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From the Country to the City: Southern Identity in the Stories of Taylor and O'Connor

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FROM THE COUNTRY TO THE CITY:
SOUTHERN IDENTITY IN THE STORIES OF TAYLOR AND O'CONNOR

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of English
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Catherine Anne Clark

1986
APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Catherine Anne Clark

Approved, August 1986

Susan Donaldson
Walter Wenska
John Conlee
DEDICATION

To my mother and father who have taught me the most important of my lessons

"And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing." —I Corinthians 13:2
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to show how Peter Taylor and Flannery O'Connor create Southern literature that is consistent with their literary predecessors, the Agrarians, and yet transcends the works of the Southern Renaissance. These two writers reject the literal, political, and geographical definition of the Southern identity promoted by the Agrarians and instead define the Southern identity as a combination of both regional and individual traits, of history and change.

The stories of O'Connor and Taylor reflect the modern Southerner in transition from the country to the city and illustrate how the characters can maintain their Southern identities in either setting. The writers focus upon two characteristics of the traditional Southern identity that they find to be enduring as modes of perception in the changing South: the preoccupation with history and change and the awareness of man's imperfection and the mystery of nature.

By using urban settings Taylor and O'Connor show that modernization and change are not necessarily destructive of the Southern identity and that, in fact, the city offers the modern Southerner more freedom for personal choice and self-definition. The two authors essentially break new ground for Southern literature by proving that Southern writers need not confine their stories to the mourning of the dead Old South but can create distinctively Southern literature by presenting the modern Southerner in the urban South.
FROM THE COUNTRY TO THE CITY:

SOUTHERN IDENTITY IN THE STORIES OF TAYLOR AND O'CONNOR
INTRODUCTION

As successors to the Southern Renaissance writers and the Agrarians in particular, Flannery O'Connor and Peter Taylor inherited a "traditional" view of the Southern identity but do not fully accept that view. Unlike the Agrarians, twelve Southern writers who wrote *I'll Take My Stand* (1930), Taylor and O'Connor reject the idea that the Southern identity is wholly regional, an identity based upon place of birth and regional history and culture alone. Instead, O'Connor and Taylor accept the enduring qualities of the traditional Southern identity while refusing the deterministic perspective of their literary predecessors. The Agrarians insisted that Southerners can only maintain their Southernness when in the rural South and that the preservation of their special regional identities is threatened by forces beyond their control such as industrialization. Taylor and O'Connor, on the other hand, view the modern Southerner as one who inherits a regional identity, who exhibits or represses that identity according to individual choice, and who by choice can combine the regional identity with an individual identity to achieve a
Southern identity that can be personally maintained whether in the country or the city.

By focusing upon modern Southern characters in transition from the country settings to the city settings, O'Connor and Taylor redefine the Southern identity as one that can change with the times and still remain the same in many ways. O'Connor writes in The Habit of Being that a shift to the city settings as backgrounds for the Southern identity is inevitable:

I don't think I'll be able to keep out of the city and stick to what you call the pure whiskey and coffin and Bible land. The fact is that all the inhabitants of the coffin and Bible land have left it and are in the city. To write about Haze and Tarwater, that's where you have to go.1

In order to reflect the changing Southern society from one that is rural to one that is increasingly urban, O'Connor includes in her works city settings which offer a variety of experience and serve as places for self-exploration. She contrasts these city settings with the isolated, decaying rural settings in her novels Wise Blood and The Violent Bear It Away.

Likewise, Taylor acknowledges the migration of Southerners from the country to the city in his comments upon his short story collection, The Widows of Thornton:

"My idea . . . was to write a group of stories dealing with the histories of four or five families from a country town [Thornton, Tennessee] who have migrated, during a period of twenty-five years, to various cities of the South and Midwest. . . . I wanted to present
these families—both Negro and white—living a modern urban life while continuing to be aware of their old identities and relationships. I wanted to give the reader the impression that every character carried in his head a map of that simple country town while going about his life in the complex city . . . to show, in fact, how old patterns, for good or bad, continued to dominate many aspects of these people's lives.

In Taylor's stories the characters who move to the city can maintain an awareness of the past and their regional culture and balance this awareness with an acceptance of the present and progress. Taylor and O'Connor's positive attitudes toward the Southerner in the city contrast sharply with the antagonism toward urbanization prevalent among their Southern literary predecessors, the Agrarians of the Southern Renaissance.

The Southern Literary Renaissance, according to Lewis Simpson, was "a flowering of literature in fiction and criticism, and to a somewhat lesser extent in poetry," in which "the Southern literary mind which had once thought to symbolize its opposition to modernity in an image of pastoral permanence now began to seek to symbolize this antagonism in an image of a recovery . . . of memory and history." While several critics, including Simpson, Daniel Singal, Louis Rubin, Jr., and Thomas Young, agree that the Southern Renaissance began in the aftermath of the First World War in approximately the year 1920, a debate continues as to whether or not the Renaissance ended in the 1950's when the emphasis of
Southern literature shifted from "a new literary covenant with the past" to "one with the self on terms generally defined as existential."  

However, most critics seem to agree that during the period between 1920 and 1950 Southern literature blossomed and was characterized by elements recognized by Cleanth Brooks in "The Southern Renascence: A Traditionalist View" and summarized by Young in The History of Southern Literature:

- a feeling for the concrete and the specific, an awareness of conflict, a sense of community and of religious wholeness, a belief in human imperfection, and a genuine and never wavering disbelief in perfection ever developing as a result of human effort and planning; a deep-seated sense of the tragic, and a conviction that nature is mysterious and contingent. Any attempt to harness nature and make it a servant of man will always be doomed to failure.

There are characteristics not only of the Southern Renascence literature but also of the Southern identity as defined by the Agrarians, such writers as Donald Davidson, Allen Tate, and John Crowe Ransom. The writings of O'Connor and Taylor reflect the influence of this preceding generation of writers. They are linked closely to the Agrarians, exhibiting a similar respect for the traditional Southern society and Southern identity as defined by the Agrarians and yet departing from Agrarian thought by accepting modernization through their uses of urban settings.
The Agrarians were a group of "Twelve Southerners" who contributed essays to a book entitled *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition*, which "vehemently attacked the New South shibboleths of national reconciliation, industrialism, and the modernization of southern society, and called instead for the supremacy of tradition, provincialism, and a life close to the soil." The core of the Agrarians were four poets who were associated with Vanderbilt University in Nashville at different times and who there published a poetry magazine, *The Fugitive*, between 1922 and 1925. These "Fugitive" poets were John Crowe Ransom, Donald Davidson, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren. Other faculty members at Vanderbilt were part of the Agrarian group, including biographer of *Augustus Baldwin Longstreet* John Donald Wade, historian Frank Owsley, psychologist Lyle Lanier, and Herman Clarence Nixon, who left Vanderbilt to teach political science at Tulane University.

Arkansas poet John Gould Fletcher, actor-playwright Andrew Nelson Lytle, journalist and former Vanderbilt student Henry Blue Klein, and accomplished playwright, novelist, and critic Stark Young completed the group of "Twelve Southerners."

*I'll Take My Stand* is a defense of the South written in response to critics of the South such as H. L. Mencken and the reporters covering the 1925 trial of
John T. Scopes in Dayton, Tennessee—critics who wrote "scathing descriptions of the ignorance, illogic, and barbarity of the Tennessee fundamentalists." Donald Davidson in *Southern Writers in the Modern World* views *I'll Take My Stand* as a counterattack against assaults upon the South. For example, Mencken's 1917 article dubs the South the "Sahara of the Bozart" in which the critic claimed that "it would be impossible in all history to match so complete a drying-up of a civilization." According to Davidson, that counterattack in *I'll Take My Stand* was two-fold:

. . . first, recognizing the peculiar and rather isolated position of the South in the American establishment, we had to disentangle the true and lasting features of the Southern tradition from the false, the impermanent, the merely pretentious, and so restore to Southern thought an image of the South that would be entirely relevant and valid, and defensible in modern terms. Second, it was no less obligatory that this image have relevance and attraction beyond the borders of the South. For the cause was general. The South needed the respect and understanding of all with whom we might have common ground . . .

This "cause," Davidson continues, is stated briefly in Ransom's "Statement of Principles," which introduces *I'll Take My Stand*:

All the articles bear in the same sense upon the book's title-subject: all tend to support a Southern way of life against what may be called the American or prevailing way; and all as much as agree that the best terms in which to represent the distinction are contained in the phrase, Agrarian versus Industrial.
Although Ransom admits that "no single author is responsible for any view outside his own article," he does make himself a spokesman of sorts for the group by writing that all of the "Twelve Southerners" favor an agrarian Southern society and are opposed to the advancement of industry and urbanization. Because Ransom, Tate, and Davidson initiated the Agrarian project, their views together tend to summarize Agrarianism.

According to the Agrarians, the urbanization of the South threatens the Southern identity as they define it and forces the South to become merely a poor imitation of the North. Ransom writes that "the concept of Progress is the concept of man's increasing command, and eventually perfect command, over the forces of nature; a concept which enhances too readily our conceit, and brutalizes our life." This emphasis on the need to maintain the relationship of man as the inferior servant to nature is the key to the Agrarians' largely geographical definition of the Southern consciousness. For example, Davidson in his essay "A Mirror for Artists" claims that in order for the artist to be able to produce his work he must be "never too far removed from nature to forget that the chief subject of art, in the final sense, is nature"; the artist should remain in "societies which were for the most part stable, religious, and agrarian; where the goodness of life was
measured by a scale of values having little to do with
the material values of industrialism." According to
Ransom's introduction, the rural Southerner depends
upon the countryside or nature for his identity; his
work is preservation and cultivation of nature, his art
is an expression of nature, and his religion is submission
to nature. He concludes that modernization adversely
alters this relationship between the Southerner and
the land and, thus the Southern identity.

But what exactly is this Southern identity? The
Agrarians do not supply one simple definition on which
they all agree. However, a composite of the Agrarians'
Southerner can take shape after the reader combines
clues from several essays. In his essay, "Still Rebels,
Still Yankees," Davidson describes the "typical"
Southerner by using a Georgian for his example:

The Georgian assumed that God would have
sense and heart enough to take into considera-
tion, when Judgment Day came around, a good
deal besides external and man-made appear-
ances. God was a gentleman, indeed, who
would certainly know, without being told,
that one was a person, a somebody, doing his
best among some rather amazing arrangements
that had better not be talked about too
much. The climate might or might not predispose
the Georgia Rebel to laziness; the fact was,
he worked and fretted more than the Yankee
knew. But the Rebel idea was never to seem to
work and fret. You must not let your work
ride you, was the saying. In plain truth,
you did not need to. The land was bountiful,
and the Lord would provide, and in event of
the Lord's failure or displeasure you could
always fall back on your kinfolks."
In this essay as Davidson compares the white Southerner with the New Englander, he suggests that the Southerner possesses an informal religious attitude, reveres gentlemanly behavior, values work, depends upon the land, and recognizes the importance of the family. Furthermore, Davidson acknowledges the Southerner's awareness of history and the defeat suffered by the South and his fear of industrialism's threat: "Around him were the visible reminders of destruction and humiliation. His land has been ravaged and rebuilt. . . . But industrialism, declining to be treated as a mere hedge, began Sherman's march to the sea all over again."¹⁹ Therefore, Davidson implies that the past is very much a part of the Southerner's present and that industrialism threatens the Southern identity as did the Civil War.

Perhaps the most important aspects of the Agrarians' views of the Southern identity are that the Southerner can only maintain his Southerness by preserving an agrarian society and by rejecting industrialism, which will destroy the Southern character. These ideas are expressed clearly and concisely by Tate as he discusses the South of his boyhood in "The Southern Mode of the Imagination," an essay written almost thirty years after I'll Take My Stand:

This preindustrial society meant, for people living in it, that one's identity had everything to do with land and material property, at a definite place, and very little to do with money. It was better for a person, however
impoverished, of my name, to be identified with Tate's Creek Pike, in Fayette County, than to be the richest man in town without the identification of place.20

The Southerner must have his land to be Southern, and industrialism and the growing cities encroach upon rural life, bulldozing over the Southern identity and spreading conformity and anonymity.

Ransom, too, concludes that the Southerner's attachment to the land is essential and that industrialism ruins the life of the Southerner:

He 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. . . . 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.21

Ransom finds that the Southerner's association with the land not only provides him with his Southern identity but also clarifies his role as man in nature and in the universe. Industrialism, on the other hand, offers the Southerner nothing. Therefore, the Agrarians seem to define the Southerner as a man who views nature as supreme, man as imperfect, and industrialism as a threat. The Southerner is very conscious of the history of his region and respects God and morality although, according
to Tate's "Remarks on the Southern Religion," the South lacks a traditional, well-organized religion with specific doctrine. Because the Agrarians insist that the Southern identity can only be preserved in the countryside, Southernness in the city seems to be an impossibility. The Agrarians not only expressed their support for the Southern agrarian society in their own poems and essays but also encouraged other writers to follow their lead—writers like Peter Taylor and Flannery O'Connor.

Albert Griffith describes the Agrarian influence upon Taylor as "some legacy held in trust . . . something he could use but not fully possess and certainly not dispose of." Although he studied under Tate, Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, and Cleanth Brooks, Taylor supports the Agrarian position very little in his own writing. Taylor enrolled in Southwestern at Memphis in the spring of 1936 where he took English classes under Tate. He then transferred to Vanderbilt University where he hoped to study under Ransom, only to discover that Ransom had moved to Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio. Taylor went on to Kenyon, studied under Ransom, graduated in 1940, and pursued graduate work at Louisiana State University under the instruction of Warren and Brooks. But, according to Griffith, only one of Taylor's stories, "The Party" (1937), "attempts to contrast the pastoral ideal so dear to the Agrarians with the urban-industrial reality; and it is an immature and mawkish story."
In an interview, Taylor himself appreciates the instruction he received from teachers such as Ransom although Ransom's instruction was limited to writing poetry:

"But even though Mr. Ransom condescended to fiction then . . . and insisted that I write poems, I learned a tremendous amount from him. When you're a young person working with a writer, I think that it's best for that time to try to learn what the writer can teach you. Mr. Ransom was a poet, so I wrote poems for him."24

Ransom, Tate, and Warren were more interested in poetry than in fiction when they instructed Taylor, but Taylor himself only published one poem, "The Furnishings of a House."25 However, Taylor does depict characters in his stories who are very sympathetic to the Agrarian cause of preserving the old ways and the little country towns although, as evident in later pages of this thesis, Taylor often satirizes those who cling only to the old ways and who refuse to accept any change. Often Taylor uses third-person limited narration to distance himself and the readers from the characters so that the irony is clear.

Like Taylor, O'Connor was also a student of the Agrarians, whose influence is pronounced in her writing, according to Lorine M. Getz. Warren and Lytle occasionally instructed the Iowa Writer's Workshop, which O'Connor attended, and Caroline Gordon, wife of Tate, was O'Connor's critic, editor, and lifetime friend.26
Gordon was particularly involved in O'Connor's revising of her first novel, *Wise Blood*. After receiving pages of comments and suggestions from Gordon, O'Connor writes in a letter that Gordon "certainly increased my education thereby."27

O'Connor, like the Agrarians, recognizes the importance of the South's past to the present and to the Southerner's realization of mankind's limitations. In *Mystery and Manners* O'Connor emphasizes the significance of the South's defeat in the Civil War and equates that defeat with the spiritual Fall of Man into sin:

... we have had our Fall. We have gone into the modern world with an inburnt knowledge of human limitations and with a sense of mystery which could not have developed in our first state of innocence—as it has not sufficiently developed in the rest of the country.28

O'Connor asserts, as do the Agrarians, that Southerners respect the mystery of nature with a religious reverence and know their limitations as humans.

However, like Taylor, O'Connor also "pokes fun" at the Agrarianism by presenting comic characters that represent the traditional, rural Old South. For example, Getz notes that in "A Late Encounter With the Enemy," O'Connor satirizes General Sash, a senile one-hundred-four-year-old Civil War veteran who was not actually a general and who can remember nothing about the war. The old man does not even realize that he represents the past to all those who honor him on Confederate Memorial
Day and at his granddaughter Sally's college graduation: "The past and the future were the same thing to him, one forgotten and the other not remembered. . . . He was invited to wear his uniform and sit in some conspicuous spot and lend atmosphere to the scene." 29

In her stories O'Connor ridicules both the characters who represent the agrarian Old South and those who are thoroughly modern because in her mind all of them--whether country or urban--are in need of Christian redemption, the realization of man's imperfection and the acceptance of the grace of God.

Although Taylor and O'Connor were influenced by the Agrarians, they suggest in their writing that urbanization and progress cannot be ignored by the South and Southern writers if the Southern identity and fiction are to continue. C. Van Woodward notes that in the decade of the 1940's when Taylor and O'Connor were just beginning their writing careers "the South's fifty-three metropolitan areas grew more than three times as fast as comparable cities in the rest of the country, at a rate of 33.1 percent as compared with 10.3 percent elsewhere." 30 At this time the number of Southerners employed in agriculture in the rural areas dropped from 5.5 million in 1930 to 3.2 million by 1950. 31 When considering the changes in the South after 1930--the lack of "any compelling vision to unite" the members of
the modern, liberal, Southern society. and the "discrediting" of the cultural, political, and social structures of the past—Richard King in *A Southern Renaissance* describes the position of the post-Renaissance writers like O'Connor and Taylor:

But the South, and the modern world which it has finally, albeit reluctantly, joined, must not deal with a new cultural situation. The value of the work of a contemporary Southern writer such as Walker Percy is that he recognizes that the tradition of the fathers is gone forever, as are the heady days of the Southern Renaissance. The fathers and Faulkner must both be transcended.32

King suggests that the post-Renaissance writers can surpass Agrarianism in literature and emerge from beneath the shadow of William Faulkner by finding a new direction for their writing—a direction he fails to name.

How could the Southern writers placed in a newly industrialized environment continue to express the Southern identity, so closely linked with the farmland, in their writing? Although Rubin does not suggest solutions to the dilemma, he does offer hope that a distinctively Southern literature can survive in the modern world. In *William Elliott Shoots a Bear* Rubin opposes the Agrarian notion that with the demise of the rural culture comes the disintegration of the Southern identity:

... I do not believe that all of the essential qualities of southern life have disappeared just because the South has become urbanized. ...
The way the southerners think and act and talk remains in numerous important ways essentially unchanged. The southern city as I see it is very much a southern city, and not merely a city located in the South. So, as far as I am concerned, there has been considerable continuity along with the change, and I think that the South as a distinct place is still very much available to the writer.  

Rubin calls for writers to use the new urban environment to reflect Southernness. Although he does not expressly define a Southern identity that can survive in the city as well as the country, Rubin suggests that the special Southern consciousness runs deeper than fields and furrows. Rather than accepting the literal Agrarian view of the Southerner as one who tills the soil and speaks with a drawl, Taylor and O'Connor view Southernness as something that is internalized. The two writers do not define the Southern identity in the Agrarian terms of man and his relationship with the land. They agree that the Southern identity is certainly in part regional, reflecting the culture and history of a certain part of the country; yet, when the surface of that region changes and some characteristics disappear altogether, the distinctive qualities of the region's people are not necessarily threatened. O'Connor and Taylor's stories suggest that the regional identity enhances the individual identity of the Southern character and that together they form a flexible and enduring Southern identity.
In *Mystery and Manners* O'Connor refutes the largely geographical and superficial Agrarian definition of the Southern identity which can only be maintained on farms and which would be lost in modern culture:

It is not a matter of so-called local color, it is not a matter of losing our peculiar quaintness. Southern identity is not really connected with mocking-birds and beaten biscuits and white columns any more than it is with hookworm and bare feet and muddy clay roads. . . . An identity is not to be found on the surface; it is not accessible to the poll-taker; it is not something that can become a cliché. It is not made from the mean or the typical, but from the hidden and often the most extreme. It is not made from what passes, but from those qualities that endure, regardless of what passes, because they are related to truth.34

In other words, O'Connor and Taylor, as well, believe that the most important, "true" traits of the Southerner can survive the disappearance of farms, slavery, debutante balls, and barn raisings and can endure the move into skyscrapers. These two writers have confidence in the enduring qualities of those who inherit the South's history, traditions, attitudes, and accents, and by focusing upon these internalized, "true" traits O'Connor and Taylor liberate their Southern characters from the land.

Both Woodward in "The Search For Southern Identity" and George Brown Tindall in "Beyond the Mainstream: The Ethnic Southerners" recognize two particular elements of the distinctive Southern identity that are also
reflected in the works of O'Connor and Taylor: a preoccupation with history and change and an acknowledgement of humans as imperfect, limited beings. Despite that the Agrarians also recognize these traits as characteristic of Southerners, O'Connor and Taylor free these elements from the confines of the Agrarians' weathered barns and corn fields. The Southerners can progress in defining their regional and individual identities even as urbanization progresses. The city is a place for all kinds of people—whether Southern, Mexican, black, Catholic, atheist—and all brands of philosophy.

O'Connor and Taylor place Southerners in city settings to show that a special Southern identity does not disappear in urban society but in fact appears all the more distinct in the anomalous city. These characters not only exhibit the regional identities they inherited by being born and raised south of the Mason-Dixon Line, but they also explore their individual identities by choosing which traditions they will observe and how much change they will accept. These choices are made in the city, where the Southerner has the opportunity to change, rather than in the country, which Taylor and O'Connor depict as stagnant and decaying. Taylor and O'Connor reflect the changes in the South during the period in which they are writing by often
placing their characters in a sort of limbo or "No Man's Land," showing them in transition between life in the rural countryside or small towns and the move into the cities. The characters are not victims of the bulldozer or urbanization but are free to choose to cling to the past and old ways, to renounce the past altogether and embrace modernity completely, or to attain a balance of the past and regional identity with modernity and individualism.

For example, in O'Connor's Wise Blood, The Violent Bear It Away, and "The Artificial Nigger," the rural protagonists choose to travel from the country into the city where their Southern values are tested and in some cases reconfirmed. The city is still depicted in these works as a big, impersonal place, but it is not the cruel, destructive place described by the Agrarians. To O'Connor the city is the scene for Christian redemption. The characters are free to choose God or to find a substitute for him; however, even when the characters resist Christianity, which O'Connor associates with a regional identity, they often are compelled to accept God's grace and mercy because Christianity is such a part of their identities as Southerners. Contrary to the opinions of the Agrarians, religion can thrive in the city, while the country is the setting for comfortable, but spiritually deadening, complacency.
O'Connor's attitude suggests that she finds Agrarianism to be too limiting for the Southerner, like a pot too small to allow the roots to grow and spread.

Taylor takes a more secular view in developing the Southern attitude towards the city and in presenting possibilities for a modern Southern identity. In stories like "Their Losses," "What You Hear from 'Em?," "Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time," "Miss Leonora When Last Seen," and "At the Drugstore" the rural Southern towns are disintegrating and modern Southerners are moving into the cities. The characters struggle with their opportunities for change in the city, with their needs to redefine themselves as participants in an urban environment, and with their desires to cling to the past and their traditions. Taylor's characters inherit a cultural and historical identity as Southerners, but when faced with a rapidly changing South they must choose how much if any they will adjust to those changes. The characters who initiate or react to change as they adjust to modern city life have hope and are often successful. Those who limit themselves, as the Agrarians suggest, to the boundaries of their land in the country are dissatisfied and decay in proportion to the decay of their plantation homes.

The works of Taylor and O'Connor are significant when considered together because their writing reflects
the change in the South from a rural to an increasingly urban society and because the writers present a still distinctive Southern identity in city settings. Taylor and O'Connor not only show how their Southern characters are able to combine tradition with progress, but as writers they, too, combine some ideas of their literary predecessors with an awareness of the modern society around them. Taylor and O'Connor show that in order to write Southern fiction a writer does not have to write about the glory of the antebellum South or mourn its decay. First, the descriptions of the countryside and the Southern city in Taylor and O'Connor's works reflect how their attitudes toward urbanization differ from those of the Agrarians. Then by examining the continuities between the Agrarian view of the Southern identity and those of O'Connor and Taylor, readers will discover that Taylor and O'Connor liberate the traditional Southerner from the land by viewing the Southern identity figuratively rather than literally. According to Taylor and O'Connor, the enduring qualities of the Southern character,—the preoccupation with history and change and the awareness of the imperfection of man—will not pass away as shopping malls take over the farmland but will survive in the cities of the modern world.
I

Unlike the Agrarians, O'Connor and Taylor do not present the rural society as "better" than the urban one. Instead, they describe both rural and urban settings and explore their effects upon the characters, never choosing one over the other as the ideal environment for Southerners. They do not praise rural life as do the Agrarians. In their stories the country is depicted as worn out, the land exhausted by cotton crops and nineteenth-century attitudes that drain the soil of its nurturing elements. In fact, often the desire to escape the isolation and sterility of the country is the impetus behind the characters' moves into the city, which seems to be a place of excitement and opportunity for personal freedom.

For example, O'Connor, who herself lived on a one-hundred-fifty-year-old dairy farm called Andalusia near Milledgeville, Georgia, describes Powderhead, a small farm setting in The Violent Bear It Away, as a representation of young Tarwater's isolation from the world of thought and experience. The farm represents the limited perspective of the old prophet, Tarwater's great-uncle, who raises Tarwater to be his successor as
the Powderhead prophet:

Powderhead was not simply off the dirt road but off the wagon track and footpath, and the nearest neighbors, colored not white, still had to walk through the woods, pushing plum branches out of their way to get to it. Once there had been two houses; now there was only the one house with the dead owner inside and the living owner outside on the porch, waiting to bury him.36

The boy, Francis Marion Tarwater, is alone when his great-uncle dies and is totally secluded from other people in a lone house in the country. He intends to burn or to bury the dead self-proclaimed prophet and thus be rid of the old man's influence. Images of death are combined with those of life and fertility in the description of Powderhead, suggesting O'Connor's somewhat ambivalent attitude toward rural life; plum branches grow near the dead owner's house, and an acre of corn runs "almost up to the house on one side" (130). However, among the corn stalks are violent, haunting images of "the two strands of barbed-wire" and the "line of fog, hump-shaped, . . . creeping toward it like a white hound dog ready to crouch under and crawl across the year" (130). The barbed-wire fence suggests the limitations of Tarwater's rural life, the lack of social interaction, and the barrier of isolation to opportunities for knowledge of the world and of himself. Furthermore, the fog suggests Tarwater's vague understanding of his great-uncle's religious teachings and his confusion about his own identity.
After Tarwater burns down his great-uncle's farm house and with it, he assumes, the old prophet's body, the young boy heads for the city to find out for himself the truth about life rather than merely relying on what his great-uncle taught him: "'My great-uncle learnt me everything but first I have to find out how much of it is true'" (170). The city is the place where Tarwater expects to learn about his own identity by contacting his uncle Rayber, a city schoolteacher, and by seeing if he is called to be a prophet while in the urban setting. Tarwater seems to want to escape the old prophet's design for him by leaving the countryside the old man inhabited; but by going to the city to take control of his own fate, the boy actually fulfills the old man's prophecy: "'The Lord is preparing a prophet with fire in his hand and eye and the prophet is moving toward the city with his warning'" (159).

The city is aglow as Tarwater approaches it with Mr. Meeks, a copper flue salesman with whom the boy hitches a ride; the light of the city implies that Tarwater will gain new knowledge, become enlightened, there. However, once again O'Connor's use of imagery in describing the city is similar in its ambiguity to her description of the countryside:

The dark city was unfolding on either side of them and they were approaching a
low circle of light in the distance. . . .
The circle of light became huge and they swung into the center of it and stopped.
It was a gaping concrete mouth with two red gas pumps set in front of it . . .
(170-71)

The city is at once dark, ominous, and mysterious and also full of light and promise, especially when viewed from a distance.

O'Connor presents both the city and the country objectively, implying the good and bad qualities of each, and she indicates her lack of preference by having Tarwater mistake the lights of the city for the fire in the country he left behind:

"Look," Tarwater said suddenly, . . .
"We're going back where we came from. There's the first again. There's the fire we left!"

Ahead of them in the sky there was a faint glow, steady, and not made by lightning. . . .

"Boy, you must be nuts," the salesman said. "That's the city we're coming to. That's the glow from the city lights. . . ."
(153)

Both the country and the city seem to be ablaze with fire and light, which suggest truth and knowledge. Thus, O'Connor implies that the lessons the old prophet taught Tarwater in the country—lessons about Jesus and the human need of Christian redemption—are true and that these truths will be confirmed by the boy's visit to the city. However, Tarwater must visit the city before he will accept his great-uncle's teachings.
Likewise, in "The Artificial Nigger" the countryside is not, as the Agrarians claim, the corrective atmosphere for modern Southerners, for the characters must again travel to the city to discover the truth about themselves and to confirm the values they learned in the rural society. In this story the rural junction is as haunting as Powderhead, and life and death images are again combined. The "coarse-looking orange-colored sun" above the mountains evokes thoughts of morning, truth, and new life, but in front of Mr. Head and his grandson Nelson "it was still gray and they faced a gray transparent moon, hardly stronger than a thumbprint and completely without light." The promise of discovering truth is apparent, but at this time knowledge is obscured. The atmosphere surrounding the characters as they await the train to the city is nightmarish, and even the train itself fears the country junction:

Trains passing appeared to emerge from a tunnel of trees and, hit for a second by the cold sky, vanish terrified into the woods again. Mr. Head had had to make special arrangements with the ticket agent to have this train stop and he was secretly afraid it would not... Under the useless morning moon the tracks looked white and fragile. Both the old man and the child stared ahead as if they were awaiting an apparition. (252)

The darkness and ghost-like qualities of the rural train junction suggest the dying spirits of the
characters who are in need of spiritual enlightenment; they are unaware of their needs of Christian redemption, as is the case in most of O'Connor's stories.

Mr. Head and Nelson must travel to the city in order to discover their flaws and limitations and before they will acknowledge their need of God's forgiveness and grace. Although the city offers the characters a better understanding of themselves and serves as the scene of Christian redemption, an industrial society, like an agrarian one, is not an ideal environment as Mr. Head points out to his grandson:

Then Mr. Head explained the sewer system, how the entire city was underlined with it, how it contained all the drainage and was full of rats and how a man could slide into it and be sucked along down endless pitch-black tunnels. . . . He described it so well that Nelson was for some seconds shaken. He connected the sewer passages with the entrance to hell and understood for the first time how the world was put together in its lower parts. (259)

O'Connor implies that urban society is certainly not perfect, but at the same time she indirectly ridicules those, like the Agrarians, who envision an industrial environment as hell on earth and the Southerner's doom by including Nelson's naive assumption that hell actually exists beneath the city as an extension of the sewer pipes.

However, although their visit to the city is a
bit unpleasant, Mr. Head and Nelson each attain a
new self-awareness which will be more specifically
discussed in later pages. After they visit the city
and return to the rural junction, the scene has changed
and is no longer the ominous setting it was when they
embarked on their journey. The moon emerges from the
clouds, "restored to its full splendor," and "flooded
the clearing with light" (269). The images of light
suggest the new self-knowledge and spiritual renewal
that the characters bring back to the country from their
city trip.

As in O'Connor's stories, Taylor presents his
characters in transition between the decaying, death-
ridden countryside and the mysterious, indifferent
cities. In "What You Hear from 'Em?" the small town
of Thornton, Tennessee is no longer grand as it had
been in the past:

Thornton wasn't even then what it had
been before the Great World War. In every
other house there was a stranger or a mill
hand who had moved up from factory town.
Some of the biggest old places stood empty,
the way Dr. Tolliver's had until it burned.
They stood empty not because nobody wanted
to rent them or buy them but because the
heirs who had gone off somewhere making
money could never be got to part with "the
home place". . . . Why, those old houses
stood there empty year after year, and in the
fall leaves fell from the trees and settled
around the porches and stoops, and who was
there to rake the leaves? Maybe it was a
good thing those houses burned, and maybe
it would have been as well if some of the
houses that still had people in them burned, too. The people move to the city and although they still feel attached to the small town houses, they leave them to rot and force uselessness upon the very rural life they cherish. The decrepit houses are symbols of the Southerners who remain behind in Thornton; for example, the heirs who do still live in the houses are regarded as the most foolish people in town, and their houses "looked far worse" than the houses that stand empty and unkept. Taylor suggests that those who move to the city to make money still have a respect for their agrarian past, evident in their hesitation to sell the old houses; however, those who cling to the past, refusing to accept any change, live in unrepai red homes that reflect the decaying lives of those who live in them. These people refuse to accept progress just as they refuse to make improvements on their homes. Taylor suggests that such homes and such people would be better off if they were destroyed altogether.

The house of Aunt Munsie, an old black woman who once was a servant to the Tolliver family before they moved away to Memphis and Nashville, has porch banisters and pillars and a wrought-iron gate that once belonged to the old Tolliver house in which
Munsie helped to raise the Tolliver boys, Thad and Will: "And sometimes her departing guests, looking back from the yard, would observe that the banisters themselves were trembling under her hand—so insecurely were those knobby bannisters attached to the knobby porch pillars" (234). Munsie's house reflects the frailty and insecurity of attempts to preserve and depend upon the past.

Like the old useless family homes, Munsie, too, has become old and useless by trying to revive the past. Always hoping that Thad and Will Tolliver will make good their empty promises to return to Thornton, Munsie realizes that she, like the empty Victorian and antebellum houses, must have the people and traditions of the past to define her identity. She links her identity with the geographical, rural Southern town as she explains to a dog and to herself why she will not visit the Tollivers in the cities:

"Why don't I go down to Memphis or up to Nashville and see 'em sometime, like you does?" Aunt Munsie asked the collie. "I tell you why. Becaze I ain't nothin' to 'em in Memphis, and they ain't nothin' to me in Nashville. You can go! . . . A collie dog's a collie dog anywhar. But Aunt Munsie, she's just their Aunt Munsie here in Thornton." (249)

Munsie feels that her identity is determined by where she lives. She feels compelled to preserve her Southern identity by remaining in Thornton with the antebellum
houses instead of moving on to prosperous cities as do other Southerners. She refuses to change and prefers to hope that the world will become again as it was in the past with her in the role of servant to the Tolliver boys. Instead of accepting the responsibility for defining her individuality, Munsie passively wishes that place and past relationships will determine her identity for her.

But Munsie cannot prevent progress and the gradual encroachment of the cities upon the countryside. In this story the growth of urbanization in the South and the migration of Southerners to the cities is significant because of the effects upon rural life, even though the prosperous cities seem to be only vague, mysterious places to Munsie, who only knows their names—Nashville and Memphis. The only point in the story when the city emerges from the background is in the image of the automobiles in the streets of Thornton. Taylor borrows the Agrarian notion of industrialism bulldozing over rural society when he describes the threat of an automobile running over Munsie and her slop wagon in the street. Munsie in her "flat-heeled, high button shoes" and apron, pulling the slop wagon "about the size and shape of a coffin," blocks the traffic in the streets and so represents the dying rural Southern life
that hinders progress and that will be run over by change (236).

A neighbor in the small town, Miss Lucille, warns Munsie to get her slop wagon off the street: "'Munsie, you be careful! You're going to meet your death on the streets of Thornton, Tennessee!'" (242). Taylor creates irony through his third-person limited narration by allowing Miss Lucille, a country relative of city folk who is cloistered in the past, to advise Munsie to make way for progress when Miss Lucille herself hides away in her old home place. The narrator also ironically notes that Aunt Munsie "could never be got to reminisce about her childhood in slavery or her life with her husband, or even those halcyon days after the old Mizzis had died" when at the end of the story Munsie does nothing but reminisce and when her appearance, house, and thoughts are all of the past (244).

While Taylor seems sympathetic toward Munsie as a representative of the rural Southern lifestyle, he satirizes her as a pathetic character whose only happiness lies in the past and who resorts to a nostalgic perspective, becoming merely a stereotype from the past in order to preserve her fantasy about the way life used to be:

. . . Aunt Munsie seemed different to people. . . . On the square she would laugh and holler with the white folks the way they liked her to . . . and she even
took to tying a bandanna about her head—
took to talking old-nigger foolishness, too, about the Bell Witch, and claiming she remembered the day General N. B. Forrest rode into town and saved all the cotton from the Yankees at the depot. (249-50)

Munsie is essentially dehumanized by her fantasy and by refusing to define her own individuality as well as her regional identity. Taylor suggests that although Southerners may regret the passing of old ways, they cannot survive by only clutching the past and ignoring the changes in the society around them.

Once again the countryside has been overtaken by progress or has been completely deserted by those who travel to the cities in Taylor's "Their Losses." Taylor depicts the Southerners of his time in a kind of limbo as three Southern ladies travel by train between the cities and their hometown of Thornton. The ladies mourn the deterioration of the country as they mourn for their dead and dying relatives: Miss Patty Bean is bringing her sick aunt home from Washington to Thornton so that the aunt may spend her last days in her hometown; Miss Ellen Watkins is bringing her dead mother to the town of Brownsville for burial; and Mrs. Cornelia Weatherby Werner is traveling from Grand Junction, where her mother has just been buried, to Memphis, where she now lives with her husband. The three ladies, so recently caught within the
shadows of death and suffering, are the only passengers sensitive to the morbid rural setting outside the train windows. For example, Miss Patty notices at a train stop that none of the business people on the train to Memphis bother to look out of the windows, but she does: "What she saw was only a deserted-looking cotton shed and, far beyond it, past winter fields of cotton stalks and dead grass, a two-story clapboard house with a sagging double gallery." In this scene the disintegration of the rural South is obvious.

The rural scene of decay is unnoticed by the new breed of passengers, businessmen and women, riding the train to Memphis: "They were fifty miles from Memphis, and they knew that nothing outside the windows would interest them until the train slowed down again, for the suburban stop of Buntyn," the "country-club stop" (200, 214). The three ladies are disturbed by this majority of silent, newspaper-reading passengers who represent the prosperous "city Southerners" adjusted to modernity.

Corenelia, annoyed by the business people is surprised to meet two old acquaintances, Miss Patty and Miss Ellen, on the train: "'I declare it's like old times. . . . Riding the Southern from Grand Junction to Memphis and seeing everybody you know! Nowadays it's mostly that sort you see on the Southern,,'"
indicating the city passengers (204). The ladies also recognize other clues of modernity altering Southern life when they note that most passengers no longer eat in the diner, that the eggs in the train diner are no longer cooked "country style," and that "sometime during the past thirty years . . . . conductors and stewards lost their sense of humor" (206, 208). Progress alters all that remains of the Southern lifestyle of the past; even the lack of conversation among the city passengers suggests the anonymity resulting from urban life. Such ideas are evidence of the Agrarian influence upon Taylor, but by the end of "Their Losses" Taylor's attitude, although sympathetic to the Agrarians, seems very ambivalent. By using third-person narration, Taylor does not have to choose between the traditional Southern attitude of Miss Patty and the more progressive and urban perspective of Cornelia.

An obvious conflict between these two attitudes concerning change in the South surfaces in a discussion upon the tradition of mourning debates by Miss Patty and Cornelia. Miss Patty represents the agrarian past and tradition for the sake of tradition:

"My people happened to be very much of the world. . . . Not of this world but of a world that we have seen disappear. In mourning my family, I mourn that world's disappearance. How could I know whether or
not I really loved them, or whether or not we were really happy? There wasn't ever time for asking that. We were all like Aunt Lottie, in yonder, and there was surely never any love or happiness in the end of it. (213)

Miss Patty is not aware of the irony of her comments; she mourns for the passing of a world and people by adhering to their traditions and thereby paves the way to her own demise. Taylor links the mentally ill Aunt Lottie with the nineteenth-century rural South and suggests through Miss Patty's words that Miss Patty, like the relatives she has lost, is not concerned with the realities of love and happiness but only with her idealistic view of the dead South of plantations, servants, and first families before urbanization. Miss Patty, as a character who mourns the past, is shown by Taylor "to be limited in perception, to be ignoring obvious truths of the past, to be fantasizing an ideal age that never existed," according to Jan Pinkerton. 40

Cornelia, on the other hand, refuses to mourn her dead mother whom she did not love:

"My mother is dead now, and I don't mean to ever say another word against her, but just because she is dead, I don't intend to start deceiving myself. The fact remains that she was opinionated and narrow and mentally cruel to her children and her husband and was tied to things that were over and done with before she was born. She's dead now, but I shall make no pretense of mourning someone I did not love." (209)
Unlike Miss Patty, Corenlia does not hide her eyes to avoid seeing the sometimes ugly reality of the past; she desires to view the past honestly, but she also will not abuse it by saying "words" against it. Corenlia seems to approach more closely Taylor's ideal of a healthy balance between an awareness of the past and acceptance of change. She wears fashionable clothes, she indulges in the "liberated," rather "unladylike" habit of smoking, she married a Jewish lawyer, and she moved to Memphis. However, unlike the other city passengers on the train, Corenlia is not oblivious to the traditions of the past or insensitive to the erosion of the agrarian South.

For instance, while Corenlia harbors no illusions about the Old South, she also realizes that Memphis is no paradise: "'It's the most completely snobbish place in the world. . . . They can't forgive you for being from the country--they hate the country so, and they can't forgive you being a Jew. . . . If you're both, you're just out! I mean socially, of course" (212). But although the city is not perfect, Corenlia stares out of the train window at the dismal, weathered farm houses, "thanking her stars for the great good luck of being Ms. Jake Werner, of Memphis, instead of an embittered old maid from Grand Junction" (206-07). She is sensitive to the special "atmosphere" of the
old rural towns, and yet she is happy that she "'got away by the skin of my teeth'" and avoided being "'stuck in Grand Junction for life, nursing Mama and all the hypochondriac kin'" (207, 211).

After contrasting the deteriorating countryside with the ominous city filled with indifferent and often cruel people, Taylor illustrates the dissatisfaction of the Southern character caught in a "no man's land" between the country and the city. They struggle either to cling to the rural past or to reject the past completely, embracing modernization; often they end up on a tight rope somewhere between the two extremes, not sure in which direction to continue. But Taylor shows through his characterization of Miss Patty and Cornelia that the Southern identity relies a great deal upon personal choice. As one of those caught in the middle of the two extremes, Cornelia considers the end of the journey for her two friends and herself:

In her lethargy Cornelia seemed unable to rise and even unable to tell Miss Ellen to go ahead without her. "I suppose you'll be met by hearse," she said, "and Patty will be met by an ambulance, and--and I'll be met by Jake". . . . There was a puzzled expression in her eyes, and she was laughing quietly at what she had said. It was one of those sentences that Cornelia began without knowing how it would end. (215)

Cornelia is the modern Southerner who has become indifferent, one who is carried to her destination
that in all its various disguises is unsatisfactory and rather ominous. Cornelia combines images of death and suffering with the image of her marriage to a city lawyer, suggesting that urban life is no more or less satisfying for the modern Southerner than the dying countryside.

Thus, through the use of settings both Taylor and O'Connor view the modern Southerner as one on a journey to an unknown destination, whether it be backward to the defeated past or forward into the mysterious future. Often the characters are stalled in the "no man's land" between the extremes of clutching to the past as in the case of Munsie or of living only for the future as the city passengers in "Their Losses." Barbara Schuler in "The House of Peter Taylor" defines Taylor's main theme as "the change in the structure of Southern society, with the decadence of those who cling to the nonexistent past, with the loss suffered by those who live only in the present." Taylor and O'Connor favor neither of these extremes and reveal the death of those who closet themselves in the past and the machine-like qualities of those who refuse to acknowledge their individual pasts and so are reduced to silent anonymity. The ambivalent attitudes of the two writers toward both the urban and rural settings reflect the modern Southerner's
dilemma of how to preserve his Southern identity and at the same time benefit from modernization. Just as their characters travel back and forth between the country and the city, Taylor and O'Connor favor a respect for the past coupled with an acceptance of the present and progress as the necessary balance for the preservation of the Southern identity in the modern world.
The characters in Taylor and O'Connor's stories reflect qualities consistent with the Agrarians' definition of the Southern identity, but these two qualities are those that Taylor and O'Connor, unlike the Agrarians, find to be enduring even in an urban society. By reflecting the preoccupation with history and change and the acknowledgement of man's imperfection, O'Connor and Taylor describe the Southern identity and the effects of modern society upon that identity. The two authors remove the political implications of the Southern identity as defined by the Agrarians and instead focus upon the two traits as modes of perception enabling the characters to react to change and to shape their individual identities.

O'Connor and Taylor both display through their writing a confidence in what Richard King defines as "the way we understand and articulate our perceptions of the past"--the Southerner's preoccupation with history, which Tate first refers to as "that backward glance" that produces "a literature conscious of the past in the present." According to C. Vann Woodward's *The Burden of Southern History*, white Southerners in
particular are more conscious of their region's past than other Americans, because the history of the South is quite different from that of the rest of the nation:

Again the Southern heritage is distinctive. For Southern history, unlike American, includes large components of frustration, failure, and defeat. It includes not only an overwhelming military defeat but long decades of defeat in the provinces of economic, social, and political life. Such a heritage affords the Southern people no basis for the delusion that there is nothing whatever that is beyond their power to accomplish. . . . Since their experience in this respect is more common among the general run of mankind than that of their fellow Americans, it would seem to be a part of their heritage worth cherishing.43

The Southerners' defeat in the Civil War and subsequent frustrations cause Southerners to be more conscious of their history. In "An Image of the South" Rubin adds that the Southerner's "pervading historical sense" is not only an awareness of the region's military and political histories but includes the "tightly-knit sense of clan and family" history.44 The "backward glance," this preoccupation with history both regional and personal, intensified by the progressing urbanization of the South after 1920 and the rapid obliteration of "an old traditional order," produced the Southern Renaissance, according to Tate and Woodward.45 The Fugitive poets, Miranda in Katherine Anne Porter's Old Mortality, Eugene Gant in Thomas Wolfe's Look
Homeward, Angel, Quentin Compson in Absalom, Absalom!, and Jack Burden in Robert Penn Warren's All the King's Men are all literary representatives of the Southerner who looks "for a lost meaning to the past and a key to the present." Taylor and O'Connor inherit the Southern writer's awareness of the peculiar historical sense of the South from the Agrarians and the Southern Renaissance writers mentioned above.

Taylor and O'Connor seem to agree with Ransom and others that "it is out of fashion in these days to look backward rather than forward" and that "the only American given to it is some unreconstructed Southerner, who persists in his regard for a certain terrain, a certain history, and a certain inherited way of living." However, they seem to disagree with such writers as Tate who assume that history and modernity cannot be successfully combined. In "The New Provincialism" Tate departs from his earlier Agrarian viewpoint by suggesting that the South is no longer ruled by regionalism, "that consciousness or that habit of men in a given locality which influences them to certain patterns of thought and conduct handed to them by their ancestors." Instead, he rather grudgingly concedes that the South has adopted provincialism, "that state of mind in which regional men lose their origins in the past and its continuity into the present,
and begin every day as if there had been no yester- 
day."49

This view of the modern Southerner as one who com- 
pletely "cuts himself off from the past" is too negative, 
unnecessarily extreme a view for Taylor and O'Connor.50 
Taylor and O'Connor present the modern Southerner as 
neither wholly "regional" nor wholly "provincial." 
They unite the historical sense with an acceptance 
of change, balancing the influences of the past and 
the future upon the Southern identity. Taylor and 
O'Connor reject the historical determinism of the 
Agrarians and recognize the importance of choice to 
the Southern character and to the Southerner's personal 
control over his own identity. Moreover, O'Connor and 
Taylor, unlike the Agrarians, do not dwell upon an 
idealistic past and dread an uncertain future but 
rather concentrate upon the present and the difficulties 
arising from the Southerner's needs to understand his 
past and to prepare for the future.

Taylor and O'Connor do not react against the 
idealism of the past in Southern literature by idealiz- 
ing the present. According to Chester Eisinger in 
his Fiction of the Forties, Taylor "recognizes the 
inevitability of change, but he coolly observes that 
change without direction or purpose is worse than 
meaningless."51 Taylor, although sympathetic toward
those characters, like the Dorsets in "Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time," who cling to the past, presents as ludicrous those who reject change. But he also satirizes the characters who disregard the past altogether and who attempt but fail to adjust to the modern South because they find no meaning in the changes, as in "Miss Leonora When Last Seen." Likewise, O'Connor characterizes Hazel Motes in Wise Blood as a struggling, grotesque figure who welcomes change not in order to find meaning in the present but rather in order to escape the meaning of the past. In The Violent Bear It Away O'Connor also presents Francis Tarwater as the Southerner who affirms his past by seeking change.

However, in Taylor's Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time" grotesque figures attempt to affirm their identities by avoiding change and embedding themselves in the past. Alfred Dorset and his old-maid sister, Louisa, are perverse outcasts in the growing Southern city Taylor calls Chatham because they resist the changes in the society around them. They live together in the "dilapidated and curiously mutilated" old family home, which remains in disrepair, thus illustrating the old couple's rejection of change and progress as in the case of the old homes in "What You Hear from 'Em?." In fact, several sections of the house are
torn down by the Dorsets so that they may reduce their taxes and remain in the house: "Also, they had had the south wing pulled down and had sealed the scars not with matching brick but with speckled stucco that looked raw and naked" (294). The Dorsets' mutilation of their home is ironic because they are in a sense destroying the past they so desperately want to preserve. They also use stucco rather than the matching brick, which suggests that they are in a sense trying to remake the past according to the way they wish it to be rather than the way it really was.

The Dorsets, whose family has the longest history in the city and once had the most members residing there, resent the rest of their family who moved away to California and up East to increase their fortunes in industry. Alfred and Louisa feel they are forced to give up their kin because they cannot accept the urban lifestyle the rest of the family has chosen. The Dorsets also make other sacrifices in order to adhere to their principles of sincerely preserving the past. For example, they give up the privilege of employing servants because modern servants cannot be trusted, and the Dorsets reject adult companionship because the modern Southerners have accepted progress and are not the Dorsets' "'own kind'" (306). Their inability to combine the past with the present is
evident when they are forced to tear away "mother's French drawing room" due to the high price of taxes in the modern society. Once again the old couple destroys a bit of the past because they cannot unite it with the present, and they mourn the passing of the old society appropriate for the drawing room: "'That was one of our greatest sacrifices' . . . 'But we knew the day had passed in Chatham for entertainments worthy of that room'" (306).

By clutching only to one another in order to preserve their idea of the past, Alfred and Louisa become the perverse participants of an obviously incestuous relationship. Taylor describes Alfred in "skin-tight coveralls, of khaki material but faded almost to flesh color" and Louisa as she pushed "a carpet sweeper about one of the downstairs rooms without a stitch of clothes on . . . just as unconcerned as if she didn't care that somebody was likely to walk in on her at any moment" (292, 293). The author also suggests that in-breeding was common in the Dorset family and incest was likely. Alfred and Louisa's parents were both from the Dorset family, and the distance of their kinship was impossible to determine due to the family's long establishment in the city and the great number of family members--"something that the old couple never liked to have
mentioned" (294). Taylor drops another hint of incest between Alfred and Louisa when he writes that they both repelled any suitors who tried to come between them: 
"Both he and she would scowl at the very recollection of those 'just anybodies' and those 'nobodies,' those 'would-be suitors' who always turned out to be misguided fortune hunters and had to be driven away" (305). Thus, by only associating with one another, both representatives of a dead past, Alfred and Louisa's relationship is as sterile and unnatural as the dried up figs and paper flowers they sell now and then to the neighbors on their street.

Furthermore, Taylor presents the decadent old couple as pitiful and perverse because they are trying to remain forever young. They invite only teenagers to an annual party in the darkened rooms of their home decorated with paper flowers and sexually suggestive sculptures and paintings. Louisa and Alfred reveal their obsession with the past and youth and suggest their own incestuous relationship when they encourage the teenagers to enjoy themselves:

"Tonight you must be gay and carefree," Mr. Dorset enjoins. 
"Because in this house we all are friends," Miss Dorset says. "We are all young, we all love one another." 
"And love can make us all young forever," her brother says. . . . 
"This is what it is like to be young forever!" (308-09)
The old couple's ludicrous attempt to elude time by pretending that they are beautiful children in love as they were in the past is satirized by Taylor in the title of the story and of a picture tacked up on a wall of the Dorset home—Bronzino's "Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time." The Dorsets are reduced to freaks as the result of their own choices to reject their family, the family's wealth, and the industrialism that made the rest of their family successful.

Finally, at the end of the story, Taylor describes Alfred and Louisa's family, the Dorsets who moved away to profit in industry. Ironically, the Dorset family had always participated in industry even before they came to Chatham from England, and through industry they amassed the family fortune. The Dorsets moved on to industrial centers in the East and West in order to increase their wealth, and so, as Jan Pinkerton notes, the family's decline, "as embodied by the old bachelor and spinster, is from commercialism to gentility, not the other way around."53 According to Pinkerton, then, Taylor is reversing the Agrarian notions of industry ruining the traditional South and of the need to preserve such traditionally Southern qualities as gentility; he suggests that such "traditional" attitudes are bogus.
However, even though Taylor is perhaps being ironic, he does not approve of the Dorset family's rootlessness and disregard for "whatever they left behind" any more than he approves of Alfred and Louisa's total immersion in a fantasy of the past. This ambivalent attitude is evident through Taylor's use of the first-person narrator who is a resident of Chatham. The narrator is embarrassed by the freakish Alfred and Louisa, somewhat resentful of the successful city Dorsets, and quite aware of the self-conscious, pretentious attitude of the not yet thoroughly modern Chatham residents:

And the truth which it was so hard for the rest of us to admit was that . . . we were all more like the Dorsets--those Dorsets who left Chatham--than we were unlike them. Their spirit was just a little closer to being the very essence of Chatham than ours was. The obvious difference was that we had to stay on here and pretend that our life had a meaning which it did not. (324)

Once again, although Taylor is not claiming the perspective of the narrator or any one character as his own, the first-person narrative strategy reveals the modern Southerner's difficulty in discovering the proper balance of regional identity, individual identity, and change in order to preserve the Southern identity. Taylor presents Southerners in transition, openly satirizing those who submit themselves to the past and yet neglecting to offer simple alternatives by
ironically treating the semi-urban and urban Southerners as well.

Miss Leonora Logan in "Miss Leonora When Last Seen" is, like the Dorsets, a representative of the past in Thomasville, Tennessee, but Miss Leonora is forced into modern society. Miss Leonora, whose family has lived in Thomasville for over a hundred years and whose relative General Logan named the town in 1816 after his dead son, is the town's last link with the past. The Logan family established Thomasville and "did all it could to impede the growth and progress" of the town in order "to keep the town unspoiled." However, despite that the Logans wanted to preserve the past in Thomasville, most of the family pursued their fortunes in industry elsewhere:

They had already scattered out and were living in the big cities where there was plenty of industry and railroads for them to invest their money in; and they had already sold off most of their land to get the money to invest. But they didn't forget Thomasville. No matter how far up in the world a Logan may advance, he seems to go on having sweet dreams about Thomasville. Even though he has never actually lived here himself, Thomasville is the one place he doesn't want spoiled. (516)

The Logans, like the Tollivers in "What You Hear from 'Em," do want to prosper in the modern world, but they also do not want to release the past entirely and so keep the railroads, factories, and highways out of
Thomasville. Taylor, thus, offers ironic commentary upon the authenticity of such a tradition of self-conscious preservation. The town grows to resent the Logans for hampering their own progress and prosperity, and finally they act against the last Logan in town, Miss Leonora.

Miss Leonora lives in the family home, Logana, and has been retired for ten years after teaching in the town high school for twenty-five years. After their offer to buy Logana is refused, the townspeople decide to condemn Miss Leonora's home in order to build a new consolidated high school because "times do change, and the interests of one individual cannot be allowed to hinder the progress of a whole community" (504). Because the townspeople thrust Miss Leonora into modern society by evicting her from her home, Miss Leonora becomes the kind of Taylor character that changes from one who immerses herself completely in the past to one who totally renounces the past and smothers her individuality in the conformity of modern society.

First of all, the past has taken its toll upon Miss Leonora as it did in the cases of the Dorsets and Aunt Munsie. Miss Leonora tries to preserve her role as the schoolteacher by not allowing anyone to know her in any other capacity and by treating her now grown former pupils as schoolboys rather than as the businessmen they are:
We never saw any of the house except the little front room that she called her "office" and that was furnished with a roll-top desk, oak bookcases, and three or four of the hardest chairs you ever sat in. It looked more like a schoolroom than her own classroom did, over at the high school. While you sat drinking coffee with her, she was still your English teacher or your history teacher or your Latin teacher ... and you were supposed to make conversation with her about *Silas Marner* or Tom Paine or Cicero.

But except for an occasional visit from former pupils, Miss Leonora must sustain her past role alone and is sometimes unable to do so. Like Aunt Munsie, Miss Leonora needs the particular people and places--her old house and her classroom--in order to relive her role as schoolteacher and to feel useful. She rejects the responsibility of defining herself as an individual outside of this public role. But her attempts to live in the past, like the Dorsets, threaten her "soundness of mind," as in the case of Miss Patty's Aunt Lottie.

Occasionally, Miss Leonora takes trips in her car in order to escape both her own past as an old-maid ex-schoolteacher and the modern changes in the growing town of Thomasville. She has been making such trips since she retired and could no longer actively fulfill her role in society as she had done in the past. On the trips Miss Leonora wears "her finery--with the fox fur piece, and the diamond earrings, and the high-crowned velvet hat, and the kind of lace choker that even old
ladies don't generally go in for any more . . . --or she would be in her dungarees" (527-28). If she stops along the way at a tourist home run by two old maids, then she dresses in finery and "talks about how the traditions and institutions of our country have been corrupted and says that soon not one stone will be left upon another" (528). However, if she stays with a farm couple, then she helps with the chores and "says there is no religion left amongst the people in the towns, says that they have forsaken the fountain of living waters" (529).

Either the disguises suggest sympathy with Agrarian assumptions about progress and modernity destroying the traditions and religion of the rural life so prevalent in the past, or the changes reflect Miss Leonora's submission to others' expectations of the literally defined Southerner. Miss Leonora is still bound hand and foot to the past, and her disguises are signs of her desperation to preserve the old way of life in the South and to avoid investigating her individuality.

But finally when Miss Leonora knows that she cannot save her house, she embarks on another trip and does not return. However, for this trip she does not wear her "schoolteacherish" uniform she once wore at "The Institute" or the costumes, "wishing that
either she had played the role of the spinster great lady . . . or that she had married some dirt farmer and spent her life working along-side him in the fields" (529). Miss Leonora cannot unite the past with the modern present and find a correct balance. Therefore, because she cannot relive the past, she leaves the past behind and conforms totally to the present. The first-person narrator does not approve of this extreme and comments that Miss Leonora chooses to become "too much like a thousand others" by staying in modern hotels now rather than with old maids and farmers and by dressing as the typical modern tourist:

All that was lacking was a pair of pixie glasses with rhinestone rims, and a half dozen bracelets on her wrists. She was one of those old women who come out here from Memphis looking for antiques and country hams and who tell you how delighted they are to find a Southern town that is truly unchanged. (531)

Taylor suggests that by renouncing her personal past and eschewing the responsibility of individuality Miss Leonora conforms and becomes only another faceless tourist.

Through the narrator Taylor avoids explicit judgments of Miss Leonora's behavior and expresses the ambivalence of the modern Southerner toward change. The narrator, a resident of Thomasville and Miss Leonora's former pupil, realizes the need for progress in the town and at the same time regrets the
disappearance of Miss Leonora and the past for which she stood. But is the modern Miss Leonora as absurd and pitiful as the narrator suggests, or is his disapproval of the change merely a reflection of his own need to clutch any remnants of the past? Taylor does not directly answer such a question, but his consistently unflattering descriptions of the extremes—characters who bury themselves in the past and those who reject the past altogether—imply that the author favors the Southerner who can balance the past with the present, the regional with the individual.

Unlike Leonora, Hazel Motes in O'Connor's Wise Blood leaves the past behind not because he cannot satisfactorily combine it with the present but because he does not want to be a part of the past at all. Hazel's preoccupation with the past focuses upon the religious tradition handed down to him from his grandfather and mother. This religious tradition of Christianity is an integral part of the South's history and the Southern identity, according to O'Connor in Mystery and Manners:

... what has given the South her identity are those beliefs and qualities which she has absorbed from the Scriptures and from her own history of defeat and violation: a distrust of the abstract, a sense of human dependence on the grace of God, and a knowledge that evil is not simply a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be endured. 55

Religion is as much a part of the Southern identity
as the lesson of the Civil War defeat and as, in Hazel's case, "a sharp high nasal Tennessee voice." Hazel's preoccupation with Jesus is something he has inherited, "like his face, from his grandfather" (11).

But Hazel's preoccupation with history is not as important as his awareness of change. Hazel wants to initiate change in his own life by freeing himself from the Christian religion. He feels guilty when he learns from his grandfather, a preacher, and his mother, a staunch Christian fundamentalist, that his soul has been saved from the penalty for sin, which is spiritual death, by Jesus Christ who died for all sinners. Hazel resents the obligation he feels to Jesus, who redeemed him despite the fact that Hazel "'never ast him'" (33). By going to the city, sinning freely, denouncing Jesus as a liar, denying the Fall of Man into sin, and establishing a "Church Without Christ," Hazel believes that he can initiate change not only in his own life but in society as well, escaping from Jesus, "a wild ragged figure motioning to him to turn around" and follow Him (10).

The city is the place of total freedom to Hazel. The freedom Hazel seeks in the city is the freedom of will, but, according to O'Connor, "free will does not mean one will, but many wills conflicting in one man." Taulkinham is the place for choice—the place where
Hazel can make changes in modern society and at the same time recognize and explore his past and his religious heritage. Ironically, Hazel flees to the city to escape from Jesus, and yet once he is there, he is only more obsessed with Him.

By sleeping with prostitute Leora Watts and taking lessons in "how to be evil and like it" from Sabbath Lily, Hazel believes he is ridding himself of Jesus when he is actually placing himself in further need of Jesus and redemption. O'Connor shows how by attempting to deny his religious tradition Hazel only reveals the depth of that tradition. For example, Hazel replaces his black hat that "'looks like a preacher's hat'" with one that "was completely opposite to the old one," but when he places the new white panama on his head, he molds it until it "looked just as fierce as the other one had" (15,57).

Hazel is actually seeking the past so dependent upon Christianity, which he left behind in rural Eastrod, Tennessee, according to Preston M. Browning, Jr.: "Unconsciously identifying with the old man whom he resembles physically and in the dogmatic, inflexible quality of his preaching, Hazel runs toward the destiny his grandfather had predicted even as he believes that he runs from it." In the city Hazel preaches his antireligion, his "Church Without Christ," just as his
grandfather preached the traditional Christianity in Eastrod. Another indication of how Hazel is unwittingly uniting his preoccupation with his religious history with change to a life in the city is that Hazel brings with him to the city his black Bible and his mother's silver-rimmed spectacles, symbols of the Christian tradition taught to him in Eastrod.

When Hazel realizes that he is not successfully ridding himself of Jesus and that he has no members for his "church," he decides that Taulkinham must not be the place for him and that he must move on to another city. When Hazel passes a sign on the highway that reads "'Jesus Died for YOU'" he realizes that "he had known all along that there was no more country but he didn't know that there was not another city" (106). In other words, Hazel finally accepts the fact that Jesus will be an obsession to him whether he is in the countryside of Eastrod, in Taulkinham, or in any other city. His religious heritage is not confined to place. Hazel then returns to Taulkinham, blinds himself as an act of repentance, and accepts Christian redemption--the most important change, according to O'Connor, that Hazel accepts in modern society.

Hazel's trip to the city is essential to his affirmation of his Southern identity, which O'Connor associates with Christianity. If Hazel had executed
his early plan to remain in the familiar Eastrod and thereby avoid temptation and sin, he would have avoided recognizing his need of redemption: "Where he wanted to stay was 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" (10). Hazel makes personal choices of whether to avoid, suppress, reject, or accept the religious tradition he inherits. By choosing to go to the city he eventually accepts his regional tradition as a part of his individual identity.

Unlike the Agrarians, O'Connor presents the urban society as an alternative environment for the Southerner who can combine an awareness of history and respect for the past with change. Even though Hazel strives to escape from his past by moving to the city, his preoccupation with his regional identity and traditions is an enduring quality of his Southern identity and can withstand a change from the rural to the urban setting. O'Connor remarks in *Mystery and Manners* that for most readers, "Hazel Motes' integrity lies in his trying with such vigor to get rid of the ragged figure who moves from tree to tree in the back of his mind," but that for her, "his integrity lies in his not being able to." O'Connor approves of Hazel's balancing of tradition, fundamental Christianity, with modernity.
Like Hazel, Francis Tarwater in O'Connor's *The Violent Bear It Away* travels to the city to escape the heritage his great-uncle wishes to pass down to him and to assert his individuality. In this story as in *Wise Blood*, the city is a place for the personal growth rather than for the destruction of the Southerner who, according to Agrarian Stark Young, will be "stampeded and betrayed out of [his] own character by the noise, force, and glittering narrowness of the industrialism and progress . . ."\(^6\) Once again the city serves as the environment in which the Southerner can affirm his past and accept change; the city is the place for self-discovery. In the urban society the rural protagonists have the opportunity to choose a new lifestyle and at the same time rediscover their regional identity, which stands out all the more clearly there. In the city the characters are made self-conscious by being in the new environment where agrarian traditions are the exception rather than the rule, and so the qualities of the rural Southerner are more pronounced.

Once again, in this novel O'Connor associates the Southerner's regional identity with a belief in and acceptance of Christian redemption. Like Hazel, Tarwater learns about Jesus, the Fall of Man, and man's need of redemption while he is in the countryside.
However, O'Connor's protagonists like Hazel, Mr. Head, and Tarwater are complacent in the country, sitting comfortably on a spiritual fence and unwilling to jump off into one side or the other; they avoid choosing either Gor or a secular substitute which amounts to the Devil. A trip to the city, a place so new and unfamiliar, is necessary to jolt the characters out of their complacency and force them to see their needs of redemption and to make a choice of whether or not to accept it. In the case of Tarwater, O'Connor shows how the urban environment and change in both the Southern society and the character himself actually encourage the Southerner's preoccupation with history and his regional identity.

In The Violent Bear It Away Tarwater travels from the country to the city to escape the regional identity forced upon him by his place of birth and his great-uncle. The great-uncle, a self-proclaimed prophet, raises Tarwater "to expect the Lord's call himself and to be prepared for the day he would hear it." The old man plants and nourishes in Tarwater a Southern identity composed of a hard-nosed, protestant, fundamentalist religion, a charitable loyalty to kin, and a love and defense of the land. Old Tarwater tries to instill these qualities in the young boy by preparing him to be a prophet, like himself. Tarwater resents the forcing of this identity upon him because he
recognizes the old prophet's hypocrisy and his ineffectuality; the old man drinks excessively and dwells on the isolated farm of Powderhead, prophesying only to himself, the boy-prophet, and the corn stalks. Like the Agrarians, Old Tarwater presents the Southern identity and lifestyle of a prophet in the countryside as in complete opposition to life in the city. He emphasizes this opposition by expressing animosity toward his nephew Rayber, a city-dwelling atheist and schoolteacher.

To the old prophet, Rayber is the enemy because he loudly rejects the old man's religion, his Southern heritage, and insists upon living in the city as the modern man concerned only with man's accomplishments which form education. Although Rayber was baptized when he was a child by his uncle, he, as the representative of rational and technological man, refuses Christian redemption because it requires a faith beyond reason and because he cannot reconcile the paradise and the hope that Christianity offers with the cruel reality of the world, as he tells the old man:

"Time has passed you by, Uncle... You're too blind to see what you did to me. A child can't defend himself. Children are cursed with believing. You pushed me out of the real world and I stayed out of it until I didn't know which was which. You infected me with your idiot hopes, your foolish violence... I've straightened the tangle you made." (166)
Rayber tries to rid himself of his Southern heritage as a Christian in the rural South by insisting that the old prophet is a thing of the past, by living in the city, by refusing to see the old man, and by refusing to allow his mentally handicapped son, Bishop, to be baptized. The prophet's animosity toward Rayber and his hope in his apprentice-prophet, Tarwater, lead the old man to take action to ensure that the Powderhead farm will pass to Tarwater rather than to Rayber at the old prophet's death. Ironically, this dedication to the land and to ensuring respect for his tradition of prophecy leads the old man and Tarwater to the city.

To keep the land from falling into Rayber's possession, the old man and Tarwater must visit lawyers in the city. By often mentioning Tarwater's "new gray hat" that he dons for his trip, O'Connor foreshadows the new selfawareness Tarwater gains as a result of visiting the city (138). During his brief first visit there, Tarwater views the city as an evil place because of the old prophet's lessons. However, Tarwater enjoys the new experience of the city with its powerful railroad and the "75,000 people here who were seeing him for the first time" (138). The boy wants to introduce himself to the masses until he realizes that according to his great-uncle these city people are evil:
Then he had realized, almost without warning, that this place was evil—the ducked heads, the muttered words, the hastening away. He saw in a burst of light that these people were hastening away from the Lord God Almighty. It was to the city that the prophets came and he was here in the midst of it. He was here enjoying what should have repelled him. His lids narrowed with caution and he looked at his uncle who was rolling on ahead of him, no more concerned with it all than a bear in the woods. (138-39)

Because Tarwater is enjoying himself and because even the old prophet seems comfortable there, the city does not appear to be so evil.

Old Tarwater is unconcerned about the sinful masses around him and feels no compulsion to preach even though he teaches Tarwater that the city is the place where a prophet is most needed. The old man is not affected by the city because he has no need of it—his identity is already established. He is the Powderhead prophet who has already chosen Christian redemption and whose only goals are to train Tarwater to follow him, to keep the land from Rayber, and to ensure Bishop's baptism. But Tarwater is just beginning to explore his own identity apart from the influence of his great-uncle, and so the city is fascinating to him. The boy begins to take responsibility for himself and his beliefs. Seeing the old man in a new environment, Tarwater views him from a new perspective and voices his own opinions, questioning the position his great-uncle has professed:

"'You always said you were a prophet. . . . Now I
see what kind of prophet you are. Elijah would think a heap of you'" (139).

Once in the city Tarwater asserts himself and does not passively accept Old Tarwater's teaching but rather begins to analyze what he has been taught and to recognize that he does not fully understand what he has been taught. When in one of the lawyers' offices, Tarwater looks out of the window onto the streets below and makes a vow to one day return to the city and assert himself as an individual:

When he was called, on that day when he returned, he would set the city astir, he would return with fire in his eyes. You have to do something particular here to make them look at you, he thought. They ain't going to look at you just because you're here. (139)

Tarwater can envision himself as a prophet returning to the city where he is needed, and yet, unlike his great-uncle, he will take action and make himself heard and noticed among the city masses. Tarwater seeks a balance between the Southern identity he has inherited and his own individual personality, and he believes that with this combination he can survive and succeed in achieving his goals in the city.

At this point in the story, Tarwater loses his new hat when it falls out of an office window and into the chaos of the city street below. The loss of his new hat suggests that Tarwater's new self-awareness
will at first be lost in the chaos of his own feelings or rebellion against his background. Later when Tarwater returns to the city and arrives on Rayber's doorstep, the boy is wearing "the atrocious stained hat" (183). O'Connor does not tell the reader how the boy found his hat that he brings with him from the country to the city. The hat signifies the old prophet's religious teachings, which Tarwater abuses and rebels against and yet still clutches. Rayber despises the hat and tries to replace it with a new red cap and to rid the boy of his country overalls and work shoes by offering him a new suit of clothes. But Tarwater leaves the new clothes untouched "as if the suggestion he put them on were equal to asking that he appear naked" (184). Although Tarwater returns to the city to get to know Rayber and to escape the teachings of his great-uncle, he instead affirms what he has learned in the country like Hazel Motes in Wise Blood.

Soon after the first visit to the city, the old prophet dies, leaving Tarwater to assert his own individuality independent of the old man's teaching. Only after the old man is dead does Tarwater begin to hear the voice of "the stranger," Tarwater's inner voice and devil's advocate. This devilish inner voice encourages Tarwater to assert his individuality and to go to the city rather than remain in the country serving
neither God nor the world but merely biding time. When Tarwater begins to hear the strange voice, he begins "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" (144).

The voice raises questions about Tarwater's redemption and about his individuality, questions that can only be answered by a return visit to the city. Tarwater is now alone at Powderhead with no one to advise him and no opportunities to test what he has learned from the old prophet in order to confirm its veracity. If he remained in the country he would have remained in doubt about his own redemption and his identity. Tarwater must go to the city to learn about himself, to learn if his great-uncle's teachings are true, and supposedly to avoid the call to be a prophet.

In his search in the city for his individuality, the boy soon realizes that he is actually the prophet that his great-uncle had hoped he would be. Tarwater asserts his individuality by not allowing Rayber to mold his personality as did his great-uncle and by attempting to refute any influence the old prophet had upon him. He refuses to take Rayber's tests, he does not approve of Rayber's food, and he insists to strangers like the clerk at Cherokee Lodge that he is not Rayber's son.
Rayber knows that Tarwater is resisting him and is struggling "to free himself from the old man's ghostly grasp," a grasp that Rayber acknowledges is the family's heritage which burdens him as well:

The affliction was in the family. It lay hidden in the line of blood that touched them, flowing from some ancient source, some desert prophet or polesitter, until, its power unabated, it appeared in the old man and him and, he surmised, in the boy. Those it touched were condemned to fight it constantly or be ruled by it. (192)

This affliction which Rayber fights off and with which Tarwater struggles is the recognition of the need for God's mercy through Christian redemption, the expression of a violently strong love for the family, and the hope that every person in the world has the potential to make the world a better place. The affliction is represented by Rayber's overwhelming love for Bishop which he tries to stifle, in the old man's obsession with baptizing Bishop and preaching Christian redemption, and in Tarwater's realization that he, too, is a prophet whose mission is to save men's souls by introducing them to God.

Tarwater's trip to the city and his search for independence and individuality bring the boy to an understanding and acceptance of this heritage. He tells Rayber that he came to the city "'to find out a few things,'" and he finds out that he is a prophet
like his great-uncle (188). Rayber shows Tarwater all of the city's fascinating aspects such as art galleries, movies, department stores, and the water works, but the boy "viewed everything with the same noncommittal eye as if he found nothing here worth holding his attention but must keep moving, must keep searching for whatever it was that appeared just beyond his vision" (189). The points of interest to Tarwater reveal him to be the prophet Old Tarwater educated him to be; for example, the boy stops to stare at the office building he visited with his great-uncle on his first trip to the city, he returns one night to a "pentecostal tabernacle" where the Carmody family is preaching, he gazes into a bakery window containing only one loaf of bread—a symbol of the eucharist, and whenever he is near a fountain or pool of water he feels an overwhelming compulsion to baptize Bishop. Tarwater has the opportunity in the city to accept Rayber's teaching and to attach himself to any of the city's many attractions and activities, but Tarwater is instead drawn to that calling he struggles to resist.

In a desperate attempt to avoid his fate as a prophet and the mission to baptize Bishop, Tarwater drowns Bishop and in doing so unintentionally blurts out the words of baptism, thereby sealing his fate as a prophet. After the murder Tarwater flees to Powderhead
and there has a vision which confirms his fate as a prophet and his Christian redemption; he envisions a multitude, the old prophet, and himself eating the loaves and fishes from a single basket, which is an obvious allusion to Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 in Matthew 14:14-21. Tarwater acknowledges his great hunger for Christian redemption and accepts redemption when he sees "a red-gold tree of fire" and hears the call to "GO WARN THE CHILDREN OF GOD OF THE TERRIBLE SPEED OF MERCY" (266-67). Just as Tarwater had to go to the city to realize his fate, he also realizes that he must return there to perform his mission: "... he moved steadily on, his face set toward the dark city, where the children of God lay sleeping" (267). According to O'Connor, a prophet and religion belong in the city as well as in the country. By visiting the city Tarwater becomes confident of his religious heritage, assured of the redemption of his soul. Furthermore, the boy is confident of his ability as an individual to take action by promulgating his Southern upbringing in modern society. O'Connor emphasizes that the city is more important to self-definition than is the country.

Therefore, in The Violent Bear It Away, Wise Blood, and Taylor's short stories, O'Connor and Taylor present their preferences for a balance of the past with change.
They show that urbanization and change are not necessarily hostile to a respect for the past and that the Southern identity can best survive in the modern world if it is composed of a regional identity coupled with an individuality tolerant of change. Taylor and O'Connor reject the extremes of "regionalism" and "provincialism" offered by Tate and instead believe that the Southerner may accept change by moving to the city and at the same time preserve his regional heritage.
In addition to a preoccupation with history and change, O'Connor and Taylor acknowledge that what the Agrarians recognize as the Southerner's belief in human imperfection is an enduring quality of the Southern identity and can be expressed as easily in the city as in the countryside. The idea that city-dwelling Southerners can maintain a "religious" perspective, an awareness that man is inferior to nature and that nature is a mystery to be revered, would rattle the respective cages of Ransom and Tate, who particularly insisted that religion "can hardly expect to flourish in an industrial society." Ransom summarizes his views of religion in the city in his "Statement of Principles" in I'll Take My Stand:

Religion is our submission to the general intention of a nature that is fairly inscrutable; it is the sense of our role as creatures within it. But 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. The God of nature under these conditions is merely an amiable expression, a superfluity, and the philosophical understanding ordinarily carried in the religious experience is not there for us to have.
To Ransom religion and a proper relationship between man and nature are impossible in the city, and in "What Is a Traditional Society?" Tate also finds modern society to be hostile to morality, unlike the agrarian, antebellum Southern society:

Man has never achieved a perfect unity of his moral nature and his economies; yet he has never failed quite so dismally in that greatest of all human tasks as he is failing now. Antebellum man, insofar as he achieved a unity between his moral nature and his livelihood, was a traditional man. . . . For traditional property in land was the primary medium through which man expressed his moral nature; and our task is to restore it or to get its equivalent today. Finance-capitalism, a system that has removed men from the responsible control of the means of a livelihood, is necessarily hostile to the development of a moral nature.64

Tate calls modern society an untraditional society in which the untraditional man, no longer working the land, participates in "finance-capitalist economics," a system "hostile to the perpetuation of a moral code."65 In this untraditional society the untraditional, modern men are arrogant and confident about their abilities to understand fully and control their environment, "to put nature under their heel."66

O'Connor certainly agrees that the rural Southerner is aware of man's limitations and respects the mystery of nature, but unlike the Agrarians she believes the entire South, including the cities, to be if not "Christ-centered" then undoubtedly "Christ-haunted."67
To O'Connor a recognition of the mysteries of nature, of man's limitations, and of the need for God's grace is not only a characteristic of Southerners and Southern writing but is in fact an obsession and the center about which Southern writing and life itself revolve: "This means that for me the meaning of life is centered in our Redemption by Christ and what I see in the world I see in its relation to that." 68

Unlike the Agrarians, O'Connor does not limit morality, a respect for nature, and the acceptance of Jesus Christ to the countryside. Hazel Motes and Tarwater learn about morality and Jesus in the country, but when they leave for the city the "wild ragged figure" of Jesus keeps pace with them; no matter how Tarwater and Hazel try to escape Jesus and to leave their morality behind them in Powderhead and Eastrod, they are not successful. Contrary to the opinions of Ransom and Tate, O'Connor shows in her stories that the city is the place in which Southerners can achieve an understanding, an acceptance, and a practice of their morality.

Once again, in "The Artificial Nigger" O'Connor takes her agrarian characters out of the country and sends them to the city, unfamiliar surroundings in which Mr. Head and his grandson, Nelson, are in a position to learn and change. The city is the testing
ground for their relationship and the realm for self-examination, including the analysis of morality. Mr. Head decides to take his grandson on a "moral mission" to Atlanta. According to Gilbert H. Muller, Mr. Head's purpose is "to teach the boy humility by exposing him to the dangers of false pride." Mr. Head recognizes impudence in Nelson and wishes to satisfy his own pride by proving to the boy that he is quite naive and that the country is more appealing than the city:

"The day is going to come," Mr. Head prophesied, "when you'll find you ain't as smart as you think you are." He had been thinking about this trip for several months but it was for the most part in moral terms that he conceived it. It was to be a lesson that the boy would never forget. He was to find out from it that he had no cause for pride merely because he had been born in a city. He was to find out that the city is not a great place. Mr. Head meant him to see everything there is to see in a city so that he would be content to stay at home for the rest of his life. (250-51)

Mr. Head realizes Nelson's need of moral guidance, but he does not realize his own selfishness and pride in his desire to assert his authority over the boy and to force his rural lifestyle upon Nelson. The trip, then, is one of self-discovery for both Nelson and Mr. Head, for O'Connor suggests that both are at the same point of moral development and are both in need of redemption: "They were grandfather and grandson but they looked enough alike to be brothers and brothers not too far apart in age" (251).
Like Tarwater, Nelson wears a "new gray hat" and, like Hazel Motes, also has a new suit for the trip (251). Nelson's hat is "too big for him but they had ordered it a size large because they expected his head to grow" (251). Once again, the hat suggests the role of a mature Christian, one with a thorough understanding of Christianity, and because the hat is too large, it suggests that Nelson must grow in order to attain a spiritual maturity.

Mr. Head has not been to the city in fifteen years, and Nelson suggests that the old man will not know his way around. To that Mr. Head responds, "'Have you ever ... seen me lost?'" (250). O'Connor obviously is suggesting that Mr. Head is not only confident of finding the correct geographical directions but also that he believes that he has never been spiritually "lost," in need of the salvation of his soul. Because, as Nelson remarks, "'It's nowhere around here to get lost at,'" O'Connor suggests that in the familiar countryside the characters learn about Christianity but are complacent and do not recognize their needs of redemption. Nelson and Mr. Head must realize that they are "lost" before they can be "found," and so they must be placed in the unfamiliar city.

Nelson and Mr. Head are not comfortable with the self-limitations they discover in the city. On the
train to the city, Nelson learns that he lacks knowledge and worldly experience; he sees a black man for the first time and realizes that the world is a larger and more complicated place than he knew when he almost gets off the train at the wrong station. At that point Nelson begins to recognize his need to depend upon his grandfather: "For the first time in his life, he understood that his grandfather was indispensable to him" (257).

Nelson's new self-knowledge shakes his pride and confidence as he realizes his limitations and the mysteries of the world outside of his rural home. Nelson becomes further aware of his need for his grandfather when Mr. Head leaves the boy sleeping on the city sidewalk in order to wound Nelson's pride by making him upon wakening feel that he is lost or abandoned. Nelson awakens on the sidewalk to find himself alone in unfamiliar surroundings, and he is afraid and intimidated by the size and power of the city. Nelson fears he is lost and runs blindly in search of his grandfather, an action which represents the breaking down of his pride, his realization of his need for salvation (his need to be "found"), and his search for spiritual guidance. As a result of his mad desperation, Nelson runs into a woman carrying groceries and injures her. When Mr. Head appears at the scene,
"the child caught him around the hips and clung panting against him" (265). However, when Mr. Head denies knowing his grandson, Nelson distances himself from his grandfather and learns another lesson of morality.

A change comes over Nelson at his grandfather's denial. Nelson discovers Mr. Head's hypocrisy and that he and his grandfather are both victims of pride. Nelson experiences spiritual growth represented by the fact that his new hat now fits tightly: "His hat was jammed on his head so that there were no longer any creases in it" (265). Nelson loses faith in his grandfather's love for him and so refuses to walk with him. However, the boy does follow Mr. Head at a distance of "about twenty paces," suggesting that he still acknowledges his dependence upon the old man.

But Mr. Head, too, learns from his act of denial and his visit to the city. He loses the sack lunch and loses his direction in the city, and so he realizes that he, like Nelson, is not as smart as he thought he was. Mr. Head, too, is "lost." Although he senses "the depth of his denial," he does not directly admit his sin by asking the boy's forgiveness but rather offers to buy him "'a Co'Cola somewheres'" or give him water from a spigot in a yard (266). The old man thinks of the punishment due him rather than the mercy and forgiveness which are the gifts from God to those who are redeemed:
He knew that if dark overtook them in the city, they would be beaten and robbed. The speed of God's justice was only what he expected for himself, but he could not stand to think that his sins would be visited upon Nelson and that even now, he was leading the boy to his doom. (266)

Mr. Head acknowledges his humanity and imperfection, and he realizes that "this was the first time he had ever had anything to forgive" and that he "disgraced himself" (266). He knows that he behaved selfishly when he denied being the boy's guardian and then abandoned him to face the consequences of the accident alone. This sin of denial is essential to Mr. Head's redemption.

If Mr. Head and Nelson had remained in the unchanging countryside where they cannot get lost and where they are complacent and comfortable with their consciences, then the old man and his grandson would never have perceived their weaknesses.

Following the denial, Mr. Head admits that he and Nelson are indeed "lost," in need of redemption, in the city: "'I'm lost and can't find my way and me and this boy have got to catch this train and I can't find the station. Oh Gawd I'm lost! Oh hep me Gawd I'm lost!'" (267). This is an important admission in which Mr. Head surrenders his pride and appeals to God; Mr. Head needs to know the geographical direction for his feet to follow as well as the spiritual direction for his soul to follow. The fat, bald man in golf
knickers points the way to the suburb's train station as well as the way to the "artificial nigger":

They stood gazing at the artificial Negro as if they were faced with some great mystery, some monument to another's victory that brought them together in their common defeat. They could both feel it dissolving their differences like an action of mercy. (269)

Both the boy and his grandfather call the statue "an artificial nigger," symbolizing their joint need and reception of redemption. They perceive the "mystery of existence" represented by the statue and described by O'Connor in a letter to Ben Griffith in 1955: "What I had in mind to suggest with the artificial nigger was the redemptive quality of the Negro's suffering for us all." 71

Mr. Head is particularly reminded of God's mercy to sinners by His sacrifice of Christ in order to redeem the souls of men. Mr. Head has not heretofore been redeemed because he had never recognized his need of redemption: "Mr. Head had never known before what mercy felt like because he had been too good to deserve any, but he felt he knew now" (269).

When Nelson then looks to his grandfather for reassurance that sins can be forgiven and that Mr. Head has not fallen forever from his position as the wise guardian, the old man can only remark, "'They ain't got enough real ones here. They got to have an artificial one'" (269). Nelson, impatient and
satisfied with his vague understanding of the statue's meaning of redemption, is insecure about his spiritual development. He fears that he and his grandfather will become lost again in sin if they remain in the city: "'Let's go home before we get ourselves lost again'" (269).

Mr. Head realizes that he has always had a sinful nature and has refused to recognize it until his visit to the city: "He had never thought himself a great sinner before but he saw now that his true depravity had been hidden from him lest it cause him despair" (270). While in the familiar countryside, he could comfortably ignore his need of redemption; however, when he visits the city, the old man cannot hide himself behind a familiar society and role as the all-knowing grandfather. Mr. Head is forced by his city experience to acknowledge his sin of pride and to accept humbly his redemption: "He saw that no sin was too monstrous for him to claim as his own, and since God loved in proportion as he forgave, he felt ready at that instant to enter Paradise" (270). Finally, Nelson, a bit leery of the change in his grandfather and not altogether sure of the changes in himself, announces, "'I'm glad I've went once, but I'll never go back again!'" (270). Of course, Nelson would not want to repeat an experience that is uncomfortable and forces him to see his
imperfections and insecurities. O'Connor also suggests that the trip to the city is necessary for the redemption of Mr. Head and Nelson, but that they only have to be redeemed once and so need not repeat the experience.

Although Taylor does not focus upon Christian redemption as does O'Connor, he often focuses upon what Albert J. Griffith calls "the mystery of self." Taylor's characters realize that the changes occurring in society are in most cases beyond their control and that they must alter their roles according to those changes as in "Miss Leonora When Last Seen" and "What You Hear from 'Em?". In "At the Drugstore" Taylor explores the mystery of the human personality through Matt Donelson's moral introspection.

Matt Donelson, his wife, and his two sons visit his parents in the Southern city in which he grew up. Before his parents or family awake one morning, Matt walks to a drugstore to purchase shaving lotion. Without actually planning where he wishes to go to buy the lotion, Matt finds himself in a familiar part of the city in front of a drugstore "that he had not thought of in a dozen years." Matt feels as if he is in a dream or that he has traveled back in time to the period when he was a schoolboy who waited with his friends in the drugstore for the arrival of the "Country Day
Special," the trolley that transported the boys to school: "A black fright seized Matt Donelson. Either this was a dream from which he could not wake himself or ... Perhaps before his eyes this modern drugstore was going to turn back into the place it had once been" (116, 120). Because Matt arrives at the drugstore as if he had "walked off down here in his sleep" and because the sight of the familiar drugstore dismays and fascinates Matt so, Taylor prepares the reader for the intense psychological and moral analysis Matt undergoes there (111).

The reader learns that Matt has put off buying the lotion elsewhere and so has been somehow compelled to go to the old drugstore and the setting of the moral confusion and development of his youth. Now as a modern man in the city he still struggles to control the darker side of his personality according to society's rules. The same druggist, Mr. Conway, still works in the drugstore, and Matt remembers how as boys he and his friends took pleasure in interrupting and antagonizing Mr. Conway. When Matt discovers that he has interrupted the pharmacist by his inquiry about shaving lotion, he "could not restrain a malicious little smile" as he thinks the situation to be "so like old times" (123):

They had always delighted in interrupting Mr. Conway when he was at work back there in the prescription room. . . . Whenever there
was a piece of roughhouse up in the front part of the drugstore and Mr. Conway had to be called from his "laboratory" to deal with it, the boys became almost hysterical in their glee. (123)

Matt recalls the boys' pranks with a mixture of sympathy for the old druggist and mischievous delight, emotion that suggests the moral dilemma with which Matt struggles. As a boy Matt never participated in the cruel pranks because he "had always been a little too timid, a little too well brought up, to have any part in them" (125). Ever since he was a boy, Matt experienced amusement mixed with disapproval when witnessing even such playful "evil." Matt seems to have returned to the drugstore because of some opportunity he wishes he had taken advantage of but did not--he regrets not indulging the mischievous side of his nature. Now as a man Matt visits the drugstore not to buy shaving lotion as much as to satisfy his long suppressed desire to antagonize Mr. Conway.

He converses respectfully with Mr. Conway at first, and Matt's face appears as the guilty face of a schoolboy when he realizes that he has irritated Mr. Conway by not specifying which brand of shaving lotion he would prefer. Matt struggles to maintain a position as a detached, indifferent customer by assuming "the most impersonal, hard, out-of-town voice he could muster," but his memories are too strong and he cannot
control his boyish breathlessness (116). Matt unconsciously wishes that he were a boy again whose rude behavior in the drugstore would be dismissed as boyish mischief rather than the man he is who is bound by the moral constraints of society. He feels "seriously tempted to snatch up some article off the counter and slip it into the pocket of his topcoat" and remembers that he had never shoplifted as a boy like the other schoolboys (116). But before Matt can act upon the temptation, his own grown-up face scolds him from the mirror.

Matt resents the intrusion of his own mannish face in the place of his childhood memories and mischievous pranks:

The person in the mirror now eyed him curiously, even incredulously, and momentarily he resented the intrusion of this third, unfamiliar person on the scene, a person, who, so to speak, ought still to have been asleep beside his wife back there in the family's guest room. (117)

Matt tries to ignore the disapproving adult face in the mirror, and he is startled to realize that his face seems to assume automatically the judgmental gaze—he cannot keep his face from expressing the morality society has taught him:

But the face had a will of its own. It had an impersonal, hard, out-of-town look, like the faces one gets used to seeing everywhere except in the mirror. It was one thing consciously to put those qualities into your
Matt's mind that has returned to his boyhood and the missed opportunities for wrongdoing rejects his physical appearance as an adult. But by the time Mr. Conway chooses a shaving lotion, Matt is recovered by "the grown-up self" and is "the mature Matt Donelson, aged thirty-five" (118).

Taylor is ironic when using rather sarcastic third-person narration to describe how Matt views himself. Matt seems to look upon himself as "a man with a family of his own but still a faithful and attentive son, a man whose career was such a going thing that he could easily spare an occasional four or five days for visits back home" (118). The superficiality of this commentary reflects Matt's lack of self-knowledge. Matt then retreats back into his boyhood memories and recalls that he never broke the rule of not looking through a magazine unless one intended to buy it, but then Matt "realized he was at this very moment holding a copy of a news magazine in his hand" (125). Once again his boyish impulse to antagonize Mr. Conway by shoplifting and his adult moral integrity battle as Matt alternates between placing the magazine back on the shelf and taking it up again. Finally, his adult morality wins out and instead of
taking the magazine or rudely reading it there in the store without paying for it, Matt buys the magazine he has no interest in reading (125).

Even though Matt has purchased his shaving lotion, loitered around the store, and bought a magazine that he does not want, he still cannot bring himself to leave the drugstore because he still has not accomplished what he has unconsciously planned to do. When Matt was a boy, the brightly illuminated prescription room at the back of the store always fascinated him, perhaps because the room was off-limits to anyone other than Mr. Conway and because a boy entering the room without permission would be a serious offense to Mr. Conway. After intentionally insulting Conway's son, the junior pharmacist, by insisting upon consulting with the senior pharmacist, Mr. Conway himself, Matt marches toward the mysterious prescription room to get a glance at the forbidden room and to offend Mr. Conway finally after so many years. However, the offense which would have given him so much pleasure as a boy and made him a hero among his friends gives him no satisfaction as an adult:

There was no satisfaction in it for him at all—not even in the glass of water which he identified as the receptacle for Mr. Conway's teeth. . . . Something inside him which a moment before had seemed to be swelling to the bursting point suddenly collapsed. (132)

The darkness of Matt's nature had taken over his behavior and caused him to have even been willing to fight the junior
druggist in order to see the prescription room. Then Matt's violent urge subsides and as the moral man of society Matt wonders at his rude behavior: "What had possessed him? Already the whole incident seemed unreal. Surely he had been momentarily insane; there was no other way to explain it" (133). Matt does not gain self-knowledge from his experience.

Although Matt feels as if his obsession with confronting the old druggist is finally over, he still must strive to keep the unruly side of his nature in check. Taylor shows that even an upstanding man like Matt Donelson is not immune to a lack of self-control. Once again, Matt reminds himself of how perfect his life appears to be:

> It was wonderful being home. It was wonderful having his wife be so attentive to his parents, and his parents so admiring of Janie. It was fine having his parents enjoy the boys, and the boys and Janie enjoy his parents, and fine enjoying them himself the way a grown man ought to do. (135)

However, the repetition of words like wonderful, enjoy, and fine give the passage a sarcastic tone. Taylor's narrator is again being ironic by playing a sort of childish word game to describe the kind of "perfect" thoughts that Matt as a grown man "ought" to think, and yet the passage implies that Matt does not actually believe these thoughts and rather is trying to convince himself that they are true. Moreover, the passage is
ironic when the reader learns of Matt's darker thoughts about his family and his total lack of self-knowledge.

Matt returns home from the drugstore to a serene scene with his family and parents at breakfast, but he notices the strange "cynicism" in his face when he shaves. Then when his father makes him a gift of a box of cigars, Matt experiences despair and another strange feeling:

He placed his two hands on the sideboard as if bracing himself against another wave, which came on now with more fury than the first and which was not of despair but of some other emotion less easily or less willingly identified. It was like regret for lost opportunities, or nearly like that--but already it had passed and already still another wave was imminent. And then it came, the inevitable feeling... His first impulse was to hurl the whole weight of his great good sense and reason against the flood of feeling, but the deeper wisdom of a long-time swimmer in these waters prevailed. ... He kept telling himself, warning himself, in big, easy strokes...

The despair and strange emotion that Matt struggles to maintain control over and with which he seems so familiar are evidence of his awareness of the dark urges he refuses to acknowledge. Matt perhaps is "warning" himself not to identify that "inevitable feeling," which the reader learns later is most likely hate toward his family. Such emotion is obviously that which in this society must be controlled by "good sense and reason," but Taylor suggests that merely controlling
such feeling is not acceptable and does not qualify as self-knowledge (136).

But although Matt gains control over his emotion, he is "barred" from rejoining the family by dark thoughts, "nonsense" that occurs to him when he places the box of cigars on the sideboard (137). Matt thinks that perhaps he had planned the trip to the drugstore before he even left for his visit home and that the trip to the store "had been intended to satisfy some passing and unnamed need of his" (137). However, his adventure at the store somehow gets out of hand and "cut too deeply into his memory and into what was far more than mere memory," penetrating "beyond all good sense and reasonableness that make life seem worthwhile—or even tolerable" (137).

Matt acknowledges the threat of a loss of self-control but will not identify his own dark nature even when it appears in his facial expression as it is reflected in the glass of a painting: "The dark face loomed large in the glass and it was a monstrous obstruson on the relatively bright scene . . . at the breakfast table behind Matt. . . . How dearly he loved them all! And how bitterly the Thing showing its face in the glass hated them!" (138). Matt dismisses the strange emotion he feels and his reflection in the glass and so fails to acknowledge the moment of
revelation and self-discovery. Taylor's narrator ironically describes Matt as experiencing "an exhilarating sense of well-being" as he rejoins the family at breakfast. As Matt returns to his proper place at the table, he believes that he returns to his proper roles as the loving father, husband, and son. But again the tone is ironic because Matt has not resolved the moral struggle he faced at the drugstore or his strange feelings toward his family.

At the end of the story when Matt peels the orange without breaking the skin and then presents the orange "unscathed and whole," Taylor is commenting upon the irony of Matt's self-perception. He views himself as the unscarred, peeled orange—a man who when stripped reveals a healthy soul without sin or flaw. Taylor suggests that Matt actually has a moral nature that is quite torn and battered by his unresolved struggle with his dark urges.

Taylor shows that the modern man in the Southern city is just as concerned with morality and experiences the same spiritual confusion as the rural farmer in the country, and O'Connor shows that even that rural farmer must go to the city to discover his moral and spiritual condition and to accept the Christian redemption he ignored while on the farm. Both writers recognize the mysteries of human nature and nature itself, and in their
stories these mysteries are highlighted in the cities while taken for granted in the country.

O'Connor and Taylor accept the traditional Southern notions of man's limitation and nature's superiority espoused by Ransom in his "Reconstructed But Unregenerate" of I'll Take My Stand: "I believe there is possible no deep sense of beauty, no heroism of conduct, and no sublimity of religion, which is not informed by the humble sense of man's precarious position in the universe." But unlike Taylor and O'Connor, the Agrarians view industrialism, science, and the growing Southern cities as evil and destructive of man's reverence for nature, as is evident in Davidson's "A Mirror for Artists": "... their role is mainly Satanic. Since their influence on humanity is to dehumanize, to emphasize utilitarian ends, to exalt abstraction over particularity and uniformity over variety, the artist tends to view them as evil." O'Connor and Taylor reject this view of urban society as evil and dehumanizing and instead use urban settings to present their characters as people who realize their imperfections and the superiority of nature and who can be both Southerners and city-dwellers.
By moving Southerners into the cities Taylor and O'Connor create literature that is consistent with the Agrarians' writing and the works of such Southern Renaissance writers as Faulkner, Wolfe, and Katherine Anne Porter and yet transcends their works. The stories of Taylor and O'Connor reflect the Southern identity as defined by the Renaissance writers by suggesting that the modern Southerner is, as in the past, preoccupied with history and change and acknowledges man's imperfection and the mystery of nature; yet, O'Connor and Taylor accept the challenge of the present and the changes facing the modern Southerner—a present South that their literary predecessors condemned as a wasteland for the Southern identity.

The Renaissance writers and the Agrarians focus upon the South's past and the decay, due to urbanization, of what Davidson calls a "traditional society" in "Why the Modern South Has a Great Literature":

A traditional society is a society that is stable, religious, more rural than urban, and politically conservative. . . . A traditional society can absorb modern improvements up to a certain point without losing its character. If modernism enters to the point where the society is thrown a little
out of balance but not yet completely off balance, the moment of self-consciousness arrives. Then a process begins that at first is enormously stimulating, but that, if it continues unchecked, may prove debilitating and destructive in the end.76

Here Davidson, like many of his contemporaries, predicts the death of the special Southern character or identity due to modernization. He notes that although the Southerner may become momentarily "self-conscious" and concerned about preserving Southernness, like the Renaissance writers, he will ultimately lose his regional identity because he must live in a high-rise rather than in a farm house. But through such works as Wise Blood, The Violent Bear It Away, "Miss Leonora When Last Seen," and "Their Losses," O'Connor and Taylor seem to reply to Davidson and C. Vann Woodward and others who question the continuation of the Southern identity and a particularly Southern literature. Taylor and O'Connor suggest that looking only to the past is the doom of Southernness, not the acceptance of the changes of the present and the future.

Walker Percy, a contemporary of O'Connor and Taylor, confirms the idea of the need of Southern writers to accept modernity in their writing and transcend the "backward glance" of the Renaissance writers in his essay, "Virtues and Vices in the Southern Literary Renascence": 
It may be true that one needs the past to understand the present, but one can also be trapped by it, like Mark Twain's river boat which got locked up forever in a bayou when the river changes course. A sense of place can decay to the merely bizarre. A sense of person can be pushed to caricature and a whole region populated with eccentrics. An ear for language is ever in danger of being beguiled by the names of trains and states—O Lackawanna, O Alabama, O ye wide Missouri—or of doing duty as the back-porch virtuosity of Jeeter Lester. . . . The vein shows signs of playing out, however. One sign is that current equivocations are at least once removed. They are no longer a hearkening back to the Time, the great days and the great men, but only to a time when the Time was remembered. It is just as well that it does play out. For only then can Southerners, armed with their peculiar weapons, attack the present. The promise of the renascence will only be fulfilled if the sense of the past can be effectively brought to bear on the dislocations of the present.77

Percy, like Taylor and O'Connor, suggests that Southern writers must stop "hearkening" back to a past they themselves did not experience and cannot remember. By continuing to only look backward, Southern writers will reduce their literature to a sentimental freak show, according to Percy. Taylor and O'Connor seem to agree, and their more positive view of modernity and their uses of city settings make their stories effective commentaries on the modern South and Southerner rather than voices of doom proclaiming the end of the Southerner because the past cannot be relived.

Therefore, the continuities with those of their literary predecessors compose a traditional Southern
identity, and O'Connor and Taylor reflect their confidence in the endurance of that identity by presenting their Southern characters as surviving in the cities and there affirming their regional and individual identities. According to Taylor and O'Connor, Southern literature and Southernness continue even if the Southern Renaissance may be over because the modern Southerner is alive and well and living in Nashville—or thereabouts.
Notes


4 Simpson 71.

5 Thomas Daniel Young, "Introduction to Part III," The History of Southern Literature, eds. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., et al. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1985) 263.


7 Singal 199.


9 Rubin 203-05.

10 Rubin 194.


14 Ransom ix.

15 Rubin 187, 197.

16 John Crowe Ransom, "Reconstructed But Unregenerate," I'll Take My Stand, by Twelve Southerners, 10.

17 Donald Davidson, "A Mirror For Artists," I'll Take My Stand, by Twelve Southerners, 29.


19 "Still Rebels, Still Yankees" 240-41.


21 "Reconstructed But Unregenerate" 19-20.

22 Griffith 19.

23 Griffith 23.


25 Griffith 24-25.


27 The Habit of Being 28.


31 Woodward 6.


34 Mystery and Manners 57-58.


40 Pinkerton 433-34.

[Notes to pages 42-58]

42 King 8; Allen Tate, "The New Provincialism," *Essays of Four Decades* 545.

43 Woodward 19.


45 Woodward 32.

46 Woodward 36.

47 "Reconstructed But Unregenerate" 1.

48 "The New Provincialism" 539.

49 "The New Provincialism" 542.

50 "The New Provincialism" 539.


53 Pinkerton 439.

54 Peter Taylor, "Miss Leonora When Last Seen," *The Collected Stories of Peter Taylor* 507.

55 *Mystery and Manners* 209.


57 *Mystery and Manners* 115.
Notes to pages 59-94

58 Preston M. Browning, Jr., Flannery O'Connor (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois UP, 1974) 34.

59 Mystery and Manners 115.

60 Stark Young, "Not In Memoriam, But In Defense," I'll Take My Stand, by Twelve Southerners, 328.

61 The Violent Bear It Away 126.


63 "Statement of Principles" xiv.

64 Allen Tate, "What Is a Traditional Society," Essays of Four Decades 556-57.

65 "What Is a Traditional Society" 556.

66 "Reconstructed But Unregenerate" 9.

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73 Peter Taylor, "At the Drugstore," The Collected Stories of Peter Taylor 111.

74 "Reconstructed But Unregenerate" 10.
[Notes to pages 94-97]

75 "A Mirror For Artists" 47.

76 Donald Davidson, "Why the Modern South Has a Great Literature," Still Rebels, Still Yankees 172.

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