche, implying that this relationship is distinguishing. He emphasizes that the literature of the renascence is rooted in and enhances all that has gone before it. To this extent, it seems to me, it serves a hermeneutic function:

> from one point of view, modern Southern literature dwarfs the earlier literary achievements of the South . . . from another, it throws light upon and actually enhances all that has gone before, very much as a distinguished man awakens an interest in, and gives a new value to, his ancestry (Young, Literature of the South vii).

He then explains how authors since then have incorporated this stance into their literature:

> It is an obsession with reality which has preoccupied many Southern authors. 'Isn't this the way it is, or the way it was?' they seem to ask themselves. 'And if this is so, must we not try to give it--in so far as words can render anything--an honest representation in language?' (Young, Literature of the South 602).

What Young calls an obsession could more accurately be described as a commitment to find a clearer vision. Young suggests that Southern authors are poignantly questioning and reevaluating a time and a people. In other words, they are looking to break down the mythical rendition of their remembered past. Writers after the thirties, in their struggles with the uncertainties of what was, reflect a determination to represent the actuality, honestly.

Unlike Woodward, Young expands what is conventionally denoted as the decades of the renascence period in Southern literature. Young's evaluation of renascent literature after 1950 most directly describes what "Southern" means to writers in their thirties and forties. He even includes Flannery O'Connor in his description:

> If literature is still in a state of renascence in the middle of the 1960's, one hundred years after the Civil War, it is being given a new birth by a different set of writers from those who were seminal and prominent thirty and forty years ago. Faulkner and Wolfe are dead, and so are some younger writers of a later generation, Randall Jarrell and Flannery O'Connor. . . . It is easy to observe that there has been a renascence of letters in the South; it is not so easy to know whether the present state of Southern writing represents vigor or reflects past glories (Young, Literature of the South 604).

Young, like Tate, asserts that the renascence in Southern fiction is over. Yet, he questions if the present state of Southern writing reflects some of that renascence "vigor" or if it mimics "past glories."

Young's query attests to the problem of categorization. O'Connor's fiction embraces a Southern Renascence temperament as Young, Rubin and Tate describe, even though, strictly speaking, she supercedes the conventionally dates. To best approach O'Connor's fiction, we must look behind conventional categories and find what sources inform them. Scholars have consistently, as this chapter has shown, characterized the time period in the South between the world wars as a surge or resurgence of

literature, a birth or rebirth of regional writing whose themes are invigorated by influential cultural and sociological concerns. Theorists looking at the historical and political climate of this period provide an additional profile: the South, in a state of economic decline, assumed a defensive posture, at the same time it was in dire need of individualism and social integration. The positions assumed in I'll Take My Stand identify what the Agrarians saw at the time as a dehumanization and depletion of natural and human resources at the hands of Northern industrialism. All these characteristics (and others not addressed in this study) intertwine to form the renascence temperament in which O'Connor was writing. Her fiction reflects this Southern Renascence sensibility primarily in her use of the vision metaphor. Here, her characters teach us that we must take a strong hard look at our condition and our spirituality. Her vision metaphor promotes a consciousness of self and society, a consciousness advocated in Agrarian philosophy. O'Connor shares with Agrarian thinking a belief that her people and her region are in need of re-definition and self-appraisal. Moreover, her fiction demonstrates an Agrarian sensibility influenced by her personal and professional correspondence with Tate, Caroline Gordon, Ransom, Lytle and other Agrarians. An examination of O'Connor's contacts with Agrarian proponents will provide further confirmation of the ways she embraces a renascence temperament.

O'CONNOR AND THE FUGITIVE/AGRARIANS: CONTACTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

As Thomas Daniel Young notes, O'Connor's fiction appeared a generation after what scholars denote strictly as the Southern Renascence, and long after the inception of the Fugitive movement in the early 1920s. Yet her fiction, to answer Young's question about the recent Southern writing representing "vigor" or reflecting "past glories," augments significant events and concerns emerging just prior to the time she was writing. P. Albert Duhamel identifies this temporal feature in O'Connor's The Violent Bear It Away, arguing that "the novel's attitude toward social scientism is an updating of the Fugitive's attitudes." He goes on to explain that O'Connor "addressed herself to problems larger than those of a challenged sectionalism" (Friedman, The Added Dimension 92). Much the same can be said about O'Connor's short stories. Her fiction unmistakably addresses residual and resultant issues from social events that emerged before and during the Southern renascence, issues answered in part by the Fugitive and Agrarian ideology.

Many of the Agrarians have publicly commented on O'Connor's fiction and art. Five principal Fugitive and later Agrarian leaders specializing in literature, Allen

Tate (and his wife, Caroline Gordon), John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, Andrew Lytle and Donald Davidson, corresponded with O'Connor throughout the height of her career in the 1950s. She shared early in her writing career until her death in 1964 a personal and professional relationship with these literary Agrarians, especially Tate, Warren and Ransom. Tate, Gordon, Warren and Ransom read and reviewed her work in progress, befriended her, facilitated her publishing career and gave tributes to her after her death. Lytle was her mentor at the Writer's Workshop at Iowa. Davidson reviewed The Violent Bear It Away for the New Yorker and The New York Times Book Review. As recently as 1978, Warren and other scholars have been reviewing her technique, and more importantly, have been rethinking her place in Southern letters. Likewise, O'Connor knew of the Fugitive's developments and read I'll Take My Stand. We know, from biographical accounts, collections of correspondence among principal Agrarians, published reviews of O'Connor's fiction and scholars' remarks on this relationship, the nature of her contact and association with the Agrarian Movement.

The essential foundation O'Connor shares with the Agrarians, albeit a broad one, is the soil: these twelve Vanderbilt scholars, and one relatively unknown fiction writer from Milledgeville, Georgia, were born and bred in the South, took their materials from the South, and thought

and molded that material in light of their Southern heritage. Furthermore, they shared a sensitivity and philosophy towards a changing South, formed in part by their travels through northern states. They also shared a pivotal ordeal: the South in transition in the forties and fifties. These shared experiences offer one important explanation of why her fiction reflects a closeness to Agrarian ideas, a closeness recognized by many prominent Agrarians.

Literary critics have recently recognized Agrarian inclinations in O'Connor's fiction. Several scholars researching either individual Agrarian members or the movement have discovered and included letters from O'Connor in their collections. In addition, current O'Connor scholars are reexamining and updating the sparse critical inquiry which appeared in the late 1960s and early 1970s that linked her in any way with Agrarianism. Melvin J. Friedman, for example, claims in his 1985 study Critical Essays on Flannery O'Connor, that she "is essentially an Agrarian sensibility, nurtured on such a militantly anti-industrialist, anti-scientific text as the 1930 I'll Take my Stand" (2). Her life, according to Friedman, "establishes her credentials as rural Southerner, Agrarian nurtured" (2).

In his study, Friedman reprints Allen Tate's tribute to O'Connor, "Platitudes and Protestants" (Friedman's title), which Tate originally wrote for Esprit in 1964. The tribute is short and rather general, although Tate has

commented in greater length elsewhere on O'Connor's art. Here is Tate's most interesting remark:

> At that time [1950] I was not well acquainted with her work: I knew only a few short stories, and the fragment of Wise Blood that I had read at Iowa in 1947.
>
> And how irrelevant my remarks on Wise Blood must have seemed to her! I hadn't the vaguest idea of what she was up to; I offered to correct her grammar; I even told her that her style was dull, the sentences being flat and simple declaratives. No doubt what I said was true; but it was irrelevant.
>
> The flat style, the cranky grammar, the monotonous sentence-structure were necessary vehicles of her vision of man. . . (qtd. in Friedman 67).

Tate's tone in this remark says as much about his respect for O'Connor's art as his words. It sounds somewhat like a confession, in which Tate is humbled, perhaps even apologetic for having misunderstood O'Connor's style. Tate, however, certainly wasn't the only one who "hadn't the vaguest idea" of O'Connor's technique. Many contemporary readers and critics criticized her syntax (less so, her use of violence and grotesquery). This was a plight she was to endure throughout her writing career.[1]

Tate concludes his tribute with a distinguished

[1] For example, The Violent Bear It Away received mixed reviews when it appeared in 1960. Sally Fitzgerald relates: "O'Connor considers her intentions to have been misunderstood by both favorable and unfavorable critics, and is angered by [a] review in Time mentioning lupus in relation to her work" (Fitzgerald, Collected Works 1252). Fitzgerald amends that Warren, Lytle and others wrote letters of praise which encouraged her at this time.

compliment that is representative of her art, but more importantly, that secures her place among Southern fiction writers: "The unusual combination of Southern gentry with Roman Catholicism gave Flannery O'Connor a unique point of view. This, with her inexplicable genius, produced a writer whose like probably will not appear again in the United States" (qtd. in Friedman 68).

O'Connor became aware of Tate and the Agrarian Movement in the 1940s and 1950s, first, when she attended the Writer's Workshop at the State University of Iowa, and later at Yaddo (an artists' colony attended at various times by Robert Lowell, Elizabeth Fenwick, James Ross and others), in Saratoga Springs, New York. At Iowa, she was beginning to form her literary style under the direction of both Warren and Lytle. After she finished her master's thesis, she sent out several stories for publication. Ransom, who was then editor of the Kenyon Review, chose one of her stories to be read aloud during a classroom visit (Fitzgerald, Collected Works 1241). Just before her stay at Yaddo, O'Connor began work on Wise Blood under the guidance of Andrew Lytle, who was then supervising the Writer's Workshop. According to Fitzgerald, Lytle began "to oversee O'Connor's work on the novel" early in 1948 (O'Connor 1242). After Wise Blood was published in 1952, O'Connor received a letter of praise from Ransom, who then invited her to apply for a Kenyon Review fellowship (Fitzgerald, Collected Works 1246). Their

relationship was more than a mutual and professional regard among Southern writers: both Warren and Lytle became O'Connor's personal friends and mentors throughout her formative writing years. Later, they would expedite her publishing career and promote her as an exceptional writer in her own time.

Her relationship with Caroline Gordon Tate, a distinguished woman of letters in her own right, was largely mentor and student. O'Connor respected Gordon as a writer and sought out Gordon's advice on several manuscripts. In 1960, O'Connor spoke at Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia, and served on a panel with Gordon, Katherine Anne Porter, Madison Jones and Louis Rubin.

Much of Habit of Being consists of correspondence between O'Connor and Caroline Gordon, primarily discussing work in progress and fiction-writing techniques. The Tates read most of O'Connor's writing before she sent it to her editor. O'Connor mentions the Tates' response to one of her stories in a letter written to Robert Giroux, her editor at the time: "I have just written a story called 'Good Country People' that Allen and Caroline both say is the best thing I have written and should be in this collection" (Fitzgerald, Habit 75). Because there were so many letters of this kind, and the nature of them particularly revealing, Sally Fitzgerald collected and commented on them in "A Master Class: From the Correspondence of Caroline Gordon and

Flannery O'Connor," which was published in the Georgia Review in 1979. Here, Fitzgerald included previously unpublished but typical letters exchanged between the two women. The overall tone is instructive, reinforcing their student-mentor relationship. Fitzgerald concludes her analysis: "Caroline Gordon commented on every story and novel that Flannery O'Connor wrote thereafter, and Flannery O'Connor never felt that she had outgrown her mentor" (846).

Gordon's reviews affected O'Connor deeply, more so than those of lesser-known reviewers. O'Connor's respect and admiration for Gordon would leave her more vulnerable to criticism. What is more, Gordon never allowed her friendship with O'Connor to bias her estimation of her writing: the nature of Gordon's reviews are not at all patronizing or gratuitous. In her review of Wise Blood for Critique (1958), for example, Gordon refers to a fellow critic's charge that if the name of the author were deleted it would be hard to tell a story by Miss O'Connor from a story by Truman Capote, Carson McCullers or Tennessee Williams. Immediately following, Gordon offers this praise,

> Miss O'Connor's work, however, has a characteristic which does not occur in the work of any of her contemporaries. Its presence in everything she writes, coupled with her extraordinary talent, makes her, I suspect, one of the most important writers of our age (3).

Later, in the same article, Gordon provides this critique:

"Miss O'Connor writes lean, stripped, at times almost too flat-footed a prose" (5). In response, O'Connor wrote to Gordon concerning some of the inaccuracies in the review:

> I guess they sent you a copy of Critique. It helped to have you say something good about the novel. . . . On reading it over, I have discovered what is wrong in the name of the Church as you have it. I knew something was wrong but I have only just realized what it is. Haze's church is always called simply The Church Without Christ, never the Church of Christ Without Christ. That one comes in with Hoover Shoates and is further lengthened to the Holy Church of Christ Without Christ by Onnie Jay Holy. This doesn't make any difference in the Critique but you will want to correct it in the [projected] introduction [to a new edition] or the book will contradict what you say. Also another detail I noted is that Haze reads the sign about Leora Watts' friendly bed in the train station, not on the train (Fitzgerald, Habit 305).

What comes through in this reply, it seems to me, is a friendly, almost reverent tone of an author diplomatically--but necessarily--pointing out some obvious mistakes in her mentor's review to prevent causing her embarrassment.

Gordon's criticism of a draft of "The Lame Shall Enter First" in 1961 affected O'Connor even more. Gordon told her that the story was "undramatic," saying that writing essays had adversely affected O'Connor's style. Fitzgerald says that O'Connor resolved to stop writing nonfiction after hearing this from Gordon (Fitzgerald, Collected Works 1254). Conversely, O'Connor reviewed two of Gordon's works, How to Read a Novel and The Malefactors. (For an history O'Connor's reviews, see Presence of Grace and Other Book Reviews.)

Still, her relationship with the Tates, enduring from 1945 until her death, was important to her formation as a writer. The Tates nurtured her writing development, and she matured under the benevolent and almost parental guidance of Allen and Caroline. She explains in a letter to "A,' 28 August 1955:

> Mrs. Tate is Caroline Gordon Tate, the wife of Allen Tate. She writes fiction as good as anybody, though I have not read much of it myself. They, with John Crowe Ransom and R. P. Warren, were prominent in the '20s in that group at Vanderbilt that called itself the Fugitives. The Fugitives are now here there and yonder. Anyway Mrs. Tate has taught me a lot about writing (Fitzgerald, Habit 98).

As this letter shows, O'Connor was aware of the Fugitive activities. But she learned about their principles and budding Agrarian ideas tacitly and intimately, from her personal and written contacts with the Tates, and from her apprenticeship under Lytle and Warren at Iowa.

Ransom was most influential in getting O'Connor's work published. He too, it seems, adopted a paternal stance when it came to advancing her career. Ransom wrote the following letter to Monroe K. Spears, editor of the Sewanee Review, on 2 May 1953: "I think mighty well of [Flannery] O'Connor, and I'm told she needs the help. . . I'll be happy to know she's looked after" (Young and Core, Selected Letters 370). Ransom writes in another letter, this time to Robert Penn Warren, 14 April 1955, his praise for one of O'Connor's recent short stories, but expresses his

reservations about her title:

> A funny coincidence. We have the best serio-comic story Flannery O'Connor has yet written, in this Spring issue. But it's entitled 'The Artificial Nigger.' I was for using it, but Phil [not identified] pointed out how sensitive the people of color are, so I wrote and proposed to her another title. Her reply was in effect that the responsibility would be ours, we could change the title if we liked, but she believed that if the people who read her title would also read the story they would see that the only reflection on anybody is on the whites. We kept her title (Young and Core, Selected Letters 375-376).

Ransom used his power as editor of The Kenyon Critics (1951-1953) and the Kenyon Review (1951-1953) to promote and publicize O'Connor's fiction. Ransom expressed his appraisal of O'Connor's writing in a letter to Andrew Lytle, 25 March 1954:

> We have a hard time finding fiction of any distinction. Some stories we publish aim at distinction and that's the most you can say for them. Take a look at our Spring number when it comes out (round April 1) and see our four stories there. The one by Flannery O'Connor is first-rate, I think, and the one we published this time last year from her ["The Life You Save May Be Your Own"] is the best story I've seen in years, if I'm not mistaken. Most of the other stories are just good tries (Young and Core, Selected Letters 374).

Like the Tates, Ransom read and commented on most of O'Connor's short stories. She sent him her "Greenleaf" manuscript which Ransom published in the Kenyon Review summer issue. This publication contributed toward her winning first prize in the 1956 O. Henry Awards. What is

reflected in the tone of O'Connor's letters to and about Ransom is a comfortable but singularly respectful relationship. For example, she writes in a letter to Cecil Dawkins, 5 October 1958, "I'll be interested to see what Mr. Ransom thinks of as 'hick talk.' I have always listened with profit to what he had to say about my stories--except when he wanted me to change the title of 'The Artificial Nigger'" (Fitzgerald, Habit 297).

In O'Connor's professional associations with Warren, we hear a mutual admiration in place of paternalism or mentorship. While at Iowa, O'Connor used Brooks' and Warren's Understanding Fiction[2] in a criticism course. O'Connor asked Robert Giroux, her editor in 1952, to send advance copies of Wise Blood to Warren, Tate, Lytle, John Wade (also an Agrarian), and other critics and writers whom she thought "a good word might be squeezed out of" (Fitzgerald, Habit 34). Later, she sent him a copy of The Violent Bear It Away, remarking to "A" about his review, "The one from Red Warren pleased me no end as I really didn't expect him to like the book" (Fitzgerald, Habit 390).

2

She advises Ben Griffith, ". . .you may know [the book] but should if you don't. It is a book that has been of invaluable help to me and I think would be to you" (Fitzgerald, Habit 83).

Warren earnestly tried to understand O'Connor's art. "An Interview in New Haven with Robert Penn Warren," in Floyd C. Watkins and John T. Hiers' Robert Penn Warren: Talking Interviews 1950-1978, illustrates Warren's admiration for O'Connor as a fiction writer. Midway through the interview, Richard B. Sale, editor of Studies in the Novel, asks Warren's opinion of several contemporary (his term) fiction writers, naming Faulkner, Welty, Porter, John O'Hara, Gordon and others. Warren starts to answer the question, but then abruptly stops and volunteers Flannery O'Connor (a name Sale omitted) as a talented short story writer:

> Warren: Oh, I also wanted to record my admiration for Flannery O'Connor. I would put her name in that same group of the best short-fiction writers. She's written some beauties, much better than her novels.
>
> Sale: Did you know her?
>
> Warren: I knew her slightly. I spent one weekend as a guest in the same house with her. That's the only time I ever saw her, in Nashville. She was a fascinating woman, wonderful writer. The short story psychology is a strange, strange thing. It's as different from a novel in a way as poetry is. Well, not quite, but there's a real difference. She was a wonderful writer. She's going to be permanent, I think (135).

Another chapter in Talking Interviews, "An Interview with Flannery O'Connor and Robert Penn Warren," records (with some omissions) the proceedings of the annual Vanderbilt

Literary Symposium on 23 April 1959. Here, Warren and O'Connor answered questions from students and members of the faculty. The overall topic of discussion addressed writing techniques, specifically methods of writing fiction. It is interesting to note in both authors' answers the many similarities in composing styles. It is also interesting (but hardly surprising) that O'Connor rarely volunteers any information. Throughout, she responds to questions directed to her or answers Warren's prompts. He frequently attempts to include her in the discussion and repeats her points to support his own:

> Warren: There's no law that makes you put the first chapter first though. . . Some of them have been written first, yes. I don't think it's knowing how the story comes out that's the point. As Flannery just said, you know what you want it to feel like. You envisage the feeling. You may or may not know how it is going to come out. You may have your big scenes in mind before you start. . . (56).

At a nearby point in the interview, Warren reiterates, "Just as Flannery was saying: you go back a little bit, and keep looking back. After you are along the way, keep looking back, and your backward looks along the way will help you go forward. You have to find a logic there that you pursue" (60).

The interview proceeds with predictable questions to Flannery about her theological intent and management of characterization. The pace picks up in what appears in print

as a rapid dialogue between Warren and O'Connor in response to Betty Weber's question about the use of the grotesque in Southern fiction. At this point, the interviewers fade into the background, and the interview becomes a direct exchange between Warren and O'Connor:

Weber: You say that the South can still recognize what a freak is, but perhaps thirty years from now we will be writing about the man in the gray flannel suit. . .

O'Connor: I think as it gets to be more and more city and less country--as we, everything, is reduced to the same flat level--we'll be writing about men in gray flannel suits. That's about all there'll be to write about, I think, as we lose our individuality.

Warren: Did you like Augie March?

O'Connor: I didn't read it.

Warren: In Bellow's book I had the sense, particularly in the first half, that it was very rich in personalities. An urban Jewish South Side Chicago world, and the people had a lot of bursting-off the page. They were really personalities. They were anything but people in gray flannel suits. That he could in that particular work catch this vigor--this clash--of personality: that's what I liked best about the book.

O'Connor: I shouldn't say 'city' in that sense. I mean--

Warren: Suburbs, yes.

O'Connor: I mean just the proliferation of supermarkets.

Warren: The city has sort of a new romance after the supermarket civilization of the suburbs; it's the new Wild West. I think Saul caught that in a way. Certainly there's a richness in his book.

O'Connor: That's his region. Everybody has to have a region, and I think in the South we're losing that regional sense.

Warren: Well, you can't keep it for literary purposes.

O'Connor: No, because everybody wants the good things of life, like supermarkets--

Warren: --and plastics--

O'Connor: --and cellophane. Everybody wants the privilege of being as abstract as the next man (63-64).

At this point in the interview, the subject changes.

A first or uninformed reading of this exchange may leave the reader puzzled or perhaps amused. It may seem odd that O'Connor and Warren cite supermarkets, plastics and cellophane as examples of the good things in life. At the least, O'Connor's supermarket philosophy appears curious, and Warren's reply, "a new romance after the supermarket civilization of the suburbs" appears equally strange. Overall, the dialogue seems disconnected, as if their communicating is misfiring.

But there is much more to her supermarket comment than appears during a first reading. Indeed, O'Connor imbues her fiction with this same technique, what Rubin identifies

as hyperbole in "Carson McCullers: The Aesthetic of Pain." Rubin comes to this conclusion after comparing McCullers' Biff Brannon (The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter) to Haze Motes (Wise Blood): "The physically grotesque is a way of exaggerating the everyday by making it all-important and inescapable" (Rubin, A Gallery of Southerners 143). This is how he believes O'Connor uses hyperbole:

> The southern experience was still very much an affair of the complex patterns of community life. . . within a clearly recognized set of expectations and assumptions. In that kind of established social context, individual behavior [social or moral] ran along expected forms, so that there were certain agreed-upon limits and standards of human conduct. Anything truly deviant, genuinely aberrant, would therefore stand out, since there was something against which it could be measured and identified (143-144).

O'Connor's freaks, according to Rubin, represent that aberrant social and moral behavior in a highly regulated and established southern community. What we are supposed to do as readers, it seems to me (which this study purports to do), is to see O'Connor's freaks in relation to those measurable standards of human conduct, and then form our own conclusions about both.

Returning to O'Connor's dialogue with Warren, in light of Rubin's theory, is O'Connor saying that a proliferation of supermarkets, plastics and cellophane in the South is an aberrant social behavior, akin to an aberrant moral behavior of some sort? She seems to be saying here that the aberrant behavior lies in the South's losing

its regional sense. This is consistent if we remember that O'Connor often expressed her dismay that the South was becoming nationalized:

> The anguish that most of us have observed for some time now has been caused not by the fact that the South is alienated from the rest of the country, but by the fact that it is not alienated enough, that every day we are getting more and more like the rest of the country, that we are being forced out not only of our many sins, but of our few virtues ("The Fiction Writer and His Country," in Fitzgerald, Mystery and Manners 28-29).

Still, I hear in her reply a Tate-like dichotomy, whereas what is considered aberrant is measured against both a "region," and an "everybody". To a closed Southern regionalism, in O'Connor's thinking, supermarkets represent an abstract--but an abstract everyone wants. By extension, O'Connor seems to be saying that the Southern mind doesn't want a closed regional sense (neither does Warren). But she does want a regional sense, and part of that regional sense includes her vision of modern man, a vision, as Gordon explains, which is not limited to Southern rural humanity (Critique 9).

Like Ransom, Andrew Lytle also admired O'Connor's craft. Long after he left his teaching position at the Iowa Writer's Workshop, he went on to provide opportunities for O'Connor to publish her work. Lytle's letters to Tate about O'Connor, collected in Young and Sarcone's The Lytle-Tate Letters: The Correspondence of Andrew Lytle and Allen Tate

(1987), discuss her stories and style. Lytle is usually seeking Tate's advice on submissions to the Sewanee Review. Tate's replies recommend O'Connor for publication (specifically for the summer 1962 issue), and explain her fiction and syntax to Lytle.

The most revealing remark about her craft appears in a letter from Lytle as he consults with Tate on his idea to highlight O'Connor and Peter Taylor in the 1962 Summer issue. Lytle was looking for a balance between entries of fiction and criticism for the two writers:

> By the way, I have this idea. I feel that both Peter Taylor and Flannery [O'Connor] have reached that stage where they need a concentrated appraisal. Say two or three pieces on them. But not only that. Let them give me something, a story or piece of fiction, to go with the criticism. I think this will lighten somewhat, without lessening, the heavy effect which criticism makes in a quarterly. Peter has agreed, and I've written Flannery. . . I've written Caroline to do something on Flannery. And I wrote Eudora Welty. I thought I'd later practice the same strategy on her work (113).

Tate's reply is positive, and O'Connor's "The Lame Shall Enter First" is published along with two critical essays by Robert Fitzgerald and John Hawks about her work.[3]

It is in a letter to Lytle asking to use his name as

3 For a fuller and entertaining account of the problems O'Connor encountered in publishing "The Lame Shall Enter First," see The Habit of Being, pages 455-6, 460, 464, 470-1, 475 and 478.

a reference for a Guggenheim fellowship that we find O'Connor's eminent praise, illustrating an admiration similar to that she had for Warren: "What you said in it is what I see in the stories myself but what nobody who reviews them cares to see" (Fitzgerald, Habit 104). Their correspondence reveals that not only did O'Connor respect Lytle, but she also felt comfortable communicating with him, as she did with Ransom. Perhaps this is due to their continual contact since their Iowa days. In a letter to Lytle on 4 February 1960, she says, "I feel better about the book [The Violent Bear It Away], knowing you think it works. I expect it to get trounced but that won't make any difference if it really does work. There are not many people whose opinion on this I set store by" (Fitzgerald, Habit 373). Few readers understood how O'Connor's stories "worked." For her to applaud Lytle's insight and opinion is rare--and exceptionally noteworthy.

O'Connor had less contact with other Agrarian members. Donald Davidson reviewed The Violent Bear It Away in 1960, first for the New York Times Book Review in February, and then in March for the New Yorker. In the March review, he comments on her use of the grotesque, concluding that "Miss O'Connor's writing, which is packed with 'trembling' pink moons and people who have 'crushed' shadows, fits her material perfectly" (78). She continued to write up until her death, but discussed her work primarily

with personal friends "A" and Maryat Lee. Her posthumous publications were managed mainly by the Fitzgeralds, and critical attention linking her with Agrarianism came later, mostly from Tate, Rubin, Holman and Friedman.

Prominent Agrarian members associated with O'Connor throughout her writing career. The nature of their relationship was fundamentally professional, yet personal overall; but they were always influential. In a letter she wrote to "A" months before her death in 1964, she relates,

> I am reading for the first time 'I'll Take My Stand' which is out in a paperback. It's a very interesting document. It's futile of course like 'woodman, spare that tree,' but still, the only time real minds have got together to talk about the South" (Fitzgerald, Habit 566).

She knew and read many critical and scholarly "minds" throughout her lifetime; but she offers little praise for those minds except for a few select theologians. For O'Connor to say that the Agrarians were real minds is distinguished praise indeed.

Moreover, she sanctioned an Agrarian approach to reading her fiction. O'Connor says in a letter to Shirley Abbott, 17 March 1956, at the height of her contact with several Agrarians, "I like very much what you've done with the Agrarian business. I haven't seen it mentioned before in connection with my work and I think it should be" (Fitzgerald, Habit 148). Here is more exceptional praise in light of her publicly expressed disapproval of rigid

critical approaches such as psychological, philosophical, feminist, etc. In her thinking, as she relates in a letter to Dr. T. R. Spivey on 19 October 1958, ". . . the meaning of a piece of fiction only begins where everything psychological and sociological has been explained" (Fitzgerald Habit 300).

Given O'Connor's contact with Agrarian members, it is not surprising that we can find similar elements of Agrarian thought in her fiction. Systematically tracing these elements will reveal some conclusions about Southern attitudes at a time of transition, and the extent to which Agrarian ideas inspired O'Connor's writing.

A thematic analysis of O'Connor's fiction will reveal that aspects of Agrarian thought and themes in the Southern literary tradition are both at work. Some of the most prominent factors characterizing literature following what is conventionally called the Southern literary tradition are the Southern regional settings, the Southern Gothic, reference to the Civil War and the fall of the South, family and ancestry, and religion and society. Agrarian themes address many of these factors, but through a strong philosophical stance grounded in promoting an agrarian livlihood. It is both necessary and possible to differentiate between these two themes in O'Connor's fiction.

C. Hugh Holman is one scholar who has made this

distinction in his article, "Her Rue with a Difference: Flannery O'Connor and the Southern Literary Tradition." In sum, he states that although he sympathizes with O'Connor's attitude, he finds her relation to the Southern literary tradition "unusual and illuminating both about her and about the tradition herself." Hence, Holman defines O'Connor's "rue with a difference" as "her essential quality [which] gives us a deeper insight into her 'country,' both of soil and spirit" (in Friedman, The Added Dimension 74). That difference, the article argues, is her Agrarian sensibility. The concern is, then, how is O'Connor's fiction "Southern", and Southern Agrarian.

Holman believes that O'Connor's Catholicism is the pivotal factor that separates her fiction from others in the Southern literary tradition. After demonstrating his claim, Holman concludes that it is O'Connor's affinity with and manifestation of Agrarian thought in her fiction that additionally distinguishes her from her contemporaries: "Miss O'Connor was generally in sympathy with such views of the Agrarians. . . she seems almost to be echoing their beliefs" (Friedman, Dimension 72). He cites Hulga Hopewell in "Good Country People" as a spokeswoman for the false security science offers; Mrs. McIntyre in "The Displaced Person" as the symbolic misplaced person--the mechanical world intruding from the outside to disrupt the 'order' of a Southern farm; and Mrs. Turpin in "Revelation" as

illustrating caste structures in a fixed social order. He concludes his argument with several cursory examples of O'Connor's archetypal desperate religious seekers as they illustrate her Agrarian affinity.

P. Albert Duhamel is another critic who examined The Violent Bear It Away for evidence of Agrarian inspiration. His study "The Novelist as Prophet" (also in Friedman's The Added Dimension) demonstrates the ways in which the story reflects several Agrarian principles. These are Duhamel's most pertinent conclusions:

> Tate, in defining poetry, and O'Connor, in defining the novel, used the same principle, the manner of seeing and expressing and also used interchangeable terms.
>
> Though the essays of the Fugitives may represent somewhat the matrix from which O'Connor's vision developed, she intended more than to update the concerns of a generation ago by substituting scientism for industrialism and addressed herself to problems larger than those of a challenged sectionalism.
>
> For O'Connor's culture was the South in which she grew up and lived, and whose heritage she saw in much the same terms as the Fugitive essayists of I'll Take My Stand (92-94).

We can use Holman's and Duhamel's limited examinations of Agrarianism in O'Connor's fiction as a basis and a blueprint for a more detailed literary analysis. We can look at other ways in which Mrs. McIntyre and Mrs. Turpin, for example, project an Agrarian message. A majority of the O'Connor canon dramatizes central Agrarian ideas and themes. Many of her works include: illustrations of anti-industrialism and

materialism as diminishing the value of nature and human nature, illustrations of modernism and alienation as a result of spiritual ineffectuality, dramatizations of the need for violence to evoke self-awareness, and demonstrations of the wrong relationship of the past in the present.

But we need a sharper and stricter definition to locate and indicate germane Agrarian inspirations. Towards this end, it is useful to turn to Tate for guidance. The key lies in Tate's concept of provincial writing. Basically, according to Tate, a regional writer may take her material from her region, but must fashion that material in light of a larger context. O'Connor disapproved of being considered a regionalist author: "the woods are full of regional writers, and it is the great horror of every serious Southern writer that he will become one of them" (Fitzgerald, Manners 74). If O'Connor eschews regional writing, then does she consider herself a serious Southern provincial writer? Miles Orvell recognizes suggestions of provincialism in her treatment of race and class relations:

> Her concern was less with uncovering the tensions in race relations, less with the Southerner's adjustments to the modern world, than with uncovering the self-deceptions and evasions that keep us from recognizing our identities in a context rather larger than the immediately contemporary one (10).

Building on Orvell's perception, the remainder of this study will examine other ways in which O'Connor writes with a

larger context in mind. We will find that her larger context is definitively and inseparably modern, Southern and Catholic. Her characters struggle, therefore, to find an identity within these larger contexts--struggles for identity considered and addressed in the Agrarian endeavor. We can read her fiction with a definition constructed from Tate's theory of provincial writing, in light of fundamental Agrarian convictions, to discover what ways O'Connor's fiction depicts an Agrarian influence and like caste of mind.

SIMILAR EXPRESSIONS: O'CONNOR'S AND TATE'S CONCEPTS OF VIOLENCE, SPIRITUALITY AND AWARENESS

O'Connor's people, as Miles Orvell rightly points out, are almost always self-deluded in recognizing their identities. Consequently, they search in their worlds, often aimlessly, for knowledge. But the nature of their worlds precludes them from finding that knowledge. In addition, the characters themselves often create, though not always consciously or deliberately, their own desperate conditions. From this base, O'Connor's stories consistently present us with characters who, through their limited and often distorted visions, become complacent and rely on outmoded thinking to manage their lives. Such thinking serves as a protective evasion, to use Orvell's words, from recognizing their true identities--spiritual identities they are either too proud or too afraid to face. What is needed is an act of violence to force recognition. This violence may or may not effect revelation. O'Connor's management of violence most importantly indicates an Agrarian affinity.

There appears to be a common core of ideas, a sharing of attitudes and values, and a similar outlook in her characters' actions and those which the Agrarians were pondering in I'll Take My Stand. Even though O'Connor didn't read this manifesto until shortly before her death, she

proceeds from many of the same positions on religion and society. The echoes of Agrarian thought in her fiction are most frequently traced back to Tate's contribution, "Remarks on the Southern Religion." Other similarities are found in Ransom's essay "Reconstructed But Unregenerate" and the introductory Statement of Principles.

The similarities are focal and substantial: both O'Connor and Tate employ the same language in talking about religion in the South; both seem to share the same viewpoint of how an individual and a society need religion to provide meaning and structure; both concur that violence is necessary to force self-awareness and illumination, where that illumination is necessary for salvation; finally, both illustrate the ramifications of industrialism. What forms the basis of their affinity is that both O'Connor and Tate recognize the corresponding nature of religion and violence. Furthermore, both writers ground their illustrations in terms of "naturalness" versus industrialism, where nature, usually in the agrarian sense of farming, conflicts with industrialism, which is considered a false way of life. These controlling ideas are treated complexly in O'Connor's fiction and in <u>I'll Take My Stand</u>. Although the ideas intertwine, we can separate them enough to understand the individual makeup of each idea and notice how they cooperate, while still being true to their correlation.

Scholars have frequently noted the recurrent rural,

dairy and farm settings as forming the basis of O'Connor's stories. But what has not been fully noted is how these basic agrarian aspects inspire the more complex aspects of Agrarian thought. First we need to distinguish between the two analogous terms, agrarian and Agrarianism. Ransom explains how agriculture or an agrarian relationship with the land informs Agrarian doctrine. He uses the words "Southern problem," the "farmer's problem," and the "general agrarian problem" to describe the lamentable state of independent farms becoming industrialized and controlled by "labor" ("Reconstructed But Unregenerate," in Stand 18). Industrialism, he argues, corrupts man's most basic vocation:

> The agrarian discontent in America is deeply grounded in the love of the tiller for the soil, which is probably, it must be confessed, not peculiar to the Southern specimen, but one of the more ineradicable human attachments, be the tiller as progressive as he may. In proposing to wean men from this foolish attachment, industrialism sets itself against the most ancient and the most humane of all the modes of human livelihood (19).

Agrarian belief not only sees our vocation with the land as elemental and honorable, but it also advocates a life philosophy drawn from our inexorable relationship to nature. Ransom explains that the independent farmer

> identifies himself with a spot of ground, and this ground carries a good deal of meaning; it defines itself for him as nature. He would till it not too hurriedly and not too mechanically to observe in it the contingency and the infinitude of nature; and so his

> life acquires its philosophical and even its cosmic consciousness. A man can contemplate and explore, respect and love, an object as substantial as a farm or a native province. But he cannot contemplate nor explore, respect nor love, a mere turnover, such as an assemblage of 'natural resources,' a pile of money, a volume of produce, a market, or a credit system. It is into precisely these intangibles that industrialism would translate the farmer's farm. It means the dehumanization of his life (20).

In defining their convictions, the Twelve Southerners drew upon the agraria tradition, and the way nature instructs and informs one's life pattern. The Agrarian tenets outlined in I'll Take My Stand are responses to what the twelve identified as an agrarian humanism underlying communal life patterns being sacrificed to industrialism.

We need to identify in O'Connor, therefore, the ways in which nature or the natural world appears in her stories, and what function it serves in complementing her theological intent. In what ways does she employ elements of farming, nature and the land to augment or illustrate religious themes? Locating these organic agrarian references will help define expressions of Agrarian thought. To this end, we must examine the way in which Agrarian thinking contributes to O'Connor's character's revelation or self-realization--the action which is always the purpose of O'Connor's stories.

"A View of the Woods" exemplifies the literal and fundamental elements of Agrarian thought. The onset of progress in the form of commercialism and how it threatens the land (here, a cow pasture) is the initiating conflict in

this story. O'Connor establishes this conflict in order to emphasize each character's attitude toward the land, and the ramifications of each attitude. Finally, she joins the idea of differing attitudes with the theme of revelation, demonstrating that a distorted perspective by its nature precludes illumination, so that the only possible outcome is despair.

Mr. Fortune, Mary Fortune Pitts' grandfather and owner of the pasture, cannot see allowing the land to stand in the way of progress. Mary Pitts regards the pasture for what it is, a feeding ground for her father's calves, and a place where the Pitts children play. In addition, Mary Pitts appreciates the aesthetic value of the pasture, or more precisely, the woods as a "view" or something pleasurable to look at. Her father farms the land and wants to buy lots from Fortune. In the course of the story, O'Connor illustrates how each character not only regards the pasture, but also how each uses it and manipulates it for personal desires. The harmful prejudices implicit in their attitudes toward the pasture, culminating in a violent death, illustrate the most literal and consequential view of Agrarianism, where commercialism intrudes and forces personal and social estrangements.

"Progress had always been his ally" characterizes grandfather Fortune's attitude toward commercialism. Fortune believed that he

> was not one of these old people who fight improvement, who object to everything new and cringe at every change. He wanted to see a paved highway in front of his house with plenty of new-model cars on it, he wanted to see a supermarket store across the road from him, he wanted to see a gas station, a motel, a drive-in picture-show within easy distance. Progress had suddenly set all this in motion (O'Connor, Three By Flannery O'Connor 309).

Fortune views progress only as he thinks it will benefit him and enhance his own life. He is also arrogant in this view, saying that those who are against his notion of progress "object to everything new and cringe at every change" (O'Connor, Three By 309).

Fortune is also under the false impression that he is forward thinking: "He thought this should be called Fortune, Georgia. He was a man of advanced vision, even if he was seventy-nine years old" (O'Connor, Three By 309). What becomes clear at this point is that O'Connor, as she does in almost all of her stories, presents us with a character steeped in self-delusion with whom to compare other characters' viewpoints.

"View" becomes a key idea here as we examine the grandfather's viewpoint of his family and the pasture. To fully appreciate the grandfather's narcissism, we must first distinguish between the narrator's and the characters' comments (a fundamental procedure for accurately reading this and subsequent O'Connor stories). In this story, the narrator's voice appears closest to grandfather Fortune,

where the majority of opinions and events are related through his point of view. As a result, the casual reader may be tempted to align with the grandfather and tend to associate O'Connor's message with his. It is important to discern between the voices and visions to understand whether O'Connor is making a comment on a character or if the grandfather is. A close reading reveals that the alternative point of view, expressed through the sparse dialogue and simplicity of the nine year old Mary Fortune Pitts, is closer to O'Connor's.

Distinguishing these voices enables us to more precisely realize the extent of the grandfather's narcissism. He is self-deluded in his relationship with Mary Fortune Pitts. He sees a physical resemblance, "her face--a small replica of the old man's" (O'Connor, Three By 307), but more erroneously assumes a spiritual affinity: "He liked to think of her as being thoroughly of his clay" (O'Connor, Three By 307). O'Connor tells us that "No one was particularly glad that Mary Fortune looked like her grandfather except the old man himself. He thought it added greatly to her attractiveness" (Three By 307). Likewise, O'Connor provides this misperception of the grandfather: "though there was seventy years' difference in their ages, the spiritual distance between them was slight" (Three By 308). The truth, which emerges as we continue to question the grandfather's self-applauding comments, is that Mary

pitts is amply unlike him, especially in her views--specifically in her view of the pasture. The grandfather is fiercely single-minded in his views of Mary Pitts, his family and nature, defining them in terms that allow for his egoism and prejudices. O'Connor emphasizes his selectivity: "The fact that Mary Fortune was a Pitts too was something he ignored, in a gentlemanly fashion, as if it were an affliction the child was not responsible for" (Three By 310). Indeed, the grandfather always refers to his granddaughter as "Mary Pitts," not "Mary Fortune" or "Mary Fortune Pitts." As a result, he cannot see any viewpoint other than his own: "Any fool that would let a cow pasture interfere with progress is not on my books" (O'Connor, Three By 307).

The basis of the grandfather's selectivity and delusion in his viewpoints, in addition to his narcissism, is determined by what value the family and nature can provide for him. He grooms his granddaughter so that "when he died Mary Fortune could make the rest of them jump" (O'Connor, Three By 309). He wants to sell the pasture in front of the house to make way for a gas station and to build his "Fortune, Georgia" empire. His motivating reason for selling the lot is to aggravate his son-in-law. He wants to control the Pitts and the land, and the value of the Pitts and the land is based on how much he can control:

Anyone over sixty years of age is in an uneasy position

> unless he controls the greater interest and every now and then he gave the Pittses a practical lesson by selling off a lot. Nothing infuriated Pitts more than to see him sell off a piece of the property to an outsider, because Pitts wanted to buy it himself (O'Connor, Three By 308).

His perverted utilitarian assessment of his daughter is even crueler: "He didn't have any use for her [Mary Pitts] mother, his third or fourth daughter (he could never remember which), though she considered that she took care of him" (O'Connor, Three By 308). Because he felt that his daughter "preferred Pitts to home" when she married, he considered that "when she came back, she came back like any other tenant" (O'Connor, Three By 308).

What is tragic and pathetic is that the grandfather's narcissism, conflated with his sense of utilitarianism, precludes any possibility for acceptance. That is, a perception which defines through egoism, by its very nature inhibits reception of the benefits of acceptance. Since his daughter marries, which he perceives as rejection, or placing him secondarily, he regards her as a tenant and takes revenge on her husband. Mary Fortune Pitts disagrees with her grandfather and rebels against his selling the lot. He sees this as the ultimate rejection, and in his attempts to physically "pound the idea into her head," he inadvertently kills her. If there is no sense of familial love on Fortune's terms, then there is no love; or more accurately, Fortune deludes himself into thinking there

is no love. Yet, he is capable of accepting of Mary Pitts--but not unconditionally: "What was the matter with her that she couldn't stand up to Pitts? Why was there this one flaw in her character when he had trained her so well in everything else? It was an ugly mystery" (O'Connor, Three By 317). The consequences of the grandfather's inability to accept what affection his family gives him is rejection and isolation.

Mary Pitts, on the other hand, realizes her grandfather's true motive in wanting to selling the lot, and in her genuine loyalty to her father strenuously objects and rebels. Mary Pitts is an innocent, free of the prejudices of her grandfather. Given the grandfather's and Mary Pitts' dissimilar viewpoints, the reader fully appreciates the irony in the grandfather's remark to her, "The people like you and me with heads on their shoulders know you can't stop the marcher time for a cow. . ." (O'Connor, Three By 310). These two disparate views form the story's pivotal outward conflict.

The underlying conflict, which Mary Pitts articulates but which her grandfather never really hears, concerns the fact that the pasture is part of the Pitts family. Mary Pitts feels a kinship with "the front lawn" which would be sacrificed if the gas station were built. This is not to say that Mary Pitts is strongly against progress. She is as fascinated with the earth movers and

bull dozers at the construction site as is the old man. But her convictions are intuitive. In other words, her attitude toward progress is not deluded or distorted by a self-serving vision. Her controlling motivations are her commitment to the view of the woods--"We won't be able to see the woods across the road"--and her loyalty to her father, "My daddy grazes his calves on that lot" (O'Connor, Three By 313).

To fully understand the import of these differing views, we must examine the way the land and commercialism are described in this story. The land is a cow pasture which has been divided and partially sold in lots. There is a highway at the front, and a line of pine trees on the other side of the highway. There is nothing particularly noteworthy about the pasture except for its substantial acreage. This may indicate the grandfather's business sense and previous attitude toward progress, or the heritage of the land established in the Fortune name.

Progress or commercialism in this story appears in the form of gas stations, fishing clubs and Mr. Tilman's "establishment." Grandfather Fortune provides this description:

> Tilman operated a combination country store, filling station, scrap-metal dump, used-car lot and dance hall five miles down the highway that connected with the dirt road that passed in front of the Fortune place. . . . He was an up-and-coming man--the kind, Mr. Fortune thought, who was never just in line with progress but always a little ahead of it so

> that he could be there to meet it when it arrived (O'Connor, Three By 316).

Fortune compliments Tilman as an "up-and-coming man," and one who precedes progress. The representative of "progress"--Tilman's "establishment"--is, however, little advanced or progressive. It is mundane commercialism.

O'Connor provides an additional and more powerful representative of progress in the earth moving equipment; the bulldozer is repeatedly referred to as "the machine." O'Connor describes the machinery as ever present, almost ominous, silently but steadily eating the earth. This suggests that progress goes on, rhythmically, almost unstoppably, despite our desires or our opinions. The closing line of the story leaves the reader with the impression that the machine is in a sense more animated or "alive" than the grandfather: "he looked around desperately for someone to help him but the place was deserted except for one huge yellow monster which sat to the side, as stationary as he was, gorging itself on clay" (O'Connor, Three By 326).

The reader is asked to notice, in addition to the nature of mechanization in this story, each characters' viewpoints towards it. We must judge the validity of how, when the conflict is literally man's aesthetics versus machine, these characters decide to choose their courses of action. This conflict is illustrated poignantly in the

grandfather's description of Mary Pitts' view of the pasture:

> She stared across the lot where there was nothing but a profusion of pink and yellow and purple weeds, and on across the red road, to the sullen line of black pine woods fringed on top with green. Behind that line was a narrow gray-blue line of more distant woods and beyond that nothing but the sky, entirely blank except for one or two threadbare clouds. She looked into this scene as if it were a person that she preferred to him (O'Connor, Three By 318).

The theme of rejection underlies this description. First, the grandfather rejects the beauty of the weeds and woods. At the end of this description, we find that the grandfather, just as he thinks his daughter had rejected him by marrying Pitts, thinks his granddaughter has rejected him in favor of someone else (God is implied).

The grandfather could see nothing of what Mary Pitts saw. Within one passage, the grandfather's vision is interwoven with O'Connor's in an important way:

> Several times during the afternoon, he got up from his bed and looked out the window across the 'lawn' to the line of woods she said they wouldn't be able to see any more. Every time he saw the same thing: woods--not a mountain, not a waterfall, not any kind of planted bush or flower, just woods. The sunlight was woven through them at that particular time of the afternoon so that every thin pine trunk stood out in all its nakedness. A pine trunk is a pine trunk, he said to himself, and anybody that wants to see one don't have to go far in this neighborhood. Every time he got up and looked out, he was reconvinced of his wisdom in selling the lot (O'Connor, Three By 318).

This passage illustrates the differing views and the

selective and judgmental view of the grandfather. He cannot see the beauty of the weeds, pines or cloudless sky. He is unable to see the beauty of the sunlight woven through the trees (O'Connor's viewpoint) and the reflection on their trunks. He selectively defines a "view" just as he selectively defines progress. He is judging what in nature is "worthy" of being called beautiful the same way he judges what is "worthy" in familial love and what is "worthy" in progress--from a viewpoint that is deluded and self-serving.

On a symbolic level, the grandfather is incapable of seeing the Divinity in nature. Often in O'Connor's stories, a tree line and sky represent the crucifixion, Redemption and God's love. Here, the irony in the grandfather's statement that Mary Pitts was "looking into this scene as if it were a person that she preferred to him" suggests that she prefers the Divinity of God to her grandfather. This may foreshadow the ending when she dies. Mary Pitts intuitively and fully sees the Divinity of the woods here. Her grandfather sees the literal weeds and pine trunks.

The grandfather's literal viewpoint precludes him from understanding his granddaughter. Thus, the reader sees his attempts to buy her good humor with ice-cream and a motorboat as totally inappropriate. Here again he deflects understanding her position and accepting her love by giving her money: "he could make it up to Mary Fortune by buying

her something" (O'Connor, Three By 318). At the end of the story, he can no longer find in her an ally. Indeed, any relationship with her is impossible. The consequence of his viewpoints is isolation.

Grandfather Fortune is never able to see the aesthetics of the woods; therefore there is no revelation. His final vision--again self-defined--proves that he is still in conflict with nature. He

> felt as if he were being pulled after it [his expanded heart] through the woods, felt as if he were running as fast as he could with the ugly pines toward the lake. He perceived that there would be a little opening there, a little place where he could escape and leave the woods behind him (O'Connor, Three By 325-26).

This is his perception, which we now know is distorted and unreliable. The grandfather can't escape. There is no refuge for him in nature. Nature is superior, suggested by the phrase, "the lake opened up before him, riding majestically in little corrugated folds toward his feet." While the lake seems to pay homage or is humbled to man, it also is accessible to man. But here, nature revenges the grandfather. There is no rescue (he can't swim, he has no boat), and the other instrument of revenge, the bulldozer, is unconcerned: "He looked around desperately for someone to help him but the place was deserted except for one huge yellow monster which sat to the side, as stationary as he was, gorging itself on clay" (O'Connor, Three By 326). The

three elements he had judged according to their usefulness to him--progress, nature, and most tragically, Mary Pitts--desert him.

The foremost question that arises from this kind of reading, would be, "is the consequence for upholding nature, death?" We find ourselves asking similar questions of many O'Connor stories. Death, for O'Connor, is often (if not always) a more desireable fate than life facing our sins. In death, there is salvation. Here, death for Mary Pitts is freedom, a release from her father's physical beatings, and her grandfather's personal control and abuse. There is no salvation for the grandfather. He is left alone without his granddaughter, with a family he hates, with the constant bulldozers and machines to remind him of the consequences of his pride. He is also left with a gas station--a reminder of his stubbornness and his arrogant sense of advanced thinking. O'Connor explains the ending in a letter to "A": "One is saved and the other is damned and there is no way out of it, it must be pointed out and underlined. Their fates are different" (Fitzgerald, Habit 190). The grandfather's fate is worse than Mary Pitts' since he must live with his sins. Furthermore, his fate illustrates Tate's claim, "We are told by our Northern friends that the greatest menace to the South is ignorance; but there is even a greater ignorance of the delusion of progressive enlightenment" (Essays 181). Because Mary Pitts sees the

reality of the pasture and her grandfather's actions in an intuitive and unblinded way, she is saved by death. Her grandfather's delusion and selectivity blind him to reality; he is damned to life.

The Agrarian problem in "A View of the Woods" is less the ramifications of industrialism and technology intruding upon a society. Rather, the conflict is smaller: what individual choices do we make when we form an attitude--a "view"--toward a mechanistic force altering the land and thereby requiring us to redefine our relationship to it? The choices grandfather Fortune makes disregard what the Agrarians saw as the spiritual or aesthetic benefit of the land, even to the point of exploiting aestheticism in favor of commercialism.

The choices Mary Pitts makes in forming her view is more complicated, but paradoxically more singular and more simplistic than her grandfather's. She is pure in the sense that her vision is not blinded or deluded by her grandfather's opinions or by her father's beatings. Subsequently, she responds impulsively, and her choices are intuitive. She does not understand the utilitarian uses of the pasture. In her childlike fascination, she is awed by the machinery; but she does not understand the societal benefits of progress or commercialism. She senses her grandfather's vengefulness. What is preeminent for her is the aestheticism of the pasture, an aestheticism she

responds to intuitively and unconditionally. She likewise intuits the Divinity of nature. For her, the only choice is to preserve the land.

"A View of the Woods" presents three generations responding to agrarian concerns. It points out the steadfast quality of our relationship to the land as an essential force in our lives. The story also illustrates our need to continually retain and redefine our relationship with land, particularly in the face of destructive forces. Commercialism and progress can influence our perceptions and our defining, as "A View of the Woods" illustrates. Specifically, as the Agrarians feared, a society worshipping materialism can destroy our recognition of nature's aestheticism. As a result, our definitions and attitudes are unnatural--a false way of life--causing us to interact with the land and each other unnaturally.

The Agrarian concern with falsifying or controlling nature, which "A View of the Woods" illustrates, gets worked out in a more complicated way in O'Connor's "Greenleaf." In this story, Mrs. May, like grandfather Fortune, wants to control her family, the Greenleaf family and even fate. Likewise, she wants to control nature, appearing symbolically as the scrub bull. Narcissism expands into superiority as Mrs. May exaggerates her self-importance to the dairy farm. Non-acceptance of people and nature as they are expands into a distorted hierarchical system of worth

based on one's background and utility. The story dramatizes a central concern for the Agrarians and O'Connor: mental perversion of the natural world (including the human community) through self-serving definitions and rationalizations represents a false way of life.

The often discussed opening passages of "Greenleaf" introduces the scrub bull in terms reminiscent of the bulldozer in "A View of the Woods." The bull is "chewing steadily," and Mrs. May hears "a steady rhythmic chewing as if something were eating one wall of the house" (O'Connor, The Complete Stories 311). We realize that the scrub bull, like the "machine," represents something ethereal (the majority of criticism denotes him as a Christ figure), although paradoxically, he is literally an inferior mongrel bull representing the earth (nature) in this story. O'Connor exalts the inferior bull: he stands "silvered in the moonlight. . . as if some patient god come down to woo her" (O'Connor, Complete Stories 311). A hedge-wreath caught in his horns looks "like a menacing prickly crown" (O'Connor, Complete Stories 312).

The majesty of the bull is also contrasted in the opening passages with the artificiality of Mrs. May's bedroom window, and more importantly, her petty comments towards the Greenleafs. A pink glow from the venetian blinds cast "bars of light" across the moon-drenched bull. Mrs. May is ugly compared to the beauty of the bull. O'Connor

describes her appearance as she bends towards the bull: "Green rubber curlers sprouted neatly over her forehead and her face beneath them was smooth as concrete with an egg-white past that drew the wrinkles out while she slept" (Complete Stories 311). As the bull paws the ground and bows to her, he is described as "gaunt and long-legged, . . . standing about four feet from her, chewing calmly like an uncouth country suitor" (O'Connor, Complete Stories 312).

The relationship between Mrs. May and the bull, established at the outset of the story, echoes the relationship between Fortune and the lake at the close of "A View of the Woods." The bull appears to be superior but humbles itself by bowing to Mrs. May. He raises his head "as if he listened," and comes to "woo" her. Mrs. May is momentarily captivated by the bull--she bends toward him and is afraid the light will make him charge--but then she admonishes him "as if addressed to a dog": "'Get away from here, Sir!' and in a second muttered, "'Some nigger's scrub bull'" (O'Connor, Complete Stories 311). This is the working polarity in which to understand the story. The lake and the bull, both imaged as ethereal, have the power to captivate and overcome the fallible Fortune and May; instead, they humble themselves to them. The agents of nature take no notice of Fortune's or Mrs. May's appearance, or their morality. The lake and the scrub bull serve as O'Connor's models of unconditional acceptance, and ultimately, God's

unconditional love.

O'Connor writes about Mrs. May and the bull in a letter to "A," 13 January 1956:

> I am very happy right now writing a story ["Greenleaf"] in which I plan for the heroine, aged 63, to be gored by a bull. I am not convinced yet that this is purgation or whether I identify myself with her or the bull. In any case, it is going to take some doing to do it and it may be the risk that is making me happy (Fitzgerald, Habit 129).

This comment, written while "Greenleaf" was in progress, cautions us not to totally condemn Mrs. May. She is self-righteous and petty, and as the story demonstrates, must be and is punished for her sins. But it seems that we are also asked to see Mrs. May through the "bull's eyes," that is, with compassion. Then we realize that she is basically a misguided and fallible human being.

Mrs. May wants control. She continually reminds her sons and the Greenleafs that the dairy farm is her place; but there is more to her attitude than taking pride in her accomplishments. She believes that she has certain rights since she owns and manages the land, and those rights give her the authority to judge and control the lives of her sons and the Greenleafs. In addition, she believes that the farm's financial success is due solely to her efforts, and that if she did not manage the dairy, no one else would. She thinks, "if the Greenleaf boys had risen in the world it was because she had given their father employment when no one

else would have him" (O'Connor, Complete Stories 312-313). Later, she says herself, "I work and slave, I struggle and sweat to keep this place for them and soon as I'm dead, they'll marry trash and bring it in here and ruin everything. They'll marry trash and ruin everything I've done" (O'Connor, Complete Stories 315).

Mrs. May dislikes the Greenleaf family, although she waivers in her feelings towards their twin boys, O. T. and E. T. She says Mr. Greenleaf is menial and shiftless, but "Beside the wife, Mr. Greenleaf was an aristocrat" (O'Connor, Complete Stories 313). Mrs. Greenleaf is a self-appointed fundamentalist prayer healer. Mrs. May says the five Greenleaf girls "were always filthy." Throughout the story, Mrs. May criticizes and belittles the Greenleafs, convincing herself that they are inferior in "stock" and "breed" to her family, in order to magnify her estimation of herself. In this sense, to Mrs. May, the Greenleafs appear as the human equivalent of the scrub bull. She is very much concerned with class, status, manners, possession and property, making sure that in her schemata, the Greenleafs remain below her.

Mrs. May is disappointed with her two boys, Scofield and Wesley, and compares them to the Greenleaf twins. Although both May boys are moderately successful--Scofield sells insurance and Wesley teaches at a university--they are not as productive, Mrs. May thinks, as the Greenleaf boys.

After serving in World War II and marrying French wives, O.T. and E.T. returned to manage a piece of land the government had provided for them. Mrs. May cannot accept her sons' chosen vocations. The basis of her nonacceptance is that the Greenleaf boys made it on their own, using governmental assistance wisely and fruitfully. Her boys, she feels, leech her farm, home and spirit. As a defense, Mrs. May reminds herself that background and parentage define a person's worth: "Whenever she thought of how the Greenleaf boys had advanced in the world, she had only to think of Mrs. Greenleaf sprawled obscenely on the ground, and say to herself, 'Well, no matter how far they go, they came, from that'" (O'Connor, Complete Stories 317).

Mrs. May's disappointment with her sons is self-imposed because she cannot see their worth and accomplishments or accept them as they are. This is not to absolve her sons; they do torment her, which is a legitimate cause for her pain. Scofield taunts her, "with the Mamma I got it's a wonder I turned out to be such a nice boy!" and, "I done mighty well to be as nice as I am seeing what I come from" (O'Connor, Complete Stories 327). We feel her pain when she cries, "O.T. and E.T. are fine boys. . . . They ought to have been my sons. . . . And you two. . . you two should have belonged to that woman!" (O'Connor, Complete Stories 321). We appreciate her emotion, but we must not lose sight of her sin--her inability to accept her sons as

her sons, and as they are. At times Mrs. May is able to see the humanity in Wesley and Scofield, the Greenleaf children and even their father. But the next minute, she is belittling them as inferior to herself, defensively clutching onto her presumed hierarchy of human worth. Thus, Mrs. May reads as a human fallible character--not wholly evil, but misguided and insecure.

The story's conflict is that the scrub bull (belonging to the Greenleaf twins) is loose, and Mrs. May is afraid it will ruin the breeding schedule of her herd. She asks her sons, Mr. Greenleaf and O.T. and E.T. to get the bull off her farm. For various reasons, no one makes any effort to take care of the bull. The May boys downplay the importance and consequences of the bull ruining the herd: "Why Mamma, ain't you ashamed to shoot an old bull that ain't done nothing but give you a little scrub strain in your herd?" (O'Connor, Complete Stories 327). The Greenleaf boys totally ignore her demands and threats. Mr. Greenleaf protests, "Ain't nobody ever ast me to shoot my boys' own bull" (O'Connor, Complete Stories 330). Clearly, only Mrs. May is concerned about the bull ruining her herd.

Mr. Greenleaf accepts the predicament of the bull and regards it almost respectfully: "He likes to bust loose, Mr. Greenleaf said, looking with approval at the bull's rump. This gentleman is a sport" (O'Connor, Complete Stories 323). But Mrs. May says, "That's a Greenleaf bull if I ever

saw one," and, "That's the awfullest looking bull I ever saw" (O'Connor, Complete Stories 323). O'Connor describes the bull, again, as handsome and dignified: "squirrel-colored, with jutting hips and long light horns, ambling down the dirt road that ran in front of the house" (Complete Stories 323).

Because Mrs. May defines herself as the only one capable of taking action, she is determined to exert her control over the other idlers. She appoints Mr. Greenleaf to shoot the bull. O'Connor uses a series of natural images and symbols to comment on the import and impact of Mrs. May's obsession to have the bull shot. O'Connor employs elements of the natural world, here again, pine trees and sun, to chart Mrs. May's journey to revelation:

> She became aware after a time that the noise was the sun trying to burn through the tree line and she stopped to watch, safe in the knowledge that it couldn't, that it had to sink the way it always did outside of her property. When she first stopped it was a swollen red ball, but as she stood watching it began to narrow and pale until it looked like a bullet. Then suddenly it burst through the tree line and raced down the hill toward her (Complete Stories 329).

Mrs. May's relationship with nature here is similar to grandfather Fortune's: both perceive it as menacing. Mrs. May first stops to notice the sun "burning" through the tree line, but only since she is "safe in the knowledge" that it couldn't harm her. She is arrogant and complacent in her thinking that the sun would sink outside of her property, so

that she was somehow protected from it. What is symbolically suggested in this passage is that nature holds some knowledge or divinity. Mrs. May is incapable of receiving that knowledge because of her pride. In her desperate attempts to retain control, and subsequently, her realization that her efforts to shun nature's communication are futile, she perceives nature as threatening, and the sun appears as a bullet pursuing her.

Mrs. May's perception of nature on the morning she and Greenleaf go to shoot the bull is again described in unnatural terms: "Birds were screaming everywhere, the grass was almost too bright to look at, the sky was an even piercing blue" (O'Connor, Complete Stories 330). Nature is unnatural here--glaring, iridescent, painful to view. Yet, Mrs. May exclaims, "Spring his here!". Mrs. May's garish perception of the naturalness of nature seems to echo her debased perception of the bull's beauty and reinforces the wrongness of destroying it.

O'Connor manages the same tropes of the sun and pine trees to indicate a change in Mrs. May's vision, or in other words, her revelation. The bull, "a black heavy shadow," emerges from the tree line and charges her:

> She stared at the violent black streak bounding toward her as if she had no sense of distance, as if she could not decide at once what his intention was, and the bull had buried his head in her lap, like a wild tormented lover, before her expression changed. One of his horns sank until it pierced her

> heart and the other curved around her side and held her in an unbreakable grip. She continued to stare straight ahead but the entire scene in front of her had changed--the tree line was a dark wound in a world that was nothing but sky--and she had the look of a person whose sight has been suddenly restored but who finds the light unbearable (O'Connor, Complete Stories 333).

Much goes on symbolically in this passage. At first, Mrs. May is spellbound by the bull as it has some power (thereby existing as something more than a scrub bull) to compel her. Yet, as the description tells us, she is not frightened; rather, she is unbelieving. In her pride, she does not believe that a scrub bull would charge her. Symbolically, she does not believe in the divinity of the bull (and by extension, God). Her powers of reason are obliterated: she has no sense of distance and could not decern his intentions. She imagines that the bull buries his head in her lap, which suggests both affection she never had from a "son" and God's love. The bull submits to her "like a wild tormented lover," suggesting the love and beauty in the wilderness of nature submitting to mankind, and, of course God's tormented love through His crucifixion. Mrs. May is gored by the bull--purged--as the violence necessary to bring about her illumination. She is then able to understand and accept pious love and God's redemption: "the tree line was a dark wound in a world that was nothing but sky." She wholly realizes the awfulness of God's love for the world and the meaning of the crucifixion. Finally, she realizes

her own pettiness in relation to God's love, and finds the comparison unbearable.

There is revelation for Mrs. May as she finally acknowledges and humbles herself to powers in control beyond her own. She accepts the mystery of nature, the mystery of God, and her place in relation to both. The Agrarian message upheld by the symbolism suggests that nature and the Divinity in nature "court" mankind or lovingly seek our attention and appreciation. In turn, our relationship with nature, God and human nature, should be accepted on their own terms. We cannot rationalize these forces in our lives into what we want them to be. Our presumed social stratifications of the human community are contrary to the impartiality of God and nature. Phrased in strict Agrarian terms, a dehumanizing ordering of humanity according to an industrial or commercial ethic reflects the consequences of a perverted control.

A deluded sense of control in our relationship to religion, another important Agrarian tenet, is likewise unnatural to O'Connor. The relationship between characters' view of the human community and the choices they make in constructing their religious beliefs is a directing metaphor throughout the O'Connor canon. Mrs. Turpin in "Revelation," one of O'Connor's most studied and discussed characters, represents the exemplary character type of one who is blinded by self-righteousness (here, class and racial

superiority), which precludes her from salvation, thereby leading her to create her own. Mrs. Turpin dramatizes what Tate calls in his essay a "half-religionist," one who fashions a religion to meet personal or practical needs. Both Tate and O'Connor reject this kind of religious selectivity, and Mrs. Turpin demonstrates the consequences of selectivity proceeding from a distorted vision. For Mrs. Turpin, vision is knowledge; yet, because her vision is blinded and biased by her self-appointed class superiority, and her perverted schema of the human family, she cannot find that knowledge she so desperately seeks.

The opening events and dialogue between Mrs. Turpin, Mary Grace and the patients in the doctor's waiting room thematically culminate in Mary Grace's throwing her book and saying to Mrs. Turpin, "Go back to hell where you came from, you old wart hog" (O'Connor, Three By 416). Later at home, Mrs. Turpin agonizes over this message, trying to understand what the message means, and asks God why she was the intended recipient:

> 'How am I a hog?' she demanded. 'Exactly how am I like them?'. . .'There was plenty of trash there. It didn't have to be me.'
>
> . . .
>
> 'If you like trash better, go get yourself some trash then,' she railed. You could have made me trash. Or a nigger. If trash is what you wanted why didn't you make me trash?'. . . I could quit working and take it easy and be filthy,' she growled. 'Lounge about the

> sidewalks all day drinking root beer. Dip snuff and spit in every puddle and have it all over my face. I could be nasty.'
>
> 'Or you could have made me a nigger. It's too late for me to be a nigger,' she said with deep sarcasm, 'but I could act like one. Lay down in the middle of the road and stop traffic. Roll on the ground' (O'Connor, Three By 422).

The reader recognizes through Mrs. Turpin's continual self-righteous comments, here and prior to this point, that her racial prejudice influences her perception, preventing her from understanding. Mrs. Turpin is so strongly concerned with class and racial distinctions that they control and thwart her perception. We must acknowledge the excessive nature of these attitudes, along with her strange habit of "occupying herself at night naming the classes of people," as reflecting an opinion and judgment that is similarly excessive. A perception so askew cannot be open to reality, let alone knowledge or enlightenment. Put in Agrarian terms, her skewed perception of reality reflects a misaligned relationship or reading of nature. Given such a state, how can there be a choice for Mrs. Turpin? There is no freedom to make way for revelation. Recognizing the pattern from O'Connor's other stories, the reader is meant to see that the violent confrontation in which Mary Grace hurls her book at Mrs. Turpin serves as Mrs. Turpin's potential for spiritual enlightenment from which she will subsequently exhibit a positive, more Christian behavior.

A close examination of Mrs. Turpin's comments and actions following this point in the story reveals that there is indeed no change of behavior, and no change in her outlook. We are told that

> all at once her vision narrowed and she saw everything as if it were happening in a small room far away, or as if she were looking at it through the wrong end of a telescope. . . . Mrs. Turpin's vision suddenly reversed itself and she saw everything large instead of small (O'Connor, Three By 415).

As Mrs. Turpin's vision fluctuates here, we are meant to read it as suggesting her fluctuating spiritual state. Likewise, Mrs. Turpin notes about Mary Grace's eyes: "they seemed a much lighter blue than before, as if a door that had been tightly closed behind them was now open to admit light and air" (O'Connor, Three By 416). Through this description, we surmise that since Mrs. Turpin's vision has changed, her spiritual state has likewise changed--supposedly for the better.

We learn that Mrs. Turpin felt "entirely hollow" after the confrontation, and that she was incapable of action--here, in the form of helping Claud. Immediately following this passage, there appears a description of the Turpin's house. Here again we find that the way she describes her house--"little flower beds spread out around it like a fancy apron, sat primly in its accustomed place between two giant hickory trees" (O'Connor, Three By 417)--sounds characteristically like Mrs. Turpin's previous

impressions of the "well-dressed grey-haired lady" in the waiting room. Both descriptions illustrate Mrs. Turpin's elevated and rationalized vision of herself and those she judges as being in her class. These descriptions also show us no change of vision. As the Turpins lie in bed, Mrs. Turpin conjures up the vision of the wart hog. Another example of her willful imaginative projections, this image reflects no change in her vision or character.

We do not see any change in her attitude or actions following the encounter with Mary Grace, except, perhaps, that she is more realistic and forthright in her opinions: "You could never say anything intelligent to a nigger. You could talk at them but not with them" (O'Connor, Three By 420). This comment is hardly characteristic of a changed, more positive or Christian behavior. There is no hint of change in character as we see Mrs. Turpin encountering Claud, "the niggers," or the hogs. What we are given is Mrs. Turpin's process of self-evaluation which is ultimately incomplete.

Still, Mrs. Turpin desperately searches for knowledge and tries to understand herself. At the close of the story, she seeks answers from a most unlikely place, the hogs in the pig parlor:

> like a monumental statue coming to life, she bent her head slowly and gazed, as if through the very heart of mystery, down into the pig parlor at the hogs. . . . They appeared to pant with a secret life.

> Until the sun slipped finally behind the tree line, Mrs. Turpin remained there with her gaze bent to them as if she were absorbing some abysmal life-giving knowledge (O'Connor, Three By 423).

Sister Kathleen Feeley believes that since Mrs. Turpin has accepted the intrinsic nature of hogs (the "abysmal life-giving knowledge"), she has symbolically accepted the intrinsic nature of mankind and herself. If the story ended here, the reader might be inclined to accept this reading and agree about Mrs. Turpin's revelation. But the story doesn't end here, nor is it meant to: "I [O'Connor] started to let it end where the hogs pant with a secret life, but I thought something else was needed" (Fitzgerald, Habit 549).

The "something else" that O'Connor adds is an elaborate description of an ideal spiritual vision. The final vision is at once fantastically spiritual--an immediate tip-off to the reader to question its validity. What has been claimed to be her salvation in the form of a vision at the close of the story is ultimately an invented imaginative projection of her salvation--the closest Mrs. Turpin can ever come to real salvation. Mrs. Turpin's final "spiritual" vision is fabricated in the same way her search for knowledge and her class systems are fabricated. She has been searching for knowledge, understanding and salvation since Mary Grace threw the book at her. Because she cannot see (is incapable of seeing), she creates things to see--in Mary Grace's eyes, in the hogs' eyes, in her visions at

night, and here again, in her final vision.

We know from previous stories that O'Connor would not treat such a serious subject as the moment of spiritual enlightenment and understanding in a sentimental way. Her physical representative of spirituality--Mary Grace--is far from a sentimental characterization. On these grounds, it seems likely that Mrs. Turpin's thrilling spiritual vision is a projection exemplifying her spiritual delusion.

The comment O'connor is making on the nature of spiritual enlightenment in this story is that there is no knowledge gained for Mrs. Turpin because her prejudice precludes freedom for choice or illumination. The spiritual tragedy, which, as O'Connor points out, is always more pitiful than a physical one, is that there is no revelation, and ultimately, no salvation for Mrs. Turpin. There is only hopelessness and pathetic delusion.

What is important here for an Agrarian argument is that for Mrs. Turpin there is no intuitiveness because of her distorted attitudes. Placed in Ransom's terms, we cannot enliven our true and natural relationship with nature and religion when we, like Mrs. Turpin, Mrs. May and grandfather Fortune, are deluded and misguided. Because Mrs. Turpin has created a religion that allows for her prejudices, she has a half-religion, using Tate's words, which is no religion at all.

When we select parts of spirituality, we close

ourselves off to the whole. As a result, we essentially have nothing--no salvation from God, in O'Connor's thinking, no societal definition of religion in Tate's. What we are left with is a self-fashioned religion, which is really no religion. O'Connor illustrates that the soul must be intuitive in order to receive grace. Tate explains that one's personality must be spontaneous and natural in order to comprehend the abstraction of religion (this will be discussed later). Both believe that truth or knowledge is not the domain of the will or intellect. Grace or illumination cannot be bought, earned or created; yet both come freely to those who are open--that is, unconstrained, unbiased, spontaneous--to receive it.

C. Hugh Holman considers the Mrs. Turpin characterization as one of "O'Connor's desperate religious seekers." O. E. Parker in "Parker's Back" is perhaps the most pathetic religious seeker in her short stories. He is not, however, blinded by delusion, as are Mrs. Turpin and grandfather Fortune. Rather, he is grossly naive, or in other words, genuinely, innocently and spiritually dense. He is not aware--indeed may be incapable of awareness--of the reality his wife or the reader sees. O'Connor tells us that Parker is "as ordinary as a loaf of bread," and had "never before felt the least notion of wonder in himself" (Three By 427).

Yet, as several critics have pointed out (Sister

Kathleen Feeley and Leon V. Driskell, among others), Parker serves the role of a prophet in this story. When Parker identifies himself as Obadiah Elihue at the end of the story, he has accepted his role as prophet (Driskell 115). "Prophecy becomes--ever more imaginatively--'a matter of seeing'" according to Feeley. She argues that "O. E. Parker is 'chosen,' and the story illuminates the communication of that choice and the effect that it has on his life" (145-149). Still, Parker is a blind prophet: he is searching for himself; he does not know what he is searching for; he does not know where to find it; he does not recognize "it" when he sees it. He ends predictably and inevitably in total blindness, in total despair.

O'Connor's most developed and complex blind prophet is, of course, Tarwater in The Violent Bear It Away. Francis Marion Tarwater, and to a lesser extent, his great-uncle Tarwater, personify and exemplify the Parker characterization: all are elemental and dense, all are blindly seeking. The Tarwaters, next to Enoch and Haze in Wise Blood, are O'Connor's paramount desperate religious seekers. In her novels, O'Connor dramatizes her concept of how spirituality and human nature are interdependent (perhaps even one's human nature is one's spirituality), and that religion, like nature, is a primal force which requires a spontaneous and unblocked association. Instead of complicating our lives with unnatural elements (that is,

industrialism, materialism), and searching for fulfillment in unnatural places, we should (must?) take our cues from the land. O'Connor dramatizes many of Tate's concepts of religion in her novels' characterizations. As such, it becomes apparent that both writers are proceeding from the same base when they talk about religion and human nature.

A review of Tate's essential philosophy before examining The Violent Bear It Away may prove helpful here. Included in Tate's conception of the provincial man as explained in "The New Provincialism," is what we have been talking about as spontaneity and intuitiveness. Rereading Tate's claim, now with the benefit of O'Connor's demonstrations of blinded and intuitive characterizations, reveals an additional idea:

> When the regional man, in his ignorance, often an intensive and creative ignorance, of the world, extends his own immediate necessities into the world, and assumes that the present moment is unique, he becomes the provincial man. He cuts himself off from the past, and without benefit of the fund of traditional wisdom approaches the simplest problems of life as if nobody had ever heard of them before (Essays 539).

Tate seems to be saying that a regional man's ignorance, "an intensive and creative ignorance" (where ignorance, like innocence, is a positive attribute), "extends his own immediate necessities into the world" (thereby moving out of his own narrow mindedness or blindness), "and assumes that the present moment is unique" (he faces reality unconstrained, spontaneously), "he becomes a provincial

man." Tate suggests that cutting ourselves off from the past, "without the benefit of the fund of traditional wisdom" is a handicap. But this may also suggest liberty. In other words, a provincial man does not depend entirely on irrelevant or passe traditional wisdom to the extent that it replaces original thinking. Tate is not undervaluing the importance of the past. Rather, he warns of the consequences of a society proceeding from traditional thinking solely on the grounds that that thinking is traditional. Tate's provincial man is an original thinker, noticing and participating in the simplest (most human, most elemental) problems of life, impulsively, intuitively and unconstrained.

Tate employs the concept of spontaneity more explicitly in "Remarks on the Southern Religion," in which he attempts to define religion. In order to understand the nature of religion as an abstraction, and then understand religion's importance to a region's tradition, Tate poses the question, "Why should our tradition compel us to choose anything?" He answers,

> we have to confess that merely living in a certain stream of civilized influence does not compel us to be loyal to it. Indeed, the act of loyalty, or the fact of loyalty, must be spontaneous to count at all; tradition must, in other words, be automatically operative before it can be called tradition (Stand 162).

Tradition, Tate seems to be saying, paradoxically cannot be

inhibited by past thinking. We can only "know" tradition intuitively and in spontaneous circumstances since it is in the nature of its abstractness to never be knowable--that is, discerned by the will or intellect.

Likewise, religion in Tate's thinking, must be "known" spontaneously for the same reason that it eludes rationality. Like tradition, religion is a conception which can never be comprehended; and in the act of comprehending it, we destroy it or know it less:

> It is irrational to defend religion with the weapon that invariably discredits it, and yet this is what seems to be happening. I am trying to discover the place that religion holds with logical, abstract instruments, which of course tend to put religion in some logical system or series, where it vanishes (Stand 163).

Yet, we can't leave it as an abstraction, because then we would never know it: "For abstraction is the death of religion no less than the death of anything else" (Stand 156). And, Tate's essay argues, a region must know religion.

Tate, unlike O'Connor, is not strongly grounded in a religious tradition. It was not until later in his adulthood that Tate became a Catholic, and this was largely due to his wife's influence. He prefaces his essay by referring to himself as a "deficient layman" on religion, writing "in the spirit of irreligion" (Stand 155). Yet, what is interesting is that Tate uses the word "violence" to refer to discussing religion: "Religion is not properly a discussion of

anything; so any discussion of religion is a piece of violence, a betrayal of the religious essence undertaken for its own good, or for the good of those who live by it" (Stand 156).

It is arguable that both O'Connor and Tate consider violence to be the sole force to bring about religious understanding. Contemplation, meditation and rationalization are ineffective. People are in such a state of blindness, ignorance or complacence, Tate and O'Connor believe, that they must suffer violence in order to see.

In addition to the "violence" Mrs. Turpin suffers at the hands of Mary Grace, Parker being struck down off his tractor in the middle of a field, Mary Pitts' physical assault on her grandfather, and his beating her head against a rock and killing her, we find repeated instances of violence serving to provoke spiritual vision in almost all of O'Connor's short stories. The Misfit, for example, shoots the grandmother and her family in "A Good Man is Hard to Find"; Mrs. May is gored through the heart by a bull in "Greenleaf"; Thomas accidentally shoots his mother in "The Comforts of Home." This violence, as will be demonstrated in The Violent Bear It Away, consistently functions as a positive value to force a character into a state to receive grace. O'Connor tells of a letter she received in 1962 from a dedicated but inexperienced student of her fiction. In it, the student said she would be "graciously appreciative" if

O'Connor would tell her "just what enlightenment" to expect a reader to get from her short stories. O'Connor defines precisely what makes "a story work":

> I have discovered that what is needed is an action that is totally unexpected, yet totally believable, and I have found that, for me, this is always an action which indicated that grace has been offered. And frequently it is an action which the devil had been the unwilling instrument of grace (Fitzgerald, Habit 118).

Both Tate and O'Connor hold the view that since it is in our human natures to be blinded by our fallibilities, complacencies and delusions, we must awaken, moreover, be forced into looking at our condition if we have hopes of breaking away from it and controlling the direction of our lives. Rubin offers this summary of how the Agrarians saw the problem working in a social order:

> What the Agrarians were saying, at a time when few Americans worried about such things, was that if the republic was to live up to its ideals and be what it could be, then it had better look long and hard at what it was in danger of becoming and devote conscious effort to controlling its own destiny, rather than continuing to drift along on the tides of economic materialism (Stand xx).

On a secular and regional level, the Agrarians saw a complacency, a kind of established and habitual ignorance--not innocence--which would consequently allow the forces and evils of materialism to over-rule. Such an ignorance fostered inaction.

Tate poses the question, "How can the American, or the Southern man, take hold of Tradition?" The answer, according to Tate, is "by violence" (Stand 174). He "cannot fall back upon his religion, simply because it was never articulated and organized for him" (Stand 174-5). Tate questions in his essay how the Southerner, in the face of dehumanizing materialism and industrialism, retains his individualism and identity as a member of the human community. Tate's answer is again by violence:

> By an act of resolute, considered will. By refusing to be determined by events rather than attempting to determine them. By thinking in terms of ultimate human values, and then ordering one's economic and social arrangements and one's political actions accordingly, instead of letting the foundations of our values and conduct go unexamined (Stand xx).

Tate saw in a region and a society incomplete and complacent due to a lack of direction from religion and from Tradition. He examines the historical effects and ramifications of this condition in the Southern region over time, concluding that since the Southern people failed to get the organized societal foundations of religion and Tradition necessary to become "borer[s] from within", they have "left the sole alternative of boring from without," which Tate says "is political, active, and, in the nature of the case, violent and revolutionary" (Stand 175). O'Connor shares this notion of violence in a more subtle way. Her stories illustrate that violence, in addition to serving as the agent of grace,

is the physical and symbolic force to empower an emotional and spiritual state of self-consciousness. Violence forces a character to look at and perhaps recognize for the first time her condition, her role and existence in mankind and her spirituality. Tate's violence allows for that "act of resolute, considered will" which likewise forces people to examine their conditions. He concludes, "The Southerner must . . . re-establish a private, self-contained, and essentially spiritual life" (Stand 175). Both agree that what they noticed in their regions and in their times as individual self-satisfying actions must be forced out of complacency, whether spiritual, social or historical.

The violence in The Violent Bear It Away works with grotesquery as O'Connor's principal techniques to bring about her characters' self-awareness. Francis Marion Tarwater's religious searching draws us into his spiritual angst and asks us to recognize our own spiritual states. But it is Tarwater's perception of death and how that perception leads to and informs his resistance to prophecy that provides the singular meaning for his life. Old Tarwater's legacy for Tarwater--"'If by the time I die . . . I haven't got him [Bishop] baptized, it'll be up to you. It'll be the first mission the Lord sends you'" (O'Connor, Three By 128)--becomes crippling, leading to Tarwater's revelation, but also his despair.

The Tarwaters respond impulsively, but in a manner

more resembling animal instinct. They react sensually rather than intellectually and derive pleasure from the most elemental stimuli. Thus, it is no surprise that the events of part one, which establishes the characters' perspectives, focus on the most organic of human functions, the ritual of death. Moreover, O'Connor thematically contrasts the great-uncle's death with the foremost religious rite of baptism. O'Connor takes great pains to establish the nature of the Tarwater world through the Tarwaters' understanding of death, and what meaning it holds for life.

Tarwater is little affected on the morning Old Tarwater dies. He sees his death in its obvious physical manner and is perplexed as how to respond: "He knew the old man was dead without touching him and he continued to set across the table from the corpse, finishing his breakfast in a kind of sullen embarrassment as if he were in the presence of a new personality and couldn't think of anything to say" (O'Connor, Three By 129). He considers cremating his great-uncle to save himself a lot of trouble, arguing that the old man's body "would burn in a minute." Cremation, however, is anathema to Old Tarwater's injunction to bury him ten feet deep (not eight so that the dogs couldn't get at him) and raise a cross over his grave. Indeed, the intermittent passages where Old Tarwater tries to make clear his intentions to his nephew are pathetically comical (and typically O'Connor):

> 'It's too much of you for the box,' Tarwater said. 'I'll have to sit on the lid to press you down or wait until you rot a little.'
>
> 'Don't wait. . . . Listen. If it ain't feasible to use the box when the time comes, if you can't lift it or whatever, just get me in the hole but I want it deep. I want it ten foot, not just eight, ten. You can roll me to it if nothing else. I'll roll. Get two boards and set them down the steps and start me rolling and dig where I stop and don't let me roll over into it until it's deep enough. Prop me up with some bricks so I won't roll into it and don't let the dogs nudge me over the edge before it's finished. You better pen up the dogs.
>
> . . .
>
> He decided to dig the grave under the fig tree because the old man would be good for the figs (O'Connor, Three By 131-136).

This description of Tarwater's funeral requests is reminiscent of the Bundrens' escapades in burying Addie in Faulkner's As I Lay Dying. Death, the most elemental or organic aspect of human life, is physical in both works. The concept of death to the Tarwaters, as it is to the Bundrens, is foremost corporal, where the primary concern is with the end of the body. O'Connor illustrates through the communal ritual of death that the Tarwaters are incapable of understanding death's abstract or ritualistic nature. To the Tarwaters, what happens to one's body and flesh in the earth is the most important--and the most easily understandable--problem of death.

The opening passages concerning Old Tarwater's death dramatize what operates strongly throughout the book as the

vision metaphor. As we have seen before, O'Connor typically establishes a character's perception and capability to perceive in order to place the reader in a position to distinguish between what the character tells us he sees and what is "real." The reader then proceeds from this distinction to accurately judge the character's actions, given the character's perspective. Parker, in "Parker's Back," most closely bears Tarwater's mundane capability for seeing: "He had no desire for one tatoo anywhere he could not readily see it himself," and, "Long views depressed Parker" (O'Connor, Three By 430). O'Connor describes Tarwater's vision:

> He tried when possible to pass over these thoughts, to keep his vision located on an even level, to see no more than what was in front of his face and let his eyes stop at the surface of that. It was as if he were afraid that if he let his eye rest for an instant longer than was needed to place something--a red spade, a hoe, the mule's hind quarters before his plow, the red furrow under him--that the thing would suddenly stand before him, strange and terrifying, demanding that he name it and name it justly and be judged for the name he gave it (O'Connor, Three By 134-135).

This passage suggests an unconsciously controlled selectivity, where Tarwater selects what he wants to see based on what he thinks he can understand; anything else appears threatening to him.

Interwoven within this description of vision is the business of naming. O'Connor alludes to Adam's naming of the animals in Genesis 2:19-20 to describe Tarwater's fear of

the responsibility of naming. In part one, Tarwater wants to name death. Yet, he can't understand it; therefore, he is fearfully obsessed by it.

The full import of Tarwater's fear does not come until later in the novel when he looks Bishop in the eyes for the first time. Tarwater feels seriously threatened by the idiot child, who is ultimately O'Connor's dramatization of unconditional God-like love. He thinks that when he looks into Bishop's "unorganized face," and sees him for what he is, he will then be responsible for what he thinks he sees. That is, he will be judged for the name he gives it. At this point, selective vision is tied up with one aspect of the prophesy theme. For a prophet, one supposedly chosen by God to proclaim His word, Tarwater can only selectively prophesy his understanding of His word. And as Rayber points out, looking Bishop in the face is not fulfilling his mission to baptize him:

> I notice that you've begun to be able to look Bishop in the eye. That's good. It means you're making progress but you needn't think that because you can look him in the eye now, you've saved yourself from what's preying on you. You haven't. The old man still has you in his grip. Don't think he hasn't (O'Connor, Three By 236).

The action Tarwater has to take is to find the courage to break out of the security of his selective vision, and the complacency of his limited knowledge--knowledge he forms for himself in addition to that impressed upon him by his great-uncle--and face the truth; here, his call to prophecy and

Bishop's Divinity.

The idiot-child Bishop, who says nothing, is paradoxically the exemplary prophet. His vision is pure and impulsive since he is incapable of rationality. Bishop finds delight in the everyday things he picks up off the street when they walk in the city; Tarwater searches with "a noncommittal eye." Indeed, we may argue that Bishop is somewhat a form of Tate's "original thinker"--wholly unconstrained by previous thought and "facing each present moment as unique." From this view, it makes sense that O'Connor would denote the idiot, one genetically and innocently incapable of intelligent thinking, let alone selective perception, as representing spontaneity and purity. The one who is wholly incapable of choice is endowed with the highest spiritual gift, while those who are capable of choice but pervert their choices through their distorted human natures and self-serving selectivity, suffer spiritual despair.

We find again in this story that what is important for O'Connor is the choices we make given our human natures; here, how the Tarwaters choose to understand that which they are capable of understanding. Significantly, this is nowhere clearer than in their selective understanding of prophecy, which inadvertently illustrates Tate's concept of half-religionists. Tate claims that we select from the whole religion that which we can understand. The Tarwaters are

incapable of understanding the theological implications of prophecy. This is something quite different from Mrs. Turpin, who has a greater capability of understanding religion, but selectively chooses self-serving aspects. The Tarwaters more excusable since they are severely limited in their capabilities to understand.

The opening pages to the novel outline, in addition to the relationship between Old Tarwater, Rayber and young Tarwater, the inception and nature of the Tarwaters' calls to prophecy. O'Connor tells us that the old man believed that the "Lord Himself" rescued him from his nephew, the schoolteacher, and by sending him "a rage of vision, had told him to fly with the orphan boy to the farthest part of the backwoods and raise him up to justify his Redemption" (Three By 126). Thus, the old man believes that his redemption from Rayber is the second time he has been called. Since Old Tarwater defines himself as chosen, "said he was a prophet," he assumes the responsibility to raise "the boy to expect the Lord's call himself and to be prepared for the day he would hear it" (O'Connor, Three By 126). Old Tarwater recalls the first time he had been called by God. He had envisioned himself an Old Testament prophet. He had "learned by fire," had "been burned clean and burned clean again," and "had been called in his early youth and had set out for the city to proclaim the destruction awaiting a world that had abandoned its Saviour" (O'Connor,

Three By 126). In Old Tarwater's vision of ministry, he believes he has the responsibility to save Tarwater, just as he tried unsuccessfully to save his nephew. Yet, when he takes Tarwater from Rayber, he has altered in his ministry and has become a slightly different prophet. He explains that the second time he was touched by "a finger of fire," that is, when the "Lord had corrected the old man with fire," his "vision had been clear." O'Connor explains that Old Tarwater "had known what he was saving the boy from and it was saving and not destruction he was seeking. He had learned enough to hate the destruction that had to come and not all that going to be destroyed" (Three By 126). This is a powerful conversion in his vision of ministry.

Old Tarwater shoots Rayber in the foot and ear when he comes to reclaim Tarwater. He sees in his face

> an expression of outraged righteousness, a look that infuriated him that he had raised the gun slightly higher and shot him again. . . . The second shot flushed the righteousness off his face and left it blank and white, revealing that there was nothing underneath it, revealing, the old man sometimes admitted, his own failure as well, for he had tried and failed, long ago, to rescue the nephew (O'Connor, Three By 127).

His instructions in "the facts of his [Rayber's] Redemption" failed to impress the nephew, which greatly pained Old Tarwater to the extent that he thinks he is God's failure.

What pained him even more was the thought "that he might have helped the nephew on to his new course himself" (O'Connor, Three By 127), and that he may similarly fail

with Tarwater. O'Connor tells us:

> At such times he [Old Tarwater] would wander into the woods and leave Tarwater alone in the clearing occasionally for days, while he thrashed out his peace with the Lord, and when he returned, bedraggled and hungry, he would look the way the boy thought a prophet ought to look. He would look as if he had been wrestling a wildcat, as if his head were still full of the visions he had seen in its eyes, wheels of light and strange points of the universe. These were the times that Tarwater knew that when he was called, he would say, 'Here I am, Lord, ready!' At other times when there was no fire in his uncle's eye and he spoke only of the sweat and stink of the cross, of being born again to die, and of spending eternity eating the bread of life, the boy would let his mind wander off to other subjects (Three By 128).

Tarwater learns from his great-uncle a prophecy of damnation and fire, of one who must wrestle and "thrash out his peace with the Lord." Subsequently, this is the kind of prophet he wants to be: "He thought of Moses who struck water from a rock, of Joshua who made the sun stand still, of Daniel who stared down lions in the pit" (O'Connor, Three By 128). When he hears his call to this notion of prophecy, he would reply, "'Here I am, Lord, ready!'" He expects the "Lord God Almighty" to appear in the heavens after his uncle dies (O'Connor, Three By 136). These, according to Tarwater, were the markings of what a prophet and religiosity should look like.

Old Tarwater tells Tarwater that his mission is to redeem Bishop and baptize him, just as Old Tarwater had previously redeemed and baptized his great-nephew. O'Connor's provides this Tarwater reply: "The boy doubted

very much that his first mission would be to baptize a dim-witted child. 'Oh no it won't be,'" . . . 'He don't mean for me to finish up your leavings. He has other things in mind for me'" (O'Connor, Three By 128). Tarwater is not interested in being the kind of prophet who is sent to baptize an idiot-child. He is not interested in a ministry formed of love and redemption, of one which hated the destruction but not all that was going to be destroyed, of a prophet without fire in his eyes.

Both Tarwaters proclaim and appoint themselves as prophets, although we may argue that they are unlikely candidates for the vocation. Moreover, they define themselves in their own versions of prophets, young Tarwater more so than his great-uncle. Old Tarwater is more accepting of God's will. He reproaches Tarwater's rationalizing his injunction to baptize Bishop: "It's no part of your job to think for the Lord. . . . Judgment may rack your bones" (O'Connor, Three By 129). Old Tarwater serves as a spiritual role model for Tarwater--"when the boy chose to listen" (O'Connor, Three By 126), but one he cannot unquestioningly accept. This in part guides Tarwater's dilemma with his legacy.

We can refer back here to Tate's "Remarks on the Southern Religion," specifically his idea of religion as a half-horse metaphor, to fully understand the implications of Tarwater's prophecy as self-created. Religion, according to

Tate, is concerned with the whole horse: "There is a complete and self-contained horse in spite of the now prevailing faith that there is none simply because the abstract and scientific mind cannot see him" (Stand 157). In our limited understanding, we select that part of the horse which we can understand, and invariably, which most suits our needs. Tate explains:

> Nothing infallibly works, and the new half-religionists are simply worshipping a principle, and with true half-religious fanaticism they ignore what they do not want to see--which is the breakdown of the principle in numerous instances of practice (Stand 158).

What we must do, and paradoxically are incapable of doing, Tate says, is "let the entire horse fill our minds" (Stand 160). That is, to face religion as it is, not as we want it to be. If we do this, Tate argues, we will come the closest we can to knowing spirituality and participating in a mature religion.

Tate seems to be saying that any principle which is inherently unknowable, like religion and tradition, must be accepted as it is--not fashioned into a human rendition of it. Only then can it be articulated and organized for a people (which, Tate argues, is imperative), and serve as a guiding force for a society.

O'Connor sees this concept of religious totality the same way, though in specific Catholic terms. She explains her concept of holistic Catholicism, and how her faith

directs her Tarwater characterizations in two letters to John Hawkes, the first on 13 September 1959:

> There are some of us who have to pay for our faith every step of the way and who have to work out dramatically what it would be like without it and if being without it would ultimately be possible or not. I can't allow any of my characters, in a novel anyway, to stop in some halfway position. This doubtless comes of a Catholic education and a Catholic sense of history--everything works toward its true end or away from it, everything is ultimately saved or lost (Fitzgerald, Habit 350).

Several weeks later, on 6 October 1959, she wrote Hawkes,

> As you say, your vision, though it doesn't come by way of theology, is the same as mine. You arrive at it by your own perception and sensitivity, but I have had it given me whole by faith because I couldn't possibly have arrived at it by my own powers (Fitzgerald, Habit 352).

Both O'Connor and Tate believe that it is in the nature of the times and in human nature that we see selectively and choose what to comprehend. And in so doing, we doom ourselves to becoming half-religionists:

> we are at the verge of committing ourselves to the half-religions that are no religions at all, but quite simply a decision passed on the utility, the workableness, of the religious objects with respect to the practical aims of society (Tate, Stand 163).

O'Connor adds what she calls our "attraction to the Holy" in talking about the self-fashioned religions and the times. In the 13 September letter to Hawkes, O'Connor writes,

> I don't think you should write something as long as a novel around anything that is not of the gravest concern to you and everybody else and for me this is always the conflict between an attraction for the Holy and the disbelief in it that we breathe in with the air of the times (Fitzgerald, Habit 349).

The "air of the times" in The Violent Bear It Away exists in two settings, Powderhead and the city, as both prove unsuccessful in providing the truth and answers for Tarwater.

Tarwater's heritage, or his sense of the past, is likewise unproductive, perhaps because it is tied up with the legacy of his call to prophecy. The history of the old man, Tarwater and the Rayber family is explained intermittently in part one. Tarwater never directly asks about his heritage, although he suffers through his great-uncle's anecdotal recitations. Rayber, however, "questioned him at length about his early life, which old Tarwater had practically forgotten" (O'Connor, Three By 134). O'Connor explains, "The old man had thought this interest in his forbears would bear fruit, but what it bore, what it bore [sic], stench and shame, were dead words. What it bore was a dry and seedless fruit, incapable even of rotting, dead from the beginning" (Three By 134). Thus, the air of the times in which Tarwater emerges--unsupportive and unfamiliar settings, a disconnected heritage and sense of a disgraced past--is uncooperative and yields no answers.

Opposing this sense of disassociation is O'Connor's

recurrent theory of our "attraction to the Holy," which appears here in the form of an involuntary and unexplainable call to prophecy. The tension between alienation and attraction is dramatized in Tarwater's blind searching. Thematically, of course, the reader sees this as Old Tarwater's injunction to baptize Bishop, and his passionate religious influence outlined in part one. Because Tarwater ferociously rejects old Tarwater, Rayber and Bishop, and mocks their fanatic religious beliefs, scientific philosophies, and idiocy, he ends up alone.

O'Connor illustrates that the only recourse for Tarwater is ironically the same recourse for his great-uncle and Rayber: to take action towards his own redemption. The actions each takes, however, are different. Since both Tarwaters have more freedom, that is, their natures are more predisposed to choice (this is not to be confused with their capabilities to understand), O'Connor allows them an attraction to the Holy. Tarwater may reject that attraction, but that rejection is a choice. Rayber (who has the greatest rationality for understanding) feels no such spiritual attraction.

One ramification of Rayber's spiritual dispassion is exemplified in his attempts to take Tarwater away from old Tarwater's influence:

> I'm sorry, Uncle. You can't live with me and ruin another child's life. This one is going to be brought up to live in the real world. He's going to be brought

> up to expect exactly what he can do for himself. He's going to be his own saviour. He's going to be free! (O'Connor, Three By 165).

But Rayber's notion of reality is little more authentic than his uncle's. The irony is that O'Connor has Rayber speak the words, "It's the way I've chosen for myself. It's the way you take as a result of being born again the natural way--through your own efforts. Your intelligence" (Three By 238). In this comment, the reader understands the unnaturalness of the Rayber world and his perversion of the concept of choice. Augmented and symbolized by mechanisms (his hearing aid and glasses), Rayber's outlook is as one-notioned as his uncle's. He is scientifically fanatic. He is incapable of love for Bishop. His spiritual denseness is more tragic than the Tarwaters' animal instinctiveness. Consequently, since Rayber's fate is more pathetic than the Tarwaters', he is damned to living alone, having to face his science and his sins.

Tarwater's journey to redemption is violent and is tied up in the joint concepts of choice and action. Tarwater feels total rejection after he is raped by the man who picks him up hitchhiking. Afterward, O'Connor allows him to understand the full import of his actions. Furthermore, after his great-uncle dies, Tarwater feels a sense of freedom: "Now I can do anything I want to" (O'Connor, Three By 137), and, "He began to feel that he was only just now

meeting himself, as if as long as his uncle had lived, he had been deprived of his own acquaintance" (O'Connor, Three By 144). He says to himself repeatedly, "I'm in charge now," as if trying to convince himself that he is free. Other characters support his new feeling of freedom, encouraging him to act and change his ways. The "stranger's" voice tells him, "The old man was the stone before your door and the Lord has rolled it away" (O'Connor, Three By 150). Rayber says, "Listen boy, . . . getting out from under the old man is just like coming out of the darkness into the light. You're going to have a chance now for the first time in your life" (O'Connor, Three By 178). Tarwater is mistaken in thinking that he is free of Old Tarwater's religious persuasions since he has died; but the truth is, he is still haunted by Old Tarwater's prophesy. The descriptions in the opening pages of Old Tarwater's call to prophecy, the nature of his ministry and his spiritual conversion foreshadows Tarwater's going to the city to find out what the truth is--"his great-uncle's version of the way things are or the strangers" (McFarland 97)--and his rejection of his mission to baptize Bishop, which he ends up doing anyway.

Tarwater's searching is rewarded in the end--action brings about revelation. His vision has changed by the end of the story: "It was the road home, ground that had been familiar to him since his infancy but now it looked like strange and alien country," and, "He sensed a strangeness

about the place" (O'Connor, Three By 262, 265). His changed vision recalls Old Tarwater's conversion. Tarwater's hunger, which is now able to be satisfied, feels "no longer as a pain but as a tide," where that tide seems to "lift and turn him" (O'Connor, Three By 267). Dorothy Tuck McFarland acknowledges Tarwater's change, explaining that the "turning" symbolizes a conversion: "His literal turning around brings him to face the treeline behind him, where the fires he set are still burning. These fires become the vehicle for a supernatural revelation. . . . He has, in short accepted the suffering and the incomprehensible mystery of human existence" (106-108), just as Old Tarwater had learned "to hate the destruction that had to come and not all that was going to be destroyed."

It is important to note that O'Connor uses violence, first when he is the perpetrator of Bishop's drowning, and then later when he is the victim of rape, as the means of affecting Tarwater's revelation. Both attest to the role of violence as a physical and emotional force to bring about spirituality. O'Connor says about the meaning of the word "violence" in the book's title, in a letter to "A", 29 June 1957,

> I'm still not sure about that title (The Violent Bear It Away) but it's something for me to lean on in my conception of the book. And more than ever now it seems that the kingdom of heaven has to be taken by violence, or not at all. You have to push as hard as the age that pushes against you (Fitzgerald, Habit 229).

O'Connor, like many of the Agrarians, acknowledged some impending power that threatened one's sense of spirituality. Their message was that we must fight to prevent that power or force from overtaking us.

O'Connor again discusses the title's significance in a letter to Dr. T. R. Spivey on 16 March 1960:

> One thing I observe about the title is that the general reaction is to think that it has an Old Testament flavor. Even when they read the quotation, the fact that these are Christ's words makes no great impression. That this is the violence of love, of giving more than the law demands, of an asceticism like John the Baptist's, but in the face of which even John is less than the least in the kingdom--all this is overlooked. . . I fail to make the title's significance clear, but the title is the best thing about the book (Fitzgerald, Habit 382).

Tarwater receives enlightenment, so that his vision of his life is changed. He is reconciled to death, which in turn changes his understanding of life. What is important is that he comes to this knowledge violently; he is an exemplification of "the violence of love." He is reconciled to his spiritual heritage. This knowledge does not come to him scientifically or by searching aimlessly. It does not come from the backwoods or the city, in school or from books. It does not come from what he sees in life or what others tell him to see. Rather, it comes to him as a result and as a reward for his questioning his self-consciousness and acting on his "attraction to the Holy."

O'Connor says here and elsewhere that we can't

ultimately create our own salvation; this is God's business after life. But we can't wait self-assuredly for salvation to come to us (like Asbury in "The Enduring Chill," or the Grandmother in "A Good Man is Hard to Find"). We have to be responsible for our own actions, for the actions we take on our attraction to the Holy, which means that we must name and judge our own morality before the final Judgment. And, in order to judge ourselves literally, we must see ourselves realistically. Violence allows for this realistic vision.

P. Albert Duhamel in "The Novelist as Prophet" sees Tate's definition of poetry and O'Connor's definition of the novel as "similar in manner of seeing and expression." Another, more complex similarity appears in their concept of religion. They share the same principle and expression when talking about our need for religion, and acknowledge the retarding effects of spiritual complacency. Indeed O'Connor and Tate share the same terminology--the word "violence"--to denote what we need to awaken us from our complacency. For O'Connor, violence forces spiritual enlightenment (ultimately, the potential to receive grace). For Tate, violence serves in part to force personal and communal realization of religion.

In both cases, violence is the means to bring about self-awareness, which O'Connor and the Agrarians see as the first step towards the proper participation in a mature religion. A confused spirituality, either individually, as

the O'Connor characterizations in this chapter have shown, or communally, as Tate's "Remarks on the Southern Religion" describe, requires re-evaluation and self-verification. A people can define spirituality in a nonconstructive sense--narrowly or regionally--as Tarwater shows us. That is, we can create a false security in our complacency if we believe only in that which we think we are capable of understanding. Or we can define our spirituality "provincially." That is, we can accept and take action on our attraction to the Holy, as O'Connor suggests, or "let the entire horse fill our minds" as Tate suggests. Both gestures, albeit abstractions, require an organized identification of religion, first for ourselves and as a region, and then identified in light of a larger context. Put another way, we must be able to rely on a strong sense of individual spirituality in order to recognize and participate in a larger religion (to be "borers from within").

O'Connor also shared with the Agrarians the core philosophy inspiring the essays in I'll Take My Stand: the divinity or aestheticism of nature, and man's intuitive relationship with it. Both illustrate man's intended relationship with nature in agrarian terms. Our association with the land is a primal and ineradicable force in our lives (as is religion and tradition). As such, the prescription O'Connor and Tate offer is for us to respond intuitively and spontaneously. Consequently, if we construct

self-serving interpretations of nature (and religion), we are creating, to use an Agrarian phrase, a false way of life. The Agrarians saw industrialism in the thirties and forties as promoting this kind of false way of life.

O'Connor and the Agrarians conceive the consequences of a misaligned relationship of man to nature and man to religion as a cheapening or dehumanizing of the value of life.

INDUSTRIALISM: A CONDITION CONTRARY TO NATURE

The articles in I'll Take My Stand advocate a way of life represented in their credo, Agrarianism versus Industrialism. The Agrarians perceived two incongruent economies, and therefore, two incongruent life philosophies. The credo supports an agrarian mode of living with its accompanying principles, over a mode that permits the mechanizing effects of industrialism. The Agrarians believed that one way of life cannot be part of the other. Andrew Lytle refers to this conflict in as a war, saying that industrialism is an unnatural product of man's creativity:

> This conflict is between the unnatural progeny of inventive genius and men. It is a war to the death between technology and the ordinary human functions of living. The rights to these human functions are the natural rights of man, and they are threatened now, in the twentieth, not in the eighteenth, century for the first time ("The Hind Tit," Stand 202).

Later in the essay, Lytle warns the farmer that he

> must close his ears because an agrarian culture and industrial warfare are sustained through the workings of two different economies. Nothing less than confusion can follow the attempt of one economy to react to the laws of another. The progressive-farmer ideal is a contradiction in terms (207).

Lytle and his fellow Agrarians reacted against what they saw in the thirties and forties as Northern industrialism

usurping man's essential and "natural" humanity. Industrialism and the worship of materialism, the Agrarians upheld, cheapened humanity and obliterated humane values. The only solution is to pursue a purely agricultural vocation wherein man can establish that which he finds meaningful in life based on his contact with the soil. It is only through an agrarian way of living, the Agrarians believed, that we realize or enliven our natural selves.

O'Connor's "The Displaced Person" illustrates literally the fundamentals of the industrialism versus agrarianism principle at its worst. O'Connor shows the destruction that results from placing acquisition above thoughtfulness. Through Mrs. McIntyre's self-righteousness and greediness in running her dairy farm, and through Mrs. Shortley's ignorant and warped sense of human value, O'Connor demonstrates how such self-serving attitudes preclude humane values and lead inevitably to displacement. We discover, if we pay special attention to the female protagonists in this story, that they dramatize the dehumanizing consequences of industrialism.

The labor code of the miniature society of the dairy farm places production before and above human concerns. Mrs. McIntyre tries to turn her dairy farm into a money-making venture. This attitude conflicts with what the Agrarians conceived to be nature's rewards of agriculture. As Lytle points out, "a farm is not a place to grow wealthy. It is a

place to grow corn" (Stand 205). Mrs. McIntyre expects material wealth from the farm, which, as the Agrarian credo suggests, is unnatural. The Statement of Principles explain that

> nature industrialized, transformed into cities and artificial habitations, manufactured into commodities, is no longer nature but a highly simplified picture of nature. We receive the illusion of having power over nature, and lose the sense of nature as something mysterious and contingent (Stand xlii).

Mrs. McIntyre runs the dairy for purposes of profit and to exert her control. Her attitude precludes the possibility for the "sense" of mystery in nature and human nature, and as a result, a sense of humanity in the dairy farm is displaced.

"What you colored people don't realize," Mrs. McIntyre says, "is that I'm the one around here who holds all the strings together. If you don't work, I don't make any money and I can't pay you. You're all dependent on me but you each and every one act like the shoe is on the other foot" (O'Connor, A Good Man Is Hard To Find 227). Clearly, Mrs. McIntyre, like Mrs. May in "Greenleaf," assumes a dictatorial position in governing her dairy farm. She is obsessed with money, frequently thinking about how others define who and what is considered rich. She measures her life's worth by what belongs to her.

There is an established, predictable labor and class structure functioning harmoniously in the dairy farm setting

until the Guizacs, a Polish family, arrive. Mr. Guizac turns out to be an important financial asset to the farm. Subsequently, for economic purposes, Mrs. McIntyre fires the Shortleys in favor of the Guizacs. The important conflict for O'Connor and the Agrarians lies in Mrs. McIntyre's placing labor before thoughtfulness, and in Mrs. Shortley's assumptions and prejudices towards the farm workers. The end of the story depicts the awful consequence of these women's attitudes--displacement and alienation.

Mrs. Shortley's distrust and gross ignorance of the Guizacs' culture and religion is the epitome of an inhumane attitude. She outlines her view of the social order of the dairy farm and describes the Guizacs' arrival. She places Mrs. McIntyre first, since she owns the farm, with herself next in line. Mr. Shortley is next because he is white, and the Negroes, Astor and Sulk, are last. O'Connor provides this description of Mrs. Shortley's initial reaction to the Guizacs' arrival: "The first thing that struck her as very peculiar was that they looked like other people" (O'Connor, Good Man 198). Mrs. Shortley (and later, Mrs. McIntyre) does not acknowledge the Guizacs as part of the family of man because, in her thinking, by regarding them as foreigners she remains superior to them.

The ensuing story focusses on and develops Mrs. McIntyre's steadily increasing materialism and sense of moral superiority. With increased acquisition comes a

superior attitude toward her farm workers, illustrated in her habitual remark, "they should be grateful for anything they could get" (O'Connor, Good Man 200). Moreover, because she is the head of the dairy farm which is becoming financially successful, she believes her rules, her traditions and her morality should govern.

Mrs. McIntyre's prejudice comes out in full force in the same way as Mrs. Shortley's: she sees the Guizacs as foreigners who don't fit in. She rationalizes her prejudice by saying that "she is not responsible for the world's misery," and "she is not under any legal obligation to them" (241). Her true attitude is revealed in the words she uses to fire Mr. Guizac: "This is my place . . . All of you are extra" (O'Connor, Good Man 246). The full connotation here is that we are all expendable, just as humanity and human values in the dairy farm society are expendable. O'Connor underscores this viewpoint through Mrs. McIntyre's remark about Mr. Guizac: she "didn't know anything about him except that he did the work. The truth was that he was not very real to her yet" (Good Man 230). In Mrs. McIntyre's thinking, humans are expendable since they are valued only for their utility.

The event at the close of the story that makes it possible for Mrs. McIntyre to come to an enlightened viewpoint and recognize the worth of humanity is Mr. Guizac's death. Just prior to the accident, O'Connor tells

us that Mrs. McIntyre "had felt her eyes and Mr. Shortley's eyes and the Negro's eyes come together in one look that froze them in collusion forever" (Good Man 250). Then, Mrs. McIntyre says that "she felt that she was in some foreign country" (O'Connor, Good Man 250). The symbolic country here is a state of equality. Mrs. MacIntyre's feelings of superiority now have the potential to be leveled. In other words, Mrs. McIntyre is given the opportunity to see herself as a member of the family of all mankind.

But while there is this potential moment, there is no such enlightenment for Mrs. McIntyre; she is damned to a life of destitution and desperation because she distorted and extorted human value. She sees only the literal consequence of Mr. Guizac's death as it destroys both her farm and her health: the farm hands leave, and she is hospitalized with "a nervous affliction" (O'Connor, Good Man 250). O'Connor's message (and an Agrarian one), here and elsewhere, is that the loss of material things makes way for spiritual enlightenment. In other words, in the process of pursuing material goals, we surrender our spirituality, leading ultimately to a spiritual death. Surrendering our desires for materialism provides the possibility for spiritual enlightenment.

The idea of displacement works on many levels in this story. On a literal level, Mrs. Shortly is "displaced in the world from all that belonged to her" (O'Connor,

Good Man 223). The farm hands are displaced at the end of the story. Mr. Guizac is displaced through death. But there are more important meanings of displacement. Mrs. McIntyre's attitudes make her feel like a stranger on her own farm. Human amenities are displaced by machinery and materialism. Humanness is displaced by ignorance and prejudice. O'Connor uses the notion of displacement to dramatize the consequence of human conduct and attitude askew from what is naturally intended (and, of course, what God intends).

The truth is revealed, as it often is in O'Connor's stories, through irony. Mrs. Shortley defines for Astor what a Displaced Person is: "It means they ain't where they were born at and there's nowhere for them to go--like if you was run out of here and wouldn't nobody have you." Astor's reply, containing the most basic wisdom and spontaneous recognition of human existence, "It seem like they here, though. . . If they here, they somewhere" (O'Connor, Good Man 203) goes unnoticed by Shortley.

We find clear instances of Agrarian thought if we examine the story in terms other than religious. One specific instance appears in Mrs. Shortley's conflated attitude towards people and work:

> She thought how the tractor had made mules worthless. Nowadays you couldn't give away a mule. The next thing to go, she reminded herself, will be niggers. 'All you colored people better look out. . . . You know how much you can get for a mule' (O'Connor, Good Man 212).

She views the black hired hands as machines and assesses them solely as to their utility. Mrs. McIntyre holds a similar opinion: "I may have to get rid of some of this other help so I can pay him [Mr. Guizac] more" (O'Connor, Good Man 214). Later, she says about Guizac, "He's extra and he's upset the balance around here" (O'Connor, Good Man 245). The issue for O'Connor and the Agrarians is the obsession with acquisition and social position to the exclusion of human concerns. Mrs. McIntyre is not charitable to the Guizacs and sees them as economic assets. She is not charitable to the Shortleys and sees them as expendable.

The main Agrarian problem is resolved, as is the religious problem, through Astor's primitive wisdom. He is the only one who was working when the Judge was alive. Astor quotes one of the Judge's favorite adages: "Judge say he long for the day when he be too poor to pay a nigger to work. . . . Say when that day come, the world be back on its feet" (O'Connor, Good Man 224-5). Throughout the story, themes of place, balance, harmony, fitting in and "right" relations have been focal, both in the workings of the dairy farm society, and in the imbalance of prejudicial attitudes. The judge's words describe those right relations as a rethinking of labor and paid labor. It suggests a refocus on human value--not values distorted by materialism--and a refocus on work ethics that misinterpret the purpose of labor. Further evidence illustrating the notion of balance

that O'Connor had in mind appears in Mrs. McIntyre's repeated derogatory comment about her help, "They're all the same." The irony here is that in truth, from humane perspectives, we are all the same. The true balance exists in the belief that we are all members of the human family, and in O'Connor's Catholicism, the family of God.

"The Displaced Person" fictionally dramatizes Lytle's claim that false and greedy expectations of farming exceed the limits and intentions of agriculture and an agrarian livlihood, making it something unnatural. He says in "The Hind Tit," "Through its philosophy of Progress it is committing a mortal sin to persuade farmers that they can grow wealthy by adopting its methods. A farm is not a place to grow wealthy; it is a place to grow corn" (Stand 204-205). The opening theory that guides Lytle's essay discusses what he calls the "miscarriage" of our society, claiming that "the high expectations held universally by the founders of the American Union for a more perfect order of society" have proved "abortive" (201). Lytle argues that our obsession with wealth has caused the miscarriage. Consequently, our obsession has produced an imbalance, unnatural or a wrong relationship between us and the land. He explains that the farmers feel pressure to be more progressive, which, he states, always means more productive. The farmer's recourse, Lytle concludes, is for him to "close his ears to these heresies that accumulate about his head,

for they roll from the tongues of false prophets" (Stand 206).

Ransom likewise sees progress, specifically industrialism, as disrupting "the right relations of man-to-nature," but examines it on a communal level. He argues in his essay, "Reconstructed but Unregenerate," that man should live compatibly with his environment:

> In most societies man had adapted himself to his environment with plenty of intelligence to secure easily his material necessities from the graceful bounty of nature. And then, ordinarily, he concludes a truce with nature, and he and nature seem to live on terms of mutual respect and amity, and his living arts, religions, and philosophies come spontaneously into being: these are the blessings of peace. But the latter societies have been seized--none quite so violently as our American one--with the strange idea that the human destiny is not to secure an honorable peace with nature, but to wage an unrelenting war on nature. Men, therefore, determine to conquer nature to a degree which is quite beyond reason so far as specific human advantage is concerned, and which enslaves them to toil and turnover (Stand 7-8).

The Agrarians were responding to what they saw in the thirties as a depletion of natural and human resources at the hands of Northern industrialism. Ransom's position, one which Tate later explored and elaborated, describes an almost "sacred" natural world, cherishable and gift giving. It is an esteemed, and as Ransom seems to suggest, superior source to which man prudently and respectfully adapts. People even establish their life-philosophies (or in the words the Principles use, life-pattern of a community) through their relationship with nature.

The characters in O'Connor's "The River" regard the natural world as symbolically sacred: the river represents the vehicle for baptism. Bevel Summers, the preacher, refers to it as "the River of Faith," the "River of Life," and the "River of Love" (O'Connor, Good Man 40-41). Here and in many other O'Connor stories, nature represents Divinity; so for her characters there is a certain Divinity in their relationship to nature. In this story, Harry "Bevel" Ashfield, another depiction of O'Connor's displaced people, finds refuge and deliverance in the river as it contrasts with the uncaring and neglectful world of his family. The opposite settings of the apartment and the river dramatize awfully and pathetically the power of alienation and, by contrast, the value of human life.

The theme of the story is straightforward: Harry Ashfield, a boy "of four or five," alienated by his selfish and partying parents, finds consolation with Mrs. Connin, a backwoods fundamentalist. She takes Harry to see the preacher and faith healer Bevel Summers (Harry adopts his name), who baptizes him in the river. When he returns home, he poignantly realizes his parents' neglect and returns to the river. Determined to baptize himself, and "to keep on going. . . until he found the Kingdom of Christ" (O'Connor, Good Man 51), he drowns.

Harry's parents ignore him. They party frequently, sleep late and pass off Harry onto baby-sitters. Harry

intuitively knows his parents neglect him. He finds some consolation in Mrs. Connin's attention when she takes him to her home. But her children stare at him and play a joke on him by letting a hog run loose. Mrs. Connin and Bevel Summers provide some much needed attention for Harry. But O'Connor makes it clear in setting up the story that Harry's only attachment is with the river.

Harry's disillusionment comes when he leaves the apartment setting and goes to Mrs. Connin's farm. Here, he realizes that the world he knows in the apartment is unreal. He learns that the pigs he had seen in books were not the "small fat pink animals with curly tails and round grinning faces and bow ties" (O'Connor, Good Man 36) when a shoat, described as "long-legged and hump-backed and part of one of his ears had been bitten off" (O'Connor, Good Man 37), charges him. Being at the farm leads him to realize that what is in his apartment home is insincere. He admits that his family "joked a lot." At the river, when Harry announces his name as "Bevel" so that the preacher could baptize him, Harry has "the sudden feeling that this was not a joke" (O'Connor, Good Man 44). This insight comes after Harry is taken out of the apartment world and introduced to the natural world of the river. When he returns to the apartment, he thanks Mrs. Connin for taking him away for the day, saying, "You found out more when you left where you lived" (O'Connor, Good Man 38).

After the baptism, the preacher says to Harry, "you'll count. . . You count now. . . . You didn't even count before" (O'Connor, Good Man 44-45). Counting in this context obviously means baptized and born into the Christian community. But it also means Harry is noticed and recognized as being part of something and someone. In a very important sense, he is as much "born into" nature as he is born into God's family. He feels a union with nature that he never felt at home. The reader appreciates the genuineness and power of this union mainly through a description of the river setting. This description, I would argue, is the most beautiful picture of nature in all of O'Connor's stories:

> They walked on the dirt road for a while and then they crossed a field stippled with purple weeds and entered the shadows of a wood where the ground was covered with thick pine needles. He had never been in woods [sic] before and he walked carefully, looking from side to side as if he were entering a strange country. They moved along a bridle path that twisted downhill through crackling red leaves, and once, catching at a branch to keep himself from slipping, he looked into two frozen green-gold eyes enclosed in the darkness of a tree hole. At the bottom of the hill, the woods opened suddenly onto a pasture dotted here and there with black and white cows and sloping down, tier after tier, to a broad orange stream where the reflection of the sun was set like a diamond (Good Man 39).

As we have seen before, O'Connor uses the woods and sky in almost every story as tropes to represent or augment a character's spirituality or morality. Here, nature reflects Harry's moral and spiritual innocence. What is different about this description is that its beauty is contained in

nature's inviting and welcoming appearance, contrasted with the glaring and stale world of the apartment. This passage leads us to realize that Harry has been initiated into the larger context of nature.

But the beauty of the description more strongly represents Harry's vision of nature and, here, what nature is offering him. What is underscored is Harry's perception and relation to the woods, which O'Connor describes as his entering into a "strange country". The country is strange because it is unfamiliar compared to what Harry knows in his parents' apartment. But this country is also welcoming. It is a world Harry will at once feel at home in, retreat to later, and finally go home to forever. Back in the apartment, when Harry goes to his room, the covers on his bed become for him his "river" as he retreats from his mother's admonitions:

> 'What lies have you been telling today, honey?'
>
> He shut his eye and heard her voice from a long way away, as if he were under the river and she on top of it. She shook his shoulder. 'Harry,' she said, leaning down and putting her mouth to his ear, 'tell me what he said.' She pulled him into a sitting position and he felt as if he had been drawn up from under the river (O'Connor, Good Man 48).

The river for Harry is freedom and salvation, and more importantly, a place where he counts. Although he is too young to fully understand the theology in the ritual of baptism (irrelevant for the purposes of this discussion), he

feels--for the first time--God's love and the love of humanity. Subsequently, his only recourse is to find what he understands to be the truth: "He intended not to fool with preachers any more but to Baptize himself and to keep on going this time until he found the Kingdom of Christ in the river" (O'Connor, Good Man 51).

Readers criticizing this story believe that Harry's death is unnecessary and extreme. Granted, his "suicide" is wasteful and tragic. But what is more tragic is the extremity of his parents' neglect, and his intuitive realization of their abuse at such a young and innocent age. We may presume that Harry's childhood, had he wished to stay with this parents, would reflect the ramifications of his parents' jejune behavior. In this sense, his death is not only necessary but it is also fortunate. The true extremes in this story lie in the aridity of his family life and the compassionating power of the river. The fact that Harry finds peace in the river is totally believable given his family life, and given what we have seen as O'Connor's conviction that death often comes as a release and a reward for her praiseworthy characters. Moreover, his drowning in the river, although it at first "wouldn't have him" (O'Connor, Good Man 52), is hardly a murder. O'Connor tells us that "He plunged under once and this time, the waiting current caught him like a long gentle hand and pulled him swiftly forward and down. . . all his fury and his fear left

him" (Good Man 52). In Harry and O'Connor's thinking, drowning is the ultimate kindness: the river rescues him from his doltish and abusive parents, bringing him with a gentle hand--home.

Another neglected child's suicide, Norton's, in "The Lame Shall Enter First," reinforces the function of nature as redeemer. Norton's father, Sheppard, like Harry's parents, neglects him in the process of satisfying his personal needs and reforming Rufus Johnson. But unlike Harry's parents, Sheppard comes to realize his neglect, admitting in his revelation that, "he had done more for Johnson than he had done for his own child," and, "He had ignored his own child to feed his vision of himself" (O'Connor, Complete Works 481). O'Connor tells us that Sheppard decided after his revelation to treat Norton differently: "He would make everything up to him. He would never let him suffer again. He would be mother and father. He jumped up and ran to his room, to kiss him, to tell him that he loved him, that he would never fail him again" (Complete Works 482). But it is too late: Norton has hung himself.

Comparing the kind of parenting in this story with "The River" is important towards understanding the justness of both children's deaths. Harry's parents appear minimally in "The River" as O'Connor guides us to focus primarily on Harry's perceptions of his family, Mrs. Connin, and the

river/nature. At once, we perceive through the narrations of "a boy of four or five," and like Harry, feel the beauty and refuge of the river, and the unloving home life.

Sheppard's relationship to Rufus Johnson--he appoints himself to reform the club-footed delinquent--forms the focus of "The Lame Shall Enter First." The bulk of the story dramatizes Sheppard's personal dilemmas, his atheism, and his obsessive and misguided efforts to adopt Rufus as his son. Rufus's resistance to Sheppard's attempts at reform, his testing Sheppard, and his resentment of his atheism form the compatible focus. The instances of communication between Norton and the other characters for the most part of the story consist of Sheppard's neglect or reproaches, and Rufus's preaching. As such, the reader is guided more into the Sheppard story line, concentrating on his personal dilemmas, which on the surface overshadow our perception of Norton. O'Connor bolsters this focus by describing in detail the process of Sheppard's revelation (not Norton's) towards the end of the story. Norton's death immediately thereafter appears as somewhat startling.

From the outset, we learn that Norton is still grieving for his mother who had died a year ago. Sheppard thinks that "a child's grief should not last so long" (O'Connor, Complete Stories 447). Norton is ten, but he seems closer in age and perception to Harry. Sheppard handles his loneliness by assuming the mission of reforming

Rufus. Norton naturally is unable to cover up or replace his grief as his father does, and his resultant behavior--hiding in the closet, obsessively counting coins and organizing packages of flower seeds--is pitiable. We empathize with Norton's emotionalism and respond logically to Sheppard's intellectualism. Rufus embodies aspects of both.

After hearing Rufus's remarks on heaven and hell, Norton questions where his mother is. Sheppard had avoided the question, although regretfully. He thinks, "His lot would have been easier if when his wife died he had told Norton she had gone to heaven and that some day he would see her again, but he could not allow himself to bring him up on a lie" (O'Connor, Complete Stories 461). Norton gets the idea from Rufus to join his mother; thus, he begins his journey towards his revelation. He compulsively looks through the telescope in the attic, which, ironically, Sheppard had bought for Rufus, searching for his mother. The descriptions again are pitiable and heart-rending:

> The child's back was to him. He was sitting hunched, intent, his large ears directly above his shoulders. Suddenly he waved his hand and crouched closer to the telescope as if he could not get near enough to what he saw. . . .
>
> 'I've found her!' he said breathlessly.
>
> 'Found who?' Sheppard said.
>
> 'Mamma!'
>
> Sheppard steadied himself in the door way. The Jungle of shadows around the child thickened.

> 'Come and look!' he cried. He wiped his sweaty face on the tail of his plaid shirt and then put his eye back to the telescope. His back became fixed in a rigid intensity. All at once he waved again.
>
> 'Norton,' Sheppard said, 'you don't see anything in the telescope but star clusters. Now you've had enough of that for one night. You'd better go to bed. Do you know where Rufus is?'
>
> 'She's there!' he cried, not turning around from the telescope. 'She waved at me!' (O'Connor, Complete Stories 478-479).

At this point, the similarities between Sheppard and Harry's parents are powerful; likewise, the aptness of their children's deaths. Descriptions of nature in both stories clue the reader that an otherworld is preferable to living at home. The beautiful imagery of the river setting indicates that nature will serve as a compassionate refuge for Harry. For Norton, the sky and stars he sees through his telescope, and especially his vision of his mother, intimate his refuge.

We can totally empathize with Harry's preference for the river and accept the justness of his death because of the extremity of his parents' neglect. Norton's death, however, is more tragic because of Sheppard's revelation. We don't know if Sheppard would have changed his treatment of Norton, but we have no strong evidence that he would not change; we can give him the benefit of the doubt. His atheism would not change, however. He may exhibit a more loving behavior, but it would not provide the nurturing

dimension of Christian love both Norton and Harry desperately search for.

The closing line substantiates for us that Norton's death was fortunate: ". . . the child hung in the jungle of shadows, just below the beam from which he had launched his flight into space (O'Connor, Complete Stories 482). The "jungle of shadows" is repeated here to emphasize Norton's psychological turmoil. We agonize for Norton, in his longing for his mother, and in his father's neglect. Norton is symbolically launched into space, rocketed away from his secular and arid home, into what he sees as his mother's arms. O'Connor suggests here the refuge of space, and of course, God's love. Space, for Norton, functions as the same kind of welcoming refuge as the river does for Harry.

Both "The River" and "The Lame Shall Enter First" project nature as a nurturing and compassionating power. Another image of nature, the pine tree is O'Connor's signature symbol of compassion, specifically, redemption. Lines of pine trees and clouded skies are used to symbolize the crucifixion, representing for her characters not only salvation in death, but also refuge and love. The physical world figures in strongly and importantly in O'Connor's stories, often, if not always contrasting with representatives of urban life.

Donald Davidson defines the position nature should hold for the artist in "A Mirror For Artists," his

contribution to I'll Take My Stand. He voices the Agrarian sentiment put forth by Ransom that the natural world is superior, and that man must live appropriately to it:

> . . . the provincial artist. . . should be able to approximate a harmonious relation between artist and environment. Especially to his advantage is his nearness to nature in the physical sense--which ought to mean, not that he becomes in the narrow sense an artist 'of the soil,' dealing in the picturesque, but that nature is an eternal balancing factor in his art, a presence neither wholly benign nor wholly hostile, continually reminding him that art is not a substitute for nature (Stand 57-58).

Davidson speaks here of nature as inspirer for the artist, where his art emerges out of and is defined from "his nearness to nature in the physical sense." O'Connor's "The River" in a sense illustrates this Agrarian/Transcendental philosophy. An implied message about nature that "The River" makes is that Harry's death is a wrong relationship to nature--the river at first "wouldn't have him." But the thematic message the story makes is that nature is a home for Harry. To this extent, the river balances the cruelty and aridity of his familial life.

The Agrarians saw that human resources, in addition to natural resources, were exploited by industrialism. O'Connor uniformly depicts characters in a state of spiritual deficiency or depletion, or what the Agrarians call "the poverty of the contemporary spirit." The type of human resources defined in the Principles are what the Agrarians call the "amenities" of life: human manners,

conversation, hospitality, sympathy, family life, romantic love, or those "social exchanges which reveal and develop sensibility in human affairs" (xliii). The Agrarians believe that "if religion and the arts are founded on the right relations of man-to-nature, these [amenities] are founded on right relations of man-to-man (Stand xliii). The concept of balance is repeated here, in the context that our lives proceed from our "right relations" to the earth, and by extension, to each other. Overall, what constitutes the "right relations" for O'Connor and the Agrarians is a primal, genuine and mutual respect for human nature and the land.

It is easier to define the "wrong relations" in human affairs in O'Connor's stories as a means towards understanding what the Agrarians mean by the "right relations," or proportionate human amenities. Essentially, O'Connor demonstrates that spiritual chaos exists in and perpetuates a state of unnaturalness--that is, man's detached or perverted relations with one another. She presents disbelieving, dissociated and blindly seeking people. In their most extreme spiritual state, O'Connor's people are dehumanized, which is the ultimate unnaturalness.

The bizarre world of Taulkinham in Wise Blood accentuates the vivid portrayal of its characters' lack of humanity. In describing Taulkinham, scholars have cited the many close parallels to the sterile world of The Waste Land.

Likewise, the characters of Wise Blood resemble Eliot's dissociated inhabitants. Wise Blood's anti-hero Enoch Emery, as his name implies, is more animalistic than human. He had "yellow hair and a fox-shaped face" (O'Connor, Three By 18), and "looked like a friendly hound dog with light mange" (O'Connor, Three By 21). He works for the city zoo and engages in a love-hate relationship with the animals. The force of the Enoch story lies in his fascination with a shrunken mummy in a museum. His spiritual void is satisfied, after searching in numerous unlikely places, when he steps into a gorilla's suit.

Hazel Motes' quest for spiritual fulfillment, while at the same time he violently and desperately rejects his "haunting Christ," comprises the theme of Wise Blood. In this sense, Motes parallels Tarwater in The Violent Bear It Away. Indeed, we know that O'Connor had these two characters in mind, as evidenced in a letter she wrote to "A" on 25 July 1959,

> Someday if I get up enough courage, I may write a story or a novella about Tarwater in the city. There would be no reformatory I assure you. That murder is forgotten by God and of no interest to society, and I would proceed to show what the children of God do to him. I am much more interested in the nobility of unnaturalness than in the nobility of naturality. As Robert [Fitzgerald] says, it is the business of the artist to uncover the strangeness of truth. The violent are not natural. St. Thomas's gloss on this verse is that the violent Christ is here talking about [sic] represent those ascetics who strain against mere nature (Fitzgerald, Habit 343).

Both novels present characters in extreme spiritual confusion. Both Motes and Tarwater fight their "attraction to the Holy." In O'Connor's words, the spiritual unnaturalness in Wise Blood appears in Motes' failed attempts to shake loose of "the wild ragged figure who moves from tree to tree in the back of [his] mind" (Three By 10). O'Connor's "nobility in unnaturalness" lies in Motes' call and eventual resignation to his attraction.

The debased city of Taulkinham is the fitting setting for Motes and his fellow spiritually starved refugees. The city's rootless and weird inhabitants--Asa Hawks, a "blind" preacher who can really see, Sabbath, his sensually misguided daughter, Leora Watts, a fat toothless whore, and two false preachers--present a depraved humanity and a perverted spirituality. It is equally fitting that religion surfaces in Taulkinham in the unlikely and artificial settings of cars, museums and picture shows.

The Taulkinham world is contrasted, as it is in many of O'Connor's stories, with the concept of home, which for Motes is the backwoods of Eastrod, Tennessee. Before Motes went into the army, he "wanted to stay in Eastrod with his two eyes open, and his hands always handling the familiar thing, his feet on the known track, and his tongue not too loose" (O'Connor, Three By 10). O'Connor tells us that Motes left his Eastrod home to join the army, which "sent him halfway around the world" to fight in the Second World War

"and then forgot him" (Three By 11). He returns to an Eastrod with "no more Motes," his home and community lost and unfamiliar.

His search to find his true country, which as we have seen is an important concept in O'Connor's stories, manifests itself in various contrasts. Her short stories typically set up opposition between North and South, city and backwoods or nature, social class structures, the past and present or belief and atheism in order for her characters to discover what she considers the ultimate true country: heaven, or its earthly counterpart, human spirituality. We see a few of these oppositions established in Wise Blood at the outset of the story. Mrs. Hitchcock repeatedly questions Motes, "I guess you're going home" (O'Connor, Three By 5). Motes replies, "Going to the city" He says that he is "Going to Taulkinham. . . ."Don't know nobody there, but I'm going to do some things." And, "You might as well go one place as another" (O'Connor, Three By 4-5). Setting Motes in a transient or "non-place" allows him the possibility to find his true country.

Another opposition set up at the outset is contained in his nihilism. Motes rejects his belief in Christ and perverts the consequence of sin. He protests, "Do you think I believe in Jesus? . . . Well I wouldn't even if He existed. Even if He was on this train" (O'Connor, Three By 7). O'Connor tells us that when he was a boy, "There was

already a deep black wordless conviction in him that the way to avoid Jesus was to avoid sin" (Three By 10). He rejects the "nameless unplaced guilt" left him by his mother, and her fundamental religion. He rejects his grandfather, who he says had for years "ridden over three counties with a Jesus hidden in his head like a stinger" (O'Connor, Three By 10). But the alternative ideas Motes forms are equally desperate and pathetic. He constructs his jesus and his truth in his Church Without Christ:

> 'Well, I preach the Church Without Christ. I'm member and preacher to that church where the blind don't see and the lame don't walk and what's dead stays that way. Ask me about that church and I'll tell you it's the church that the blood of Jesus don't foul with redemption'(O'Connor, Three By 54).

At one point he protests, "I don't need Jesus. . . What do I need with Jesus? I got Leora Watts" (O'Connor, Three By 28). Motes is unable to live with his new constructed beliefs, although paradoxically, he tortures himself, blinds himself and even murders for his beliefs.

The ensuing action of the story is repetitive: Motes struggles to shake off his haunting Christ, meets intermittently with Enoch Emery and enters into detrimental relationships with other religious seekers and pretenders. Each encounter illustrates and underlines his spiritual desperation. What O'Connor is trying to portray through Motes' searching is God's terrible love and how it haunts Motes. This point is best illustrated in the story Sabbath

tells Motes about the woman who killed her baby by strangulation, and then hung it in the chimney. Sabbath says that the mother saw the child's image looking at her through the chimney, concluding that, "Jesus made it beautiful to haunt her" (O'Connor, Three By 26). The oxymoron of beautiful haunting likewise describes Motes' spiritual dilemma. Other evidence comes later in Enoch's awful fascination with a picture of a moose. O'Connor says this about the moose's face: "The look of superiority on this animal's face was so insufferable to Enoch that, if he hadn't been afraid of him, he would have done something about it a long time ago" (Three By 68).

The message coming through in comparing these two passages is that God's love and grace are beautiful. They become haunting for Motes through his guilt in rejecting it. Moreover, for Motes and ourselves, God's love becomes haunting as we remember our unworthiness through original sin. Thus, Motes acts as his own God and punishes himself by walking with rocks in his shoes and tying barbed wire around his chest. He says to the truck driver, "I don't have to run from anything because I don't believe in anything" (O'Connor, Three By 39). Yet his protests are ardent because he knows of Christ's love in his blood, a "knowing" represented by Enoch's knowledge of his wise blood. What Motes feels in his blood is the mystery of redemption. Enoch is incapable of feeling any mystery of life. He is incapable

of perceiving anything beyond that which is physical, sexual or animal. The wise blood is Motes', not Enoch's, and it is wise because it calls him to redemption.

The vehicles used to reinforce the unnaturalness, yet wholly human act of Motes' rejection of God are the shrunken man at the museum and Motes' Essex. Enoch regards the mummy as the "new jesus"; the reader recognizes that there is nothing new or Jesus-like about the mummy. There is nothing sacred about the shrunken man, and nothing enlightening or guiding about Enoch's relationship to it. O'Connor tells us that Enoch

> couldn't understand at all why he had let himself risk his skin for a dead shriveled-up part-nigger dwarf that had never done anything but get himself embalmed and then lain stinking in a museum the rest of his life. It was far beyond his understanding (Three By 90).

The role of the car assumes various symbolic functions in the story. It echoes the coffin imagery of the train berth in the beginning of the story, and then foreshadows the ditch that serves as Motes' coffin at the story's end. The car is also a "place" for Motes. He tells the salesman that the car is his house because he "ain't got any place to be" (O'Connor, Three By 37). The car is the vehicle that allows Motes the freedom to go anywhere. It can "move Motes to the place he wanted to be" (O'Connor, Three By 95). An automobile serves a similar function in O'Connor's "The Life You Save May Be Your Own." Here, Mr.

Shiftlet explains to Mrs. Crater, "The body, lady, is like a house: it don't go anywhere; but the spirit, lady, is like an automobile: always on the move, always. . . " (O'Connor, Good Man[1] 63). Ironically, Motes needs a spiritual journey, not a physical one. Motes conflates religion with his car: "Nobody with a good car needs to be justified" (O'Connor, Three By 58). The car becomes for him his representative of freedom and independence, his acquisition and mobility, and ultimately his spiritual extension.

A related way in which the car symbolizes his spirituality appears in his obsession to buy it. O'Connor tells us, "There was only one thought in his mind: he was going to buy a car. The thought was full grown in his head when he woke up, and he didn't think of anything else" (Three By 34). The events at the dealership emphasize his single-mindedness to the exclusion of reality. His obsession with his car accentuates his religious obsession and, of course, reinforces the tragedy of spiritual destruction when the cop pushes his car over the cliff.

The question raised is, how can Enoch and Motes find fulfillment given their obsessive and perverted spirituality? The "new jesus" mummy is certainly not the answer. Enoch takes action as a means towards his fulfillment. He wants to become somebody important, to be feared by children, but welcomed in Taulkinham. He wants to affect people's lives. He steals the mummy and tries to

blaspheme. But his salvation comes only when he dons the gorilla suit. At this point, O'Connor tells us, "No gorilla in existence. . . was happier at that moment than this one, whose god had finally rewarded it" (Three By 102).

But what god or God rewards Motes? Losing his car and murdering Solace Layfield lead to his ultimate and unavoidable spiritual surrender. He blinds himself with lime and resigns himself to the passivity of Mrs. Flood's porch. Ironically, it is only at this point that Motes, although he doesn't realize it, becomes a true preacher. And Mrs. Flood becomes his disciple. When he is not preaching, she is ready to listen. When he is not leading, she is ready to follow. When she welcomes him into her home, he leaves, and she searches frantically for him. When he is not seeking companionship, she wants to marry him. Even as he lies dead in his bed, she sees life in him. Motes had been unnoticed and not taken seriously all his life. Now, when he gives up fighting for all he desires and believes in, he is rewarded with Mrs. Flood.

Motes' resignation opens the way for his reward, or in O'Connor's terminology, his Redemption. O'Connor explains the ending in a letter to Ben Griffith, on 3 March 1954:

> Let me assure you that no one but a Catholic could have written Wise Blood. . . . And of course no unbeliever or agnostic could have written it because it is entirely Redemption-centered in thought. Not too many people are willing to see this, and perhaps it is hard to see because H. Motes is such an admirable nihilist. His nihilism leads him back to the fact of

> his Redemption, however, which is what he would have liked so much to get away from (Fitzgerald, Habit 69-70).

His physical compensation and enlightenment is Mrs. Flood, the representative of humanness which both Motes and Enoch had yearned for. She is also his salvation, although he dies never knowing it.

We can truly appreciate Motes' desperation by recalling a pertinent reference stated in the Principles. A comparison can be made between the closing spiritual states of Motes and the Taulkinham world, and what the Agrarians saw as a spiritually devoid society. The Agrarians questioned how an industrial and materialistic society can find humane and spiritual fulfillment. One answer they offered was to follow a way of life that invokes "human virtues of a simpler, more elemental, nonacquisitive existence" (Stand xv). The Principles refer to the concept of "genuine Humanism" which the Agrarians claim is rooted in the agrarian life of the older South. As such they warn that we must recover our "native humanism" (Stand xliv). If we don't, the Principles argue, then we cannot "make more than an inconsequential acquaintance with the arts and humanities. . . . Or else the understanding of these arts and humanities will but make [us] the more wretched in [our] own destitution" (Stand xliv). Motes' attraction to his haunting Christ exposes him to what he never consciously

understands as his fulfillment--God and Redemption. But since he is exposed to it, he is more wretched in his knowing. His wise blood is a gift because it allows him this acquaintance. In O'Connor's words, Motes' wise blood allows him to receive grace. In a letter to John Hawkes, on 13 September 1959, O'Connor explains the importance of her Catholicism in writing The Violent Bear It Away and Wise Blood:

> This doubtless comes of a Catholic education and a Catholic sense of history--everything works toward its true end or away from it, everything is ultimately saved or lost. Haze is saved by virtue of having wise blood; it's too wise for him ultimately to deny Christ. Wise blood has to be these people's means of grace--they have no sacraments (Fitzgerald, Habit 350).

Even though Motes knows Christ exists, he futilely fights that knowledge. He despairs in that knowledge--that is, he is wretched in his knowing. Yet, as O'Connor explains, he is ultimately saved by that same knowledge.

What many scholars have referred to as O'Connor's freaks and grotesques are people, as poignantly illustrated in these two novels, who are spiritually unnatural: they are warped souls and desperate seekers. C. Hugh Holman explains that those characters "Living in a world not ordered to an adequate sense of the power and presence of God. . . seek either to deny Him or to pervert Him, and thus they become grotesque and unnatural" (Roots 186). Placed in a debased and unkind setting, these characters engage in equally

warped and grotesque human relations. The result is alienation, desperation and detachment. Grotesquery in O'Connor's stories lies not in physical abberations or freakishness; rather, it consistently takes the form of a pathetic and misguided humanity.

O'Connor also uses grotesquery to point out wrong human relations, or the opposite of what the Agrarians termed as the "right relations of man-to-man." The Agrarians' idea of "genuine Humanism" or "native humanism" stated in the Principles is defined as follows:

> Humanism, properly speaking, is not an abstract system, but a culture, the whole way in which we live, act, think, and feel. It is a kind of imaginatively balanced life lived out in a definite social tradition. And, in the concrete, we believe that this, the genuine humanism, was rooted in the agrarian life of the older South (xliv).

With this definition, we enter again into the problem of sweeping abstraction if we stop in defining humanism as "the whole way in which we live, act, think, and feel." But the Agrarians make it clear that humanism is shaped within a social and cultural tradition. Moreover, they hold that genuine humanism, which they see as rooted in a particular region at a particular time, has since been lost. What the Agrarians seem to be saying here is that as a culture, we engage in human interrelations based on and emerging from a tacitly agreed upon social tradition. As such, any significant change in the culture, and in the long run, the

tradition, causes a modification or change in that culture's interrelations.

The Agrarians, of course, were referring to the effects of industrialism as diminishing the quality of humanism, as compared to what they saw as a more genuine humanism of the Old South. To regain this native humanism, the Agrarians argue, a culture must make changes in its social and economic tradition. The ultimate answer is to return to an agrarian livlihood:

> We cannot recover our native humanism by adopting some standard of taste that is critical enough to question the contemporary arts but not critical enough to question the social and economic life which is their [the older South] ground (Stand xliv).

O'Connor's "Everything That Rises Must Converge" addresses and illustrates the tensions in human relations resulting from an event that changed Southern social culture. The exemplum shows Mrs. Chestny placing her nostalgic and outmoded attitudes, reflecting Old South manners, ahead of basic human consideration. Julian, her son, deludes himself into thinking that his liberal attitude welcomes social change, when in fact, it is only patronization. O'Connor's comment on genuine humanism--we must acknowledge and respect each other as members of the family of man and of God--emerges from these two generational attitudes towards social change.

The inhumanity in this story appears in Mrs.

Chestny's bigotry and Julian's patronizing attitude toward black passengers during a bus ride downtown. O'Connor drew from a landmark social issue at that time, the racial integration of public buses. Julian is accompanying his mother downtown to her YWCA weight reducing class, since "she would not ride the buses by herself at night since they had been integrated" (O'Connor, Three By 271). During the bus ride, the interaction between Mrs. Chestny, Julian and black passengers flesh out prejudicial and conflicting attitudes. The two opposing viewpoints are summed up in this exchange between Mrs. Chestny and her son:

> 'Of course,' she said, 'if you know who you are, you can go anywhere.' She said this every time he took her to the reducing class. 'Most of them in it are not our kind of people,' she said, 'but I can be gracious to anybody. I know who I am.'
>
> 'They don't give a damn for your graciousness,' Julian said savagely. 'Knowing who you are is good for one generation only. You haven't the foggiest idea where you stand now or who you are' (O'Connor, Three By 273).

A favorite line for Mrs. Chestny is "I know who I am." But by the end of the story, the reader sees that both characters are misinformed as to who they think they are. The source of surface valuation, both in what he thinks and what he says in this story, is Julian's perspective. His consciousness is central to the narrative; however, O'Connor makes it clear through direct dialogue and actions not filtered through Julian, that Mrs. Chestny's attitude is equally as important and weighty. The key here (and this is

a typical O'Connor technique) is that attitudinal comments come out of each character's viewpoints, so that their understanding of their own attitudes and each other's attitudes are ambiguous if not inaccurate. This misguided perception forms the basis for misunderstanding each other and the main black passengers, Carver and his mother.

Mrs. Chestny is a native of the Old South. She takes pride in her manners, a kind of pride reflecting an older social code. In this way, she is very much like the Grandmother in "A Good Man Is Hard To Find." She is proud of her lineage, evidenced when she impresses upon Julian, "Your great-grandfather was a former governor of this state. . . . Your grandfather was a prosperous landowner. Your grandmother was a Godhigh." And later, "You remain what you are. . . . Your great-grandfather had a plantation and two hundred slaves" (O'Connor, Three By 273).

She doesn't take social change well and, as a result, longs for the past's manners and codes in which she felt comfortable and knew her place. To her, change is an upheaval of established ways: "With the world in the mess it's in . . . it's a wonder we can enjoy anything. I tell you, the bottom rail is on the top" (O'Connor, Three By 273). She says later, "The world is in a mess everywhere. . . I don't know how we've let it get in this fix" (O'Connor, Three By 276). Mrs. Chestny holds the opinions of a previous generation, what we now recognize as

prejudicial, and is unconcerned with problems of social justice or racial integration. She deludes herself into thinking that she is open-minded. She believes that the blacks were better off when they were slaves, and tells Julian, "They should rise, yes, but on their own side of the fence" (O'Connor, Three By 273). The reader sees that she has no desire to change her attitudes, if they can be changed at all.

Julian is similarly deluded, although he would emphatically disagree. He sincerely believes that "he was free of prejudice and unafraid to face facts" (O'Connor, Three By 277). Moreover, he proceeds from many of the same prejudicial attitudes as his mother. For Julian, however, the issue is less one of class or cultural inferiority; it is more an issue of identity. That is, Julian's attitude fails to acknowledge blacks as people. Instead, he sees the blacks on the bus as instruments of revenge, and the means towards aggravating his mother. O'Connor tells us that Julian "would have liked to teach her a lesson that would last her a while" (Three By 278), and one of the "various unlikely ways" he would teach her that lesson, he imagines, would be to make friends with "some distinguished Negro professor or lawyer and bring him home to spend the evening" (O'Connor, Three By 279). The ultimate offense, Julian thinks, would be to bring home a "beautiful suspiciously Negroid woman" (O'Connor, Three By 279). On the bus, he

takes delight at the changing seating arrangements between the blacks and his mother, and Carver and his mother, erroneously attributing racial factors as the cause.

Julian chooses not to recognize the humanness in his mother in the same way he chooses not to recognize the humanness of the blacks. At the climax of the story, therefore, when Carver's mother slugs Mrs. Chestny with her purse for offering Carver a shiny new penny, Julian sees his mother as deserving: her offering is the ultimate condescension. The reader may be inclined to agree with Julian's position, given Mrs. Chestny's veiled prejudice. But we know by this point in the story that we must question Julian's every judgment: most of the previous actions filtered through his consciousness have proved to be distorted and prejudiced.

To call Mrs. Chestny's offering a condescension ignores her charitableness. The description of Mrs. Chestny's interaction with Carver on the bus is delightful, albeit strictly controlled by Carver's mother. They play "peek-a-boo." Mrs. Chestny says about Carver, "Isn't he cute?" and, "I think he likes me." In Mrs. Chestny's thinking, the penny-giving is a courteous gesture reflecting a code of manners typical in an older South, in Mrs. Chestny's generation. She is an older person offering a small gift (it could have been a piece of gum or candy) to a child.

But her gesture is considered condescending in Julian's eyes (which we have established as distorted), and to a lesser extent, Carver's mother's eyes. After the mother hits Mrs. Chestny with her pocketbook, she says, "He don't take nobody's pennies" (O'Connor, Three By 283). Julian rejoices in her admonition since in his thinking, this has finally taught his mother "the lesson of prejudice" Julian had spoken of teaching her all along. Julian responds:

> He saw no reason to let the lesson she had had go without backing it up with an explanation of its meaning. She might as well be made to understand what had happened to her. 'Don't think that was just an uppity Negro woman,' he said. 'That was the whole colored race which will no longer take your condescending pennies. That was your black double. She can wear the same hat as you, and to be sure,' he added gratuitously (because he thought it was funny), 'it looked better on her than it did on you. What all this means,' he said, 'is that the old world is gone. The old manners are obsolete and your graciousness is not worth a damn' (O'Connor, Three By 284).

As experienced readers of O'Connor's fiction, we cannot accuse Mrs. Chestny of the kind of mindless condescendence that Julian does. We have no evidence--from Mrs. Chestny--at this point in the story that she regards Carver as a "pickaninny" in the same blatant prejudicial spirit as the Grandmother's appellation in "A Good Man is Hard to Find" (O'Connor, Good Man, 12).

Yet, this is not to absolve Mrs. Chestny. She is guilty of racial prejudice, as her comments early in the story evidence. Her old manners that relegate classes to

hierarchal places are obsolete. Condescension disguised as "graciousness" is truly "not worth a damn." Instances of bigoted thinking from a previous generation--"you remain what you are," "blacks were better off when they were slaves," and, "They should rise, yes, but on their own side of the fence"--must be changed, indeed needs to be "slugged" in order to bring about integration and mutual respect. This, perhaps, is the crux of the story, and for me, the more important message.

Our reactions to and judgments of Mrs. Chestny's offering must by necessity be various and complex if we are to understand her character and ourselves in a socially changing world. Mrs. Chestny's actions and Carver's mother's actions show us that racial integration is confrontational. Indeed, human integration is resistive and discordant. But to condemn Mrs. Chestny as Julian does, or choose not see a part of ourselves in her, is missing O'Connor's point. Mrs. Chestny is a fully human character, who, despite her very real old order prejudices and self-delusions, is a generous and thoughtful human being. She is much more human than Julian. The following exchange characterizes their differences:

> 'True culture is in the mind, the mind,' he said, and tapped his head, 'the mind.'
>
> 'It's in the heart,' she said, 'and in how you do things and how you do things is because of who you are' (O'Connor, Three By 275).

Mrs. Chestny may proceed from an obsolete code of manners which recognizes racial distinctions as inferior. In this sense, and this sense only, Julian's scolding after his mother is hit is correct. Neither Mrs. Chestny nor Julian are exemplary characters; Carver assumes this role. But Mrs. Chestny comes closer to genuine humanism because she recognizes the human factor in people. Yet, O'Connor is not saying that we should condone her prejudicial attitude, any more than we should condone Julian's patronization. Rather, we can feel compassion for the person, but must condemn the prejudice. Moreover, we must not tolerate condescension, prejudice or patronization.

The ideal is to proceed from an attitude that regards all humans as members of the family of man. In contrast, Julian's thought, "It confirmed his view that with a few exceptions there was no one worth knowing within a radius of three hundred miles" (O'Connor, Three By 277), shows that his isolation not only cuts himself emotionally free from the others, but it also allows him to feel superior to them.

What converges here is our collective native, genuine humanism. When we come out of ourselves, in other words, move out of our own self-interest, we emerge, merge, and eventually converge as a people. We respect each other simply on the basis of our mutual mortality. On a social level, this story illustrates the conflicts involved in

racial integration. On an individual level, it shows the resistance involved in human integration or aggregate convergence. The story points out that what the Agrarians call the amenities of life reflect more than niceties or manners. Our amenities are one of Tate's cultural forms of society which can promote or destroy humanness. As the Agrarians upheld, these amenities are "social exchanges which reveal and develop sensibility in human affairs" (Stand xliii). In a fragmented or changing society, amenities are vital towards retaining and hopefully fostering genuine humanness.

Thus we find O'Connor's closest affinity with the Agrarians in their most important and most fundamental concern, the influence industry and commerce have on an individual's moral psyche. "The Displaced Person" dramatizes what the Agrarians feared to be the most damaging effects of industrialism--displacement of human values and alienation.

The concept of nature is central to the conflict of industrialism versus agrarianism, both in terms of the natural environment and human nature. Here again, O'Connor shares with the Agrarians a mutual conception of individual and communal naturalness. Industrialism disrupts a natural order, both environmentally and spiritually. It is the social and environmental condition of the times which fosters unnaturalness, illustrated in the abusive family of "The River." There is unnaturalness in social conditions and

the human condition, vividly illustrated in Wise Blood. The consequence of an unnatural order is loss of individuality. On a communal level, the consequences are loss of an agrarian--and a humane--tradition.

There is no compensation for industrialism. That is, we cannot incorporate partial aspects of genuine humanism into a society that worships progress and commerce over human worth. We learn from one tenet of O'Connor's Catholic education, "everything works towards its true end or away from it, everything is ultimately saved or lost" (Fitzgerald, Habit 350), and from Tate's religion of the whole horse theory, that the only answer is to reestablish ourselves and our lives based on a proportionate relationship to the land. Out of this relationship will emerge our natural and intended humanism.

There aren't many wholly natural or exemplary characters in O'Connor's stories, although the children, Bishop, Harry, Norton, Carver, represent innocent ideals of humanity. In this examination, Mrs. Flood's instinctive compassion comes closest to representing O'Connor's model of humane demeanor. The body of her stories illustrates fallen man, fallible and spiritually deficient, and his struggles and interactions with each other, with the aim of defining a spiritual "nobility of unnaturalness."

Notes

1

Another interesting parallel about cars can be made to "The Life You Save May Be Your Own." Tom T. Shiftlet, the "one-arm jackleg" protagonist, complains, as Motes does, about the shoddy way cars are produced. His argument reflects acute Agrarian thinking towards industrial mechanization:

> He had raised the hood and studied the mechanism and he said he could tell that the car had been built in the days when cars were really built. You take now, he said, one man puts in one bolt and another man puts in another bolt and another man puts in another bolt so that it's a man for a bolt. That's why you have to pay so much for a car: you're paying all those men. Now if you didn't have to pay but one man, you could get you a cheaper car and one that had a personal interest taken in it, and it would be a better car (O'Connor, Good Man 60).

For a further analysis of O'Connor's use of the car, see Phil Patton's Open Road: A Celebration of the American Highway (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1986, page 60), and Priscilla Lee Denby's dissertation, The Self Discovered: The Car in American Folklore and Literature (Indiana University, 1981, Indiana: IU, 3707).

SHARED SOUTHERN MINDS: THE SIMILAR PERSPECTIVES OF FLANNERY O'CONNOR AND THE VANDERBILT AGRARIANS

"Everything That Rises Must Converge" illustrates the importance that manners can have in shaping communal interrelations over time. Put in Agrarian terms, the story shows how social amenities have the power to "reveal and develop sensibility in human affairs" in a community of fixed manners and social structure. Mrs. Chestny's gestures to reach out to Carver and his mother, however inappropriate those gestures are, illustrate an individual's response to an overwhelming change in the established social structure, here, to racial integration. As such, "Everything That Rises Must Converge" is a modern short story version of what C. Hugh Holman conceives as an American realistic historical novel of manners. Holman explains that the southern writer of the novel of manners a generation after the Civil War "used the novel of manners as the tool for dealing with the past" (Holman The Immoderate Past 44). The result, according to Holman, is a body of southern writing dramatizing the individual's efforts to adapt to a changing society:

> The result has been an enormously revivifying tension through an examination of the individual's beliefs, commitments, emotions, and ambitions against the pattern of society about him. These novels have tended to present the striving of the self for definition and

> self-realization against the strong sense of order, tradition, decorum, dignity, and grace which has been for a century and a half a truly major element of the southern character (Immoderate Past 44).

Mrs. Chestny's story and "The Artificial Nigger," to cite two of many possible examples, seem to exemplify what Holman is saying here. Both stories illustrate characters' needs for affirmation, and their attempts to retain individual identity--predominantly by looking to past codes--when faced with a major disruptive change in social structure.

Any rethinking of Southern social conditions in times of change must include a reassessment and reaffirmation of the region's relationship to its past--both individually and communally. Indeed, as discussed in chapter one, a region's ancestry makes it unique, and Southern writers have perpetually been inspired by their ancestry, addressing regional attitudes toward history in their writing. Reference to Southern historical positions appears in almost all of the essays in I'll Take My Stand. Tate, in defining provincialism, argues that a region must recognize the past's appropriate place and purpose.

This examination would be incomplete if it did not address such an important theme. Essentially, O'Connor's treatment of the past in the South's present in her fiction is tied up with those concepts we have been referring to as social and cultural re-identification. Before we examine how O'Connor's vision of the past coincides with the Agrarians'

and gets fleshed out in her fiction, we need to review the socio-historical climate of the period in which her vision was nurtured.

The South between the world wars underwent many social changes. Holman describes this period as being in a state of decayed order and lost wealth, with confused community and familial standards, hungering for meaning and needing structure--a condition reminiscent of the South after the Civil War. Holman explains that the southerners looked to the antebellum South for order and values:

> The southerner, predisposed to look backward as a result of his concern with the past, has tended to impose a desire for a social structure that reflects moral principles and he has tried to see in the past of his region at least the shadowy outlines of a viable and admirable moral-social world (Roots 181).

The Agrarians likewise looked backwards for values. Paul K. Conkin explains that the Agrarians looked "to find redemptive values somewhere in their southern heritage" in order to separate the South from national industrial and materialistic identification (The Southern Agrarians 172). Looking to the past for moral guidance in the face of social upheaval is a descriptor of southern people, and a perpetual theme in southern writing. One reason, Donald Davidson explains, is that the South's

> people share a common past, which they are not likely to forget; for aside from having Civil War battlefields at their doorsteps, the Southern people have long

> cultivated a historical consciousness that permeates manners, localities, institutions, the very words and cadence of social intercourse ("A Mirror for Artists" in Stand 53).

The important question for scholars, and one we must ask in this examination of O'Connor's writing, is, has the past been a fruitful place in providing the necessary answers? Posed another way for the purposes of this discussion, if existing social values are confused and ambiguous, where does a community find redemptive or replacement values? Broadly, the answers for the Agrarians (as this examination has illustrated) are rooted in the essential, elemental and native humanism of the past. The key lies, as the Agrarians state and O'Connor illustrates, in a people's interpretation and understanding of the past; that is, how we remember and employ the past in our present and future.

We have seen a partially positive example of employing benevolent values of the Old South in a transitional present South in Mrs. Chestny. Two other O'Connor characters, however, Tanner in "Judgement Day" and General George Poker Sash in "A Late Encounter with the Enemy," dramatize ways in which remembering the past unrealistically leads to delusory living in the present. Briefly, Tanner, like Mrs. Chestny, imposes his ingrained Georgia backwoods opinions to New York City life. Refusing to adapt to the reality of his present, he retreats to an illusionary world of a previous time and place. George Poker

Sash likewise retreats into his past, back to a ceremony in which he received his general's uniform. He prefers to revel in his rendition of the ceremony to avoid facing its actuality, or the present events of his granddaughter's commencement. Both Tanner and Poker Sash die without acknowledging the reality and relevant importance of their pasts.

T. C. Tanner in "Judgement Day" is literally a displaced person: he feels imprisoned in his daughter's apartment in New York City and wants desperately to return to and die in his hometown of Corinth, Georgia. Like Mrs. Chestny, Tanner carries a set of values and ideas about the black race from his friendship with "the Negro Parrum Coleman," and his association with the black doctor whose land he was squatting on in Corinth. Also like Mrs. Chestny, Tanner misappropriately applies those values to the black tenants in the New York apartment.

But unlike Mrs. Chestny, Tanner's intentions are mean-spirited. He ignores his daughter's warnings: "Don't you go over there trying to get friendly with him. They ain't the same around here and I don't want any trouble with niggers, you hear me?" (O'Connor, Three By 454). To taunt her, he takes great interest in the black neighbors and makes overtures to the actor. But these overtures are dissimilar in spirit to Mrs. Chestny's. In other words, Tanner is not proceeding from childlike morality. The

following passage characterizes Tanner's tenor in dealing with the actor:

> 'A nigger!' he said in a gleeful voice. 'A South Alabama nigger if I ever saw one. And got him this high-yeller, high-stepping woman with red hair and they two are going to live next door to you!' He slapped his knee. 'Yes siree!' he said. 'Damn if they ain't!' It was the first time since coming up here that he had had occasion to laugh (O'Connor, Three By 454).

The laughter we hear in this passage is not Tanner's fond reminiscence of his long-standing friendship with Parrum Coleman. Neither is it Tanner's happiness at the prospect for comradery. We hear, as the subsequent dialogue bears out, a childish (not childlike) glee and demeaning gaming with the actor as a black--not as a human being. A Northern "nigger" is an attraction or a curiosity for Tanner. This is the attitude Tanner proceeds from in his comments and gestures, an attitude he never questions.

In addition, Tanner disregards the black tenants' individuality. He assumes the black man in the adjoining apartment is "A South Alabama nigger" and calls him "Preacher" because, Tanner thought, "It had been his experience that if a Negro tended to be sullen, this title usually cleared up his expression" (O'Connor, Three By 455). The black man counters crossly, "I'm not from South Alabama. . . I'm from New York City. And I'm not no preacher! I'm an actor" (O'Connor, Three By 455).

Tanner is obstinate in his misconceptions and

completely ignores the Negro's corrections. He is still calling the actor "preacher" in his last breath. He is similarly bullheaded in his misconceptions of New York, and in his glorification of the South. These attitudes form the focal point of the story. Tanner's refusal to face the reality of his relocation leads him to contrive a scenario in which he is sent in a boxcar back to Corinth and is found by Parrum. Tanner writes this note and pins it to his pocket:

> IF FOUND DEAD SHIP EXPRESS COLLECT TO COLEMAN PARRUM, CORINTH, GEORGIA. . . . COLEMAN SELL MY BELONGINGS AND PAY THE FREIGHT ON ME & THE UNDERTAKER. ANYTHING LEFT OVER YOU CAN KEEP. YOURS TRULY T. C. TANNER. P.S. STAY WHERE YOU ARE. DON'T LET THEM TALK YOU INTO COMING UP HERE. IT'S NO KIND OF PLACE (O'Connor, Three By 443).

In Tanner's scenario, Parrum and Hooten find him in the box, and as they open the lid, Tanner jumps up and shouts, "Judgement Day!' Judgement Day! he cried. Don't you two fools know it's Judgement Day?" (O'Connor, Three By 457). In the process of carrying out this illusion, Tanner dies on the stair rail. What is foremost to Tanner is making his daughter conform to his determination to be buried in the South, and in the process, take revenge against her for bringing him to New York. The South, to Tanner, is his heaven. He says to himself, "During the night, the train would start South, and the next day or the morning after, dead or alive, he would be home. Dead or alive. It was being there that mattered; the dead or alive did not" (O'Connor,

Three By 444). Tanner envisions his judgment day as occurring when he returns to his final home--Corinth--with Parrum and Hooten as his judges.

Another way of understanding Tanner's pride is by comparing him to another displaced father, Old Dudley, in O'Connor's first published work (1946), "The Geranium." Indeed, the plot and characterization in this story are restricted versions of "Judgement Day." Old Dudley, in a moment of weakness, makes an unfortunate decision to leave his Georgia home and live with his daughter in an apartment in New York City. Like "Judgement Day," the story's events are narrated through the father's consciousness, with most of his perceptions related through flashbacks. What Old Dudley sees in his apartment setting, he equates and compares to what he remembers seeing in Georgia. His perception of the geranium exemplifies this perception:

> He didn't like flowers, but the geranium didn't look like a flower. It looked like the sick Grisby boy at home [he had polio] and it was the color of the drapes the old ladies had in the parlor and the paper bow on it looked like one behind Lutish's [Mrs. Carson "back home" (3)] uniform she wore on Sundays (O'Connor, Complete Stories 9).

Dudley thinks, "There were plenty of geraniums at home, better-looking geraniums. Ours are sho nuff geraniums, Old Dudley thought, not any er this pale pink business with green, paper bows" (O'Connor, Complete Stories 3).

Moreover, Dudley, like Tanner, is anachronistic in

his moral vision, specifically in his opinion of blacks. He mistakenly thinks that his Negro neighbor is a servant. When Dudley learns that the man is a tenant, he chastises his daughter:

> 'You ain't been raised that way!' he's said thundery-like. 'You ain't been raised to live tight with niggers that think they're just as good as you, and you think I'd go messin' around with one er that kind! If you think I want anything to do with them, you're crazy' (O'Connor, Complete Stories 9).

The consequence of his pride and bigotry, as we have seen patterned in O'Connor's stories, is alienation.

It is the black tenant who assists Dudley when he is disoriented and falls in the stairwell. Dudley is speechless and shocked as the black man holds out his hand for Dudley to grasp and supports him on each step up to his apartment. Sitting back in his chair, Dudley responds,

> His throat was going to pop on account of a nigger--a damn nigger that patted him on the back and called him 'old timer.' Him that knew such as that couldn't be. Him that had come from a good place. A good place. A place where such as that couldn't be (O'Connor, Complete Stories 13).

The blow to Dudley of having a "nigger" help him, moreover, of having to rely on a "nigger" to help him is almost too much for him.

But there is a secondary factor at work here. Just as Dudley has been relating what he sees in the present to events and people in his hometown in Georgia, he is now,

perhaps unconsciously, equating the black tenant with Rabie, "a light-footed nigger," and his hunting and fishing partner. Dudley believes that everything at home was "better." But one thing, of all things, the black tenant, may actually be similar. Significantly, the tenant talks of hunting--"I went deer hunting once. I believe we used a Dodson .38 to get those deer. What do you use?" (O'Connor, Complete Stories 12)--during the stairwell ordeal. Dudley is shocked by his realization, although not admission, that this northern Negro may actually be like Rabie.

Dudley doesn't allow himself this realization, however. In other words, his moral vision doesn't change, and he sacrifices a potential friendship. He prefers to be alone rather than "go messin' around with one er that kind." Dudley cannot realize or accept his circumstances. He cannot accept his daughter's love and concern for him (he says "she was doing her duty"); he cannot accept the Negro's kindness; he cannot accept the inevitability of his present life. Symbolized in the smashed geranium "at the bottom of the alley with its roots in the air" (O'Connor, Complete Stories 14) is Dudley paralyzed by his pride and self-imposed alienation.

O'Connor illustrates in "The Geranium" and "Judgement Day" the consequences of debilitating pride, and the foolishness in placing undue emphasis on earthly time and place. A complementary theme is the irrelevance of

regional and prejudicial attitudes towards man, seen in light of all mankind. The narration supports these two ideas of inappropriateness as most of both stories are told through the fathers' perceptions, flashbacks and illusions. Theme and narrative work together to illustrate a nonconducive remembrance, one that regards and judges present events through remembrances of the past, and one that has exaggerated the importance of the past in the present.

Yet, O'Connor is not saying that we are foolish to savor or take pride in our homes or regions. Neither are the stories advocating an abandonment or an entire forgetting of the past. The fondness both men feel (and we feel) when they speak of their "nigger" friends is genuine, and their separation from them is pitiable. Both daughters' rudeness and patronization, especially in "Judgement Day," likewise evoke our sympathy for the fathers and validate their feelings of alienation. The two apartment settings are not home to the fathers, either in locale or in familial love. Tanner's dire longing to return home to his friends, poignantly reiterated in his final illusion when he misidentifying the actor with Coleman, demands our compassion. Indeed, we want to help him when he is hanging on the stair rail asking for help--"Hep me up, Preacher. I'm on my way home!" (O'Connor, Three By 459)--and condemn the actor for abusing him instead of helping him. Finally, the

tears both men shed as they realize the inescapability of their situation likewise warrant our compassion.

But our compassion cannot overshadow and condone the actuality of the fathers' situations: both men have made the choice to leave their southern homes, and as a result of their inability to adapt, have defined themselves as trapped. Dudley's momentary decision to move is expressed simply: "There was a thing inside him that had wanted to see New York" (O'Connor, Complete Stories 4). Tanner's pride results in his entrapment as he chooses not to work for his part-black landlord: "I don't have to work for you. . . . The government ain't got around yet to forcing the white folks to work for the colored" (O'Connor, Three By 451). And, "I got a daughter in the north. . . . I don't have to work for you." Tanner may be less able to return home than Dudley. But Tanner's wrongness is that he bides his time, in addition to retreating into his illusions and reminiscences, by taunting his daughter and gaming with the actor. Finally, both fathers' are bigoted and egotistic in not accepting their daughters' attitudes towards blacks: "you ain't been raised that way."

The chief consequence illustrated here is Tanner's and Dudley's persistence and extreme pride in hanging onto a notion and a moral outlook of a region and a previous time to the point where it interferes with and precludes their perceptions of present reality. As such, both characters die

in a state of chilling alienation.

In O'Connor's Catholicism, the principal wrongness in these stories is both fathers' obsession with corporal life, and their physical concerns with region, and for Tanner, burial place. They give these temporal elements of earthly life more importance than God intends. Moreover, Tanner's delusionary judgment day takes place on earth. The problem here again is a sense of vision. We should measure the importance of our earthly life--including elements of time, space and physicality--in relation to the larger context, which for O'Connor is the afterlife. In secular and Agrarian thinking, our interpretation of the past and our opinions about humankind should also be grounded in a larger context. For Tate and Ransom, the larger context is a world society consisting of those forms essential to constituting the humanity of life, in the past, present and future (this idea will be elaborated upon later).

"A Late Encounter with the Enemy" more vividly portrays an obsessive and embellished view of the past, here, an illusionary interpretation of a single event. General George Poker Sash chooses to reminisce in his notoriety at a theatre premiere in Atlanta twelve years ago rather than to face an uninteresting present. O'Connor illustrates in the General's character the ramifications of nostalgia, as Ransom believes has the power to disguise, retard and even replace the true and essential importance of

our lives.

Both General George Poker Sash, one hundred and four years old, and his sixty-two year old granddaughter, Sally Poker Sash, hold illusionary memories of the past. O'Connor tells us that General Poker Sash was probably a foot soldier in the Civil War, but "he didn't remember that war at all" (O'Connor, Good Man 157). Neither does he remember having a son (just as grandfather Fortune cannot remember having a wife). General Poker Sash chooses not to remember the past, as O'Connor tells us: "He didn't have any use for history because he never expected to meet it again" (Good Man 157), and, "What happened then wasn't anything to a man living now and he was living now" (Good Man 165). The present and future, in the General's thinking, were relative and insignificant to one particular event: when he received the general's uniform at a premiere opening in Atlanta. At that time, he had ridden in uniform, mounted on a horse, on a float "surrounded by beautiful guls" (O'Connor, Good Man 157). Since then, he has revelled in the celebrity, glamour and distinction of that event.

Sally Poker Sash likewise holds onto memories of the past, but for different reasons. She glorifies those past principles which she believes are nonexistent in the present. She is about to graduate from college, after twenty years of summer school, with a B. S. degree in education. Sally

> wanted the General at her graduation because she wanted to show what she stood for, or, as she said, 'what all was behind her,' and was not behind them. This them was not anybody in particular. It was just all the upstarts who had turned the world on its head and unsettled the ways of decent living (O'Connor, Good Man 156).

Sally Poker Sash holds onto her definition of past traditional values as she remembers them. What is "behind her" is a societal code fostering "ways of decent living," a code she sees herself as a product of, and believes is superior to that of the present generation. She also believes that her grandfather symbolizes that code:

> She meant to stand on that platform in August with the General sitting in his wheel chair on the stage behind her and she meant to hold her head very high as if she were saying, 'See him! See him! My kin, all you upstarts! Glorious upright old man standing for the old traditions! Dignity! Honor! Courage! See him!' (O'Connor, Good Man 156).

Her grandfather, in her thinking, is a living representative of the true and rightful system of manners. This retributive sentiment has more meaning for her than her own academic achievements. She defines her importance here, not on her academic achievements in receiving the degree, but on her own and her grandfather's cultural ancestry. O'Connor accentuates her vicarious and misplaced pride by providing this background information for Sally:

> She had been going to summer school every year for the past twenty because when she started teaching, there were no such things as degrees. In those times, she said, everything was normal but nothing had been normal

since she was sixteen. . . (Good Man 156).

Sally Poker Sash appraises her life, here, her commencement, based on her inflated and exalted remembrance of a sociality when she was sixteen.

General Poker Sash agrees to be the center stage representative of dignity, honor and courage, although he is actually uninterested in his granddaughter's graduation and would much rather be focal on a parade float. The climax of the action comes when General Sash dies on stage at the same time Sally Poker Sash receives her scroll. The actions preceding his death culminate to demonstrate O'Connor's temporal message.

Significantly, the commencement speaker addresses a widely held southern attitude about history: "If we forget our past, . . . we won't remember our future and it will be as well for we won't have one" (O'Connor, Good Man 165-166). The General tries to avoid this message by retreating into his memory, trying to picture himself on the float moving slowly through downtown Atlanta. O'Connor tells us that he is disinterested in the speaker's words because "The past and the future were the same thing to him, one forgotten and the other not remembered; he had no more notion of dying than a cat" (Good Man 161). Not only has he forgotten his real past, he doggedly fights to circumvent it. During the speaker's address and just before the General dies, the

black procession of graduates become for him a black procession of his past, to which he responds,

> As the music swelled toward him, the entire past opened up on him out of nowhere and he felt his body riddled in a hundred places with sharp stabs of pain and he fell down, returning a curse for every hit. . . . then a succession of places. . . rushed at him as if the past were the only future now and he had to endure it. Then suddenly he saw that the black procession was almost on him. He recognized it, for it had been dogging all his days. He made such a desperate effort to see over it and find out what comes after the past that his hand clenched the sword until the blade touched bone (O'Connor, Good Man 167).

The general dies while desperately trying to see over "his past" to find out what comes after the past.

Our ability to know the future is conditioned by our ability to remember the past. The problem is that how we remember the past or past events, as illustrated in this story, is often how we want to remember them--not how they actually occurred. The General has chosen to remember a false and imperialized past, and he dies before the memory of his true past can lead him to a knowledge of the future. Sally Poker Sash likewise remembers a false past, selectively esteeming those elements of history that confirm her superior status and designates them as the only true past. Both Sashes, like Tanner, Dudley, and even grandfather Fortune, refuse to relinquish their notions of the past--and by extension, their notions of nature--notions that are delusionary and self-serving. Such an outlook inhibits any constructive living in the present and future. This is

O'Connor's secular message. It is also an Agrarian one.

Her Catholic message is that the events of our lifetime are properly understood only when we see them in relation to the Divine scheme. Since life is a preparation for death, we are misguided and deluded if we over-exaggerate the importance of our life's events. To live while attempting only to preserve the great moments of the past is to abandon all hope for the future. Finally, those who accept a false past as true, and then attempt to make its preservation the focus of their lives, have little chance of finding a spiritually satisfying present life or afterlife.

Both Tanner and the Poker Sashes illustrate the ramifications and destructive nature of nostalgia as Ransom defines it in "Reconstructed But Unregenerate". He compares the English attitude of preserving the essentials of the past in order to insure the present and future, to the "peculiar" American notion of nostalgia:

> Memories of the past are attended with a certain pain called nostalgia. . . . Nostalgia is a kind of growing-pain, psychically speaking. It occurs to our sorrow when we have decided that it is time for us, marching to some magnificent destiny, to abandon an old home, an old provincial setting, or an old way of living to which we have become habituated. It is the complaint of human nature in its vegetative aspect, when it is plucked up by the roots from the place of its origin and transplanted in foreign soil, or even left dangling in the air. And it must be nothing else but nostalgia, the instinctive objection to being transplanted, that chiefly prevents the deracination of human communities and their complete geographical dispersion as the casualties of an insatiable wanderlust

(Stand 6).

What Ransom is saying is that Americans, unlike the English, attach a "peculiar" sentiment or affection to their memories of objects and places. His comparison shows that our peculiar sentiment is self-serving, personal and individual, caught up in pride and tenacity, in the way Tanner and the Poker Sashes show us. The sorrow comes when there is a severing of the past in the present, or, Ransom says, an abandonment of "living to which we have become habituated." Naturally we will feel a sense of loss and sorrow since it is in the personal nature of nostalgia to remember things the way we want to remember them. That is, we interpret and understand our memories for ourselves, and habituate ourselves in an unreal complacency and security in those interpretations.

Referring to the English as a model, Ransom explains that the most fruitful way to regard the past is twofold: to see its objective factuality and regard its importance communally:

> The human life of English provinces long ago came to terms with nature, fixed its roots somewhere in the spaces between the rocks and in the shade of the trees, founded its comfortable institutions, secured its modest prosperity--and then willed the whole perpetuity to the generations which should come after, in the ingenuous confidence that it would afford them all the essential human satisfactions. For it is the character of a seasoned provincial life that it is realistic, or successfully adapted to its natural environment, and that as a consequence it is stable, or hereditable (Stand 5).

A "seasoned provincial life" is realistic and sees the actuality of the past, and those elements in the past which afford "all the essential human satisfaction" for future generations. It places its affections on those natural objects and institutions, and on a relative prosperity that will engender and perpetuate generations of satisfaction. It is a practical process of interpreting the past, only secondarily, if at all, attended with personal affections. As a result, there is no sense of growing-pain or sorrow. Nostalgia defined this way engenders nothing, as O'Connor's two stories show. A region's and a people's realistic and authentic remembrance of the past engenders a fruitful present and remembering for the future.

But what we surrender in perpetuating a wholly objective vision of the past is, as Ransom says, that part of nostalgia which "prevents the deracination of human communities." In this sense, nostalgia serves as a positive or corrective value--a value that is vitally useful and much more conducive than a "peculiar" personal affection. A people's ideal attitude towards the past, Ransom seems to be saying, fosters those actual elements of history which insure primary human satisfactions generationally and draw on those instinctive desires to associate communally.

Rarely have our great writers, in the process of

nurturing their talents, been in perfect harmony with their age and homeland, or have felt in full communion with their society. Occasionally, through writing about individuals overcoming obstacles within their community, does a writer come to terms with her own feelings of incongruity. This examination has shown how one fiction writer from Milledgeville, and twelve scholars from Vanderbilt have written about this problem. O'Connor and the Agrarians recognized similar social problems, sought similar means in grappling with them, and came to many of the same resolutions. Perhaps it is because, as Lewis A. Lawson says, they shared a culture and a time period. Lawson says that for the southerner, "Shared history could provide ready reference points for private experience" (Another Generation 16). Granted, a shared history can bring about shared private experience and similar recognition of problems. But there is more to their relationship. O'Connor and the Agrarians are like-minded in a vital way: both recognized an impending power operating within their region and period that had the potential to threaten moral and human values.

O'Connor shared Tate's conception of the Southern Renascence period. From O'Connor's depictions, and the convictions put forth in I'll Take My Stand, we know that the Southern people in the period between the two world wars experienced the struggles for individuality inherent in social transition. Southerners assumed first and foremost an

aggressive regionalism, a defensive posture in the face of northern industrialism. The South was largely agricultural, distrusting a mode of economic sustenance based on mechanization, materialism, commercialism, and the cultural values that supported it. The South was poverty stricken and proud, depleted in both natural and human resources. The Southern people were displaced: individualism was forfeited to collectivism and automation; humane values were supplanted; interrelationships were dissociated; communities were desperately seeking a viable social and moral order.

O'Connor dramatizes these consequences inherent in a changing social order through her characters' struggles to define their own roles and voices. She saw people like Tarwater, threatened by what they don't know and can't understand, retreating to the security of their ignorance and naivete. She saw people like Motes, fighting to resist impending, seemingly ubiquitous change, a change characterized by "the machines" silently but steadily eating the earth in "A View of the Woods." She saw "Tanners" and "Mrs. Chestnys," clutching onto an unfruitful past in search of familiar modes of behavior. She saw people like Mrs. Shortley, Mrs. McIntyre and Mrs. Turpin, desperately trying to cover up their insecurities about changing social class rules with self-righteousness. Finally, she saw people like Sally Poker Sash who preferred to remember a nostalgic and mythic rendition of a previous social code in order to avoid

coping with the present. These O'Connor characters reflect a people "living with a code that was no longer applicable, which meant a detachment from reality and loss of vitality" (Holman Roots 180). She shows us a people whose coping actions are procrastinating and yield no satisfactory meaning.

Perhaps Andrew Lytle best describes O'Connor's South and her people in what he saw at the time as "the great drain"--a depletion of humanity at the hands of industrialism ("The Hind Tit" Stand 235-236). The Agrarians witnessed a cheapening of humanity under an industrial system. O'Connor's desperate religious seekers characterize what the Agrarians noticed as "the poverty of the contemporary spirit" (Stand xliii), the resultant effects of a depleted and spiritually deficient humanity. Both O'Connor and the Agrarians acknowledge cultural and regional re-identification as the optimal solution.

The South in the thirties and forties was called to redefine its cultural and national identity, and its relationship to its heritage. This call to redefinition was in response to national social change. "A Statement of Principles" explains the predicament in this way:

> The younger Southerners, who are being converted frequently to the industrial gospel, must come back to the support of the Southern tradition. They must be persuaded to look very critically at the advantages of becoming a 'new South' (Stand xxxviii-xxxix).

Most important, the South had to affirm its redemptive values and find a place for them in its present.

In the process of redefinition, southern people had to first examine themselves; this conviction forms the core of the Agrarian essays and is O'Connor's chief thematic concern. Basically, the South's people had to continually review their purpose and condition--and to view themselves provincially. That is, the South had to see itself in relation to a larger context, a context larger than regional, larger than national. It had to measure its societal values and worth in relation to a world society, as Tate says, or in O'Connor's Catholicism, to the family of God. Violence forces us, individually and communally, out of our complacency, and allows us to objectively judge the morality of our actions and the worthiness of our values. Self-checking subsequently makes us responsible to the larger society and God. It also makes us consider what individual freedoms and humanities become lost in the process of choosing a new social order. This is not to say that the South must sacrifice its identity, individuality or regionalism. Neither O'Connor nor the Agrarians would advocate such an idea. But they do advocate defining regionalism in proportion to a larger context. Like Mrs. Chestny, we can acknowledge individualism, racial and social class systems as created by man, but recognize that we are part of one nation, one family of God. As we converge and

join as a people, as a world society, all human distinctions become blurred.

And of course, religion is the steadfast manifestation of the ultimate larger context, particularly for O'Connor. Tate individually acknowledged the influence of religion, arguing that "Humanism is not enough":

> We have seen the assumptions of the humanists. . . . humanism is not enough, and that if the values for which the humanist pleads are to be made rational, a universal scheme of reference is necessary. There should be a living center of action and judgment, such as we find in the great religions, which in turn grew out of this center . . . . The religious unity of intellect and emotion, of reason and instinct, is the sole technique for the realization of values ("Memoirs and Opinions" Essays 190-191).

Measuring one's importance against a "universal scheme of reference" fosters a genuine humanism and a spiritual unity. In addition, O'Connor and Tate agree that proper living is a matter of the intelligence and the will.

These requirements for humanitarian communal living emerged in response to a striving culture and region at the time O'Connor was writing. As such, they offer a different framework in which to read her fiction. Through her fiction, we better understand not only how O'Connor reacted to her changing South, but also how her people reacted--their struggles and efforts to find resolutions. These are the advantages of reading her fiction in the parameters of a historical and cultural context.

The nature of that context is exemplified in the

Vanderbilt Agrarian ideologies. It would be short-sighted to limit the extent of Agrarian influence in O'Connor's fiction by connecting her solely to the Vanderbilt literary endeavor of the twenties and thirties. Agrarianism was more than that, and its manifestation in O'Connor's fiction is much more complex. The relationship goes beyond her association with prominent Agrarian leaders, and in turn their recognition of Agrarian philosophy in her fiction. It is more than finding suggestions, and at times direct echoes of Agrarian thought. Certainly O'Connor was, as Melvin Friedman claims, "rural Southerner, Agrarian-nurtured." She shared a similar frame of mind with the Agrarians, a Southern frame of mind, not only in the sense of a shared historical experience, but also in the sense that these "real minds" accurately understood the South she perceived. She grappled with many of the same social and religious concerns the Agrarians addressed, and came to many of their same conclusions. Her fiction is invigorated by Southern Agrarian philosophy and reading her stories and novels with the texts of the Agrarians reveals meanings and connections that enrich both.

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APPROVAL SHEET

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

July 17, 1989
Date

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