

CHAOS AND CONFORMITY:
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THE SYSTEMATIC GROTESQUE OF FLANNERY O'CONNOR

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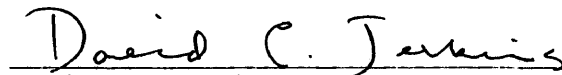
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Author

Approved, May 1982


Lynn Z. Bloom


David C. Jenkins


H. Camm Walker

ABSTRACT

Flannery O'Connor has often been singled out from other Southern writers for greater intensity and consistency of theme in her writing. O'Connor's work illustrates one fundamental principle, absolute and inviolable: man is grotesque without God. Given this principle, fundamental to O'Connor's religious belief, the form of her fiction is virtually inevitable. The non-believers in O'Connor's fiction are depicted as grotesque, yet not as grotesque as the professed believers, the hypocrites. The "saved" of her fiction are those individuals who realize the grotesqueness of modern man and turn to God.

The characters in Flannery O'Connor's writings can be roughly categorized into four groups: hypocrites, do-gooders, intellectuals, and cathartic agents. The hypocrites profess belief in God, but are so smug and self-satisfied that they believe they have no real need of God. The do-gooders replace God with man, exalting the power and potential of man. The intellectuals do not emphasize the power of man, and in their recognition of man's "true" state are closer to the "saved" than other O'Connor types. But the intellectuals deny the existence, and thus the necessity, of God. The last group, the cathartic agents, are those who recognize the basic grotesqueness of man. These characters, though not usually of the "saved," act upon the other three types to force a confrontation, a recognition of man's need for God. All of O'Connor's stories either involve the conflict between a cathartic agent--sometimes accompanied by an emblem--and one or more of the remaining types.

O'Connor's use of the grotesque departs from the grotesque tradition in the relationship of the visual and subjective grotesque and in her systematic, logical ordering of the grotesque. In traditional grotesque, a feeling of disassociation and estrangement is accompanied or signaled by visual grotesquery. In O'Connor's fiction, visual grotesques are in opposition to the grotesque impulse. Many of the most emotionally deformed characters are visually innocuous, while the cathartic agents are usually physically deformed. Second, the systematic ordering of O'Connor's fictional world to conform to one determining principle is not typical of the grotesque. The relegation of the grotesque to a subservient, functional role in illustrating her theme defines the fundamental distinction between O'Connor's work and that of the traditional grotesque--the use of the systematic grotesque.

I

The grotesque is characterized subjectively by an underlying common impulse expressed in varying forms. This impulse produces a feeling of estrangement and alienation, succinctly, a "fear of life."¹ Also, in much of the grotesque there is the suggestion of vague, ominous forces beyond human control; people move as puppets manipulated by an unknown force. The varying forms of the grotesque can be objectively categorized as bizarre and unlikely combinations of disparate objects, unnatural combinations of animate and inanimate forms, and extreme distortion or disfigurement of recognizable forms.

The tension and uncertainty resulting from the conflict between the grotesque and the natural world causes a reaction characteristic of the grotesque--laughter mixed with horror or disgust.² The domination of one element over another is determined mainly by the degree of identification with the grotesque character or situation. If viewed objectively, the grotesque becomes comic, and can be safely dismissed by laughter. If identification with the grotesque is made and an inescapable connection to reality--and thus truth--is maintained, horror or disgust results.³

The grotesque first emerged as an ornamental style in the Italian Renaissance (inspired by recently unearthed Roman artifacts). This ornamentation was characterized by the combination of animal, human, and plant forms. As the Renaissance spread outward, grotesque art surfaced in other countries as well, most notably in Holland and Belgium. At this point, the grotesque was usually religiously oriented, illustrating man's basic sinful

nature, and was noticeably lacking in comic overtones.

In France, the identification of the grotesque with the distortive art of caricature (introduced by Jacques Callot in 1620) initiated the exaggerated, burlesque air typical of much modern grotesque. During the 1700's, the grotesque gained respectability and genre status as a combination of the tragic and the comic. However, during the Post-Romantic period of the nineteenth century, a feeling of underlying evil and unknown forces triggered the "mysterious and terrifying connection between the fantastic and the real world which is so essential for the grotesque."⁴ This combination can be seen in various artists: in France, Charles Baudelaire, in his Flowers of Evil (1857), created a "world of the dream of beauty . . . ever wildly oscillating between ecstasy and disgust"⁵; in England, the more comic face of the grotesque was expressed in the farcical juxtapositions of Edward Lear's poetry⁶ and the grotesque distortions in the characters of Charles Dickens.⁷

In America, the grotesque was notably evident in the writing of Edgar Allen Poe. His short story, "The Masque of the Red Death," is a compact model of grotesque imagery and estrangement.⁸ Though grotesque images surface intermittently in American literature (in the works of Sherwood Anderson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Stephen Crane, for example), Southern literature seems to have emphatically claimed the grotesque as its own. Southern writers such as William Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe, Robert Penn Warren, Nathaniel West, Erskine Caldwell, Katherine Anne Porter, Truman Capote, Tennessee Williams, Eudora Welty, Carson McCullers, Walker Percy, and Flannery O'Connor all use, in varying degrees, grotesque

elements or grotesque themes of estrangement in their works.

In Southern literature, the use of the grotesque is directly linked to questions of morality--what is good and what is evil. In general, Southern writers are acutely conscious of the problems of morality in the modern world. William Faulkner, the unchallenged giant of Southern literature, was intensely concerned with the "problem of living as moral men in an immoral world."⁹ In his search for answers, Faulkner unearthed the ineffable undertow of the past, the modern lack of human ties, and the depths of human evil. His work included grotesque, inhuman creatures who wandered in a landscape of barely constrained violence. And Faulkner is not alone; the warped, dark shadow of Popeye creeps ominously through much of Southern literature. Many Southern writers groped and probed in the intricacies of evil and good, examining and starkly exposing the canker they found. On Southern literary observation, Frederick J. Hoffman notes:

Above all, Southern writing is noted for a sense of the concrete. . . . Perhaps the Southern literary tradition has been most active of all in adhering to the concrete fact. This is not often the "realistic" fact, or the scientific fact so much admired in most modern literature. It is the object, or the experience, observed with a most thorough and tender concern for preserving its essential nature. . . . Much of this detail is violent, grotesque, the exaggeration made palpably real.¹⁰

Further, William Van O'Connor writes of William Faulkner and Robert Penn Warren that "both writers . . . seem not only troubled by, but participant in the sense of man's estrangement, his guilt, and his general sense of meaninglessness."¹¹ This is true for many Southern writers as well; they lack a frame of reference, a standard to measure by.¹²

It is at this point that Flannery O'Connor makes a significant departure from Southern literature. O'Connor's frame of reference is the Christian tradition. Many writers, such as Warren and West, used Christian elements, but O'Connor writes from the Christian viewpoint. Flannery O'Connor writes "with the assurance that the Christian doctrines of grace, mercy, and redemption are true."¹³ This differentiates her from many other Southern writers in their preoccupation with moral issues--O'Connor has a defined starting point.

Regardless of "starting point," the grotesque of the South (and indeed virtually all grotesque) has a purpose: the function of the grotesque when viewed as process rather than as static form is to effect change. The apparent comic absurdity and gratuitous evil of the grotesque functions to mirror the worse aspects of present conditions, but without the utter hopelessness of the absurd. Far from suggesting the ultimate nothingness of the absurd, the grotesque embodies the "clash between accepting and rejecting the possibility of truth outside our experience."¹⁴ This is precisely the challenge to Southern writers: to show in the concrete reality of the South the existence of another meaning and ordering.

However, a fundamental question still lies unanswered: why did the recent outpouring of grotesque literature occur in the South? Critics have variously and at length tackled this question. The general rise of the Southern literary grotesque in recent years has often been described in terms of cultural estrangement. William Van O'Connor proposes that there were more Southern writers of the grotesque because, among other reasons, the culture's "old agricultural system depleted the land and bred abnormality;

in many cases people were living with a code that was no longer applicable, and this meant a detachment from reality and loss of vitality."¹⁵ Bernard Breyer defines the Southern movement toward the grotesque from a religious standpoint: Southern religion made writers more conscious of original sin. According to Breyer, man was once whole and is now less than whole. Thrown out of paradise, he is isolated and conscious of alienation from a once-held position. Violence in literature--integral to the modern grotesque--serves "as the most dramatic manifestation of man's proud, perverse, volcanic, unregenerate . . . unreconstructed soul."¹⁶ Violence serves to remind society of its fallen state. Similarly, Lewis A. Lawson sees Southern literature as traditionally old-fashioned; it is based on concepts of fundamental good and evil. According to Lawson, the grotesque serves as a method to indicate the presence of evil. Northern literature of realism is rejected by the South as too limited; Southern literature traditionally embraces the mystical. However, Lawson sees an end to the Southern grotesque movement as the South undergoes a cultural and social revolution and, in effect "Northernizes." Lawson assumes a direct correlation between social views and literary trends; he sees a movement toward Northern literature in the cultural shift of the South.¹⁷

Flannery O'Connor has often been singled out from other Southern writers for greater intensity and consistency of theme in her writings. O'Connor's work is based on a solidly grounded, inviolable theological framework. In order to understand and then to evaluate O'Connor's religious stance in her works, it must first be understood that "any view of man's place in the world which denies the added dimension revealed through Christ"

must be labeled grotesque.¹⁸

Many critics have examined O'Connor's work and purpose from a religious perspective. Sister Bertrande states that O'Connor's purpose is to show the workings of the Holy Spirit in everyday life. Bertrande describes the plan, purpose, and pattern of O'Connor's work as "the action of redemptive grace at work in the soul of man and his response to its influence."¹⁹ A similar view is taken by Robert Drake, who states that O'Connor's principal theme is Christian religion: there is no salvation in works or self, only in Christ. Those characters who attempt to rely on themselves or their works are depicted as grotesque. Further, Drake recognizes an important implication of O'Connor's grotesque--an assumption of "straightness" lies behind her grotesque. According to Drake, inherent in O'Connor's writings must be a basic "rightness," or the grotesque becomes meaningless.²⁰ The link of grotesque to religious redemption--Drake's "rightness"--has also been noted by Irving Malin. In an article in The Added Dimension: The Art and Mind of Flannery O'Connor, Malin states that the "Christian writer believes that sin and the grotesque are joined because sin violates cosmic order."²¹ But in O'Connor the author sees a conflict: O'Connor the Christian believes in man's free will, but O'Connor the writer affirms the grotesqueness of the world, implying the inescapable trap of self-love. Opposing this interpretation are Leon Driskell and Joan Brittain, who in their book, The Eternal Crossroads: The Art of Flannery O'Connor, show no evidence of a conflict of grotesque determinism and religious free will. According to Driskell and Brittain, O'Connor's stories detail fanatics, killers, self-centered egotists, and hypocrites who "rise out of their

grotesqueness and converge in their awareness of themselves as sinners in a redeemed world. The message is hope."²² Another critic, Henry Taylor, also emphasizes grotesquery as a means of redemption. Taylor examines the fiction of O'Connor in light of the assumption of an interrelation between physical and mental deformity. According to Taylor, characters with physical deformities are disposed to meditate on the spiritual deformity common to all men; thus these characters often serve as a means of enlightenment for those unaware of their spiritual deformity, their grotesqueness.²³ This idea of enlightenment, by violence, is explored by Marion Montgomery. Montgomery maintains that O'Connor, by the shock of her "fanatical" position on religion, tries to highlight the "repulsive grotesque" that has rejected it. O'Connor's work, according to Montgomery, tries to show man's true obscenity--disassociation from reality--enjoyed through excessive sentimentality, which is in itself a distortion.²⁴

Another perspective on Flannery O'Connor's purpose can be found in the recurrence of the journey motif. Ted Spivey examines O'Connor's use of the quest myth, theorizing that O'Connor's characters are involved in an intense quest for God. Her stories narrate the beginning and progress of the quest, but not the end. The journey or quest is begun as the result of an individual's sense of his own and the world's disintegration, and O'Connor portrays the grotesqueness of the character along the road of the quest.²⁵ Frederick Hoffman also examines the journey motif in O'Connor. Hoffman notes that in O'Connor's fiction, man is in need of redemption, and the grotesque characters portrayed often function in the role of Christ, redeemer, or at least in the role of challenger to Christ's authority. According to

Hoffman, man, by means of the grotesque character, is set upon his journey to real salvation.²⁶

Another aspect of O'Connor's use of religion and the grotesque can be found in an examination of the author's use of the demonic. John Hawkes, in his article, "Flannery O'Connor's Devil," alleges that O'Connor uses the devil's voice as a vehicle for satire. Hawkes, quoting Edwin Honig, defines satire as a form that demolishes, by means of irony and analogy, man's image of himself as a rational creature.²⁷ According to Hawkes, the satire of O'Connor has the purpose of teaching man the absurdity of disbelief in God; O'Connor's devil goes around "piercing pretention" and teaching, by violent means, self-knowledge.²⁸ Preston M. Browning also acknowledges the positive aspect of the demonic: according to Browning, the demonic in O'Connor's fiction makes possible the salvation of her characters. Confronted with evil, the character recognizes his own imperfect understanding and need for grace. In recognizing the actuality of the devil, the presence of God is also acknowledged, thus making salvation accessible. Browning points out that the grotesque in O'Connor--the sense of perverse, demonic evil--is not used in the traditional Nihilistic manner. For Browning, the grotesque in O'Connor's fiction points the way to a means of salvation by stripping away the layers of respectability and morality, readying the character for redemption by grace.²⁹

One critic takes yet another perspective on O'Connor's religion and the grotesque--the Marxist perspective. William Van O'Connor, in an article on "The Grotesque in Modern American Fiction," explains the social climate behind literature of the grotesque, applying these conditions to American

literature of this mode. Literature of the grotesque is a reaction to the blandness of bourgeois customs and habits. According to William O'Connor, the authoress' work is the result of a "Catholic orthodoxy erupting inside an amoral commercialism and an ill-defined and sometimes not very vigorous Protestantism."³⁰

Opposing all this analysis and evaluation is a critical viewpoint that asserts there is no purpose in O'Connor's grotesque, nor any link between the author's use of religious theme and grotesque effect. Elmo Howell condemns O'Connor as repetitious, self-conscious, and unsubtle, and attributes O'Connor's popularity and critical acclaim to a "Southern fad."³¹ In the same category is an assertion by Issac Rosenfield that there is no correlation between O'Connor's style, techniques, and statement. In a review of O'Connor's novel Wise Blood, Rosenfield sees O'Connor's work as a depiction of an insane world, peopled by "monsters" and "submen"; and he declares that in her novel the "extremely important distinction between religious striving and mania is ground away."³²

Such criticism is evidence of an incomplete evaluation of O'Connor's method and purpose. The method of O'Connor is the grotesque; the purpose is to illustrate one principle, absolute and inviolable--man is grotesque without God. Given this principle, fundamental to O'Connor's religious belief, the form of her fiction is virtually inevitable. The non-believers in O'Connor's world are depicted as grotesque, yet not as grotesque as the professed believers, the hypocrites. The "saved" of her fiction are those individuals who realize the grotesquery of modern man and turn to God. Many of O'Connor's demonic figures function as cathartic agents, "piercing

pretensions" and thus bringing the opportunity for revelation nearer to the yet "unsaved."

O'Connor's definition of the grotesque--existence without God--is directly related to the grotesque impulse of estrangement. The estrangement, for O'Connor, is religious: man has been ejected from paradise, out of the presence of God. Modern man needs to re-establish his relationship with God. From the impulse of the grotesque a purpose of change can be inferred-- a total unequivocal rejection of the known is the province of the absurd. The grotesque suggests change--beneficial change. Thus O'Connor's method of illumination by the grotesque is neither horrific, superfluous,ⁿ or unsubtle. On the contrary, O'Connor's grotesque approaches the sublime.

The grotesque and the underlying meaning of O'Connor's fiction interact in two ways: the grotesque indicates present conditions, suggesting an alternative, and the underlying principle in action produces grotesque effects. But these grotesque effects should not become the focus of the work; they merely point to the operation of O'Connor's religious axiom of redemption--the principle underlying all her work. Though O'Connor's grotesque is traditional in impulse, it is unconventional in its systematic nature. The pattern of O'Connor's stories is unvarying and logical, following the dictates of her premise. The systematic operation of O'Connor's grotesque, the grotesque's adherence to O'Connor's religious vision, and the logical outcome of the system's application will be examined in this paper.

II

The machinery of the grotesque, which patterns O'Connor's world, can be seen operating in the short story "Revelation." In this story, the "traditional," though unstated, class system of high and low is violently overturned, distorting accepted standards and creating the phenomenon of the grotesque. The possible truth of this new view threatens the reader's "sense of essential humanity," and therefore, according to Geoffrey Harpham, the idea is viewed as grotesque.³³

In "Revelation," Ruby Turpin, a white, middle-class citizen, takes her husband, Claud, to the doctor. In the waiting room, Ruby is attacked and viciously denounced as "a wart hog from hell" by another occupant of the room, an ill-mannered girl. Ruby, shocked by the incomprehensible act, returns home and ponders the insult. She struggles to understand why she has been singled out by the girl, and Ruby is rewarded for her efforts by a vision--a revelation of souls ascending into heaven, "white trash," "niggers," and "freaks" in the fore, the less favored "respectable people" in the rear.

O'Connor's stories revolve around four character types: hypocrites, do-gooders, intellectuals, and cathartic agents. All of her stories either involve the conflict between a cathartic agent--sometimes accompanied by an emblem--and one or more of the remaining types, or detail the evolution of a potential cathartic agent. In "Revelation," the central focus is the interaction between Mary Grace, the rude girl, and Ruby Turpin, an O'Connor hypocrite. The opposition between the two characters rests on the basis of

perspective; each holds a view opposite and exclusive of the other.

The waiting room contains representatives of all classes of people; Ruby Turpin delineates the classes according to her viewpoint. Through her eyes are seen a woman in a feed sack dress and her child, both dirty and classified by Ruby as "white trash"; a younger woman chewing gum--"not white-trash, just common"; a well-dressed lady with whom Ruby associates herself--"respectable people"--and the lady's daughter, Mary Grace. This representative grouping of all the classes of people in Flannery O'Connor's world is completed by the entrance of a young Negro delivery boy. The last category of Ruby's social cosmology is the freaks, into which Mary Grace falls.

However, Ruby is less than absolute in her views; she vaguely realizes some contradiction:

. . . on the bottom of the heap were most colored people, not the kind she would have been if she had been one, but most of them; then next to them--not above, just away from--were the white-trash; then above them the home-owners, and above them the home-and-land owners, to which she and Claud belonged. Above she and Claud were people with a lot of money and much bigger houses and much more land.³⁴

However, at this point the conflicts of rich colored people, poor good white people, and bad rich white people begin to confuse her. This confusion, and the resulting uncertainty, is the reason Mary Grace is able to affect Ruby.

Mary Grace, the "freak" of Ruby's world, is a cathartic agent, a demonic figure whose function is to shock Ruby. The Christian allusions in the name Mary Grace, though the girl herself radiates evil, suggest the

girl's function as a means of rebirth for Ruby. This "awakening" must be violent to be successful. The catharsis of Ruby can only be triggered by a violent shock. Mary Grace's view of the world is like that of Ruby's vision: an exact inversion of the accepted system. Mary Grace, unlike Ruby, is confident in her own clear view. Mary Grace glares at the world around her, seeing the "true" graceless, fallen--and therefore grotesque--state of the people around her.

The juxtaposition of opposites,³⁵ a tension that is central to much of the effect of the grotesque, can be seen in an examination of O'Connor's physical descriptions. Physically, Mary Grace is ugly and awkward, and her appearance evolves from the merely unpleasant to the deranged. Often in O'Connor's stories, as Henry Taylor suggests, the physically deformed character has the most inner knowledge and vision. As Taylor explains, physical deformity makes the character an outcast; alone and made aware in a concrete way of a grotesque appearance, the deformed character often meditates on the inner grotesqueness of all mankind. The outward deformity of the cathartic agent makes him more aware of the inner deformity present in himself and in all men. This knowledge, which begins the journey to reintegration, brands him a "freak."³⁶

Logically, then, an outwardly normal and whole exterior is often indicative of a greater inner deformity. The outwardly normal character, complacent and superficial, is never motivated to reflect on his inner state. The automatic conventionality of Ruby Turpin indicates her unawareness of her own grotesqueness. The vision of the outwardly normal character

is more distorted than that of the outwardly grotesque character.

The contrast of outwardly conventional, inwardly deformed, can best be seen in Mary Grace's mother, another of O'Connor's hypocrites, but a more extreme example than Ruby Turpin. The Mother and Ruby Turpin particularly annoy Mary Grace, and with good reason: the two women, one nameless, represent the solid, indifferent, self-confident lost souls of O'Connor's fiction. Mary Grace's mother, the worse of the two women, degenerates to the extreme of mouthing smug platitudes of mediocrity: she is no longer an individual; nameless, faceless, mechanical, she is barely human. This automated, soulless existence is what Mary Grace accuses Ruby Turpin of in a violent confrontation. Immediately preceding Mary Grace's attack on Ruby, platitude and mechanical discourse virtually dominate the conversation. The last exchange between the two older women before Mary Grace throws her book closes in repetitive commonplaces:

Some day she'll wake up and it'll be too late . . . it never hurt anyone to smile . . . it just makes you feel better all over . . . there are just some people you can't tell anything to. . . . (p. 499)

The last remark made in the exchange is by Ruby:

"If it's one thing I am," Mrs. Turpin said with feeling, "it's grateful. When I think who all I could have been besides myself and what all I got, a little of everything, and a good disposition besides, I just feel like shouting, 'Thank you, Jesus, for making everything the way it is!' It could have been different! . . . Oh thank you, Jesus, Jesus, thank you!" (p. 499)

It is at this point that Mary Grace throws her book at Ruby and attacks

her, attempting to choke her. The imagery is violent and startling: the girl's "raw" face crashes across the table, and her fingers sink "like clamps" into Ruby's soft neck.

This scene presents a problem of identification for the reader. Up to this point, the inane remarks and attitude of Ruby Turpin makes the reader empathize with Mary Grace. But the ugly violence of the girl's attack and her absurdly comic invective leave the reader alternately shocked, horrified, and amused--precisely the effect of the grotesque. The abrupt disassociation creates a moment of what Mathew Winston categorizes as "grotesque black humor"; the style serves "to distance us from the work, to make us laugh one moment at what horrifies us the next, or to keep us uneasily suspended between the two responses."³⁷ Mary Grace's outburst leaves the reader adrift--precisely O'Connor's intention.

The revelation is given to Ruby Turpin because she, unlike many of Flannery O'Connor's characters, has the potential to come to a true awareness of her condition. The message in Mary Grace's assignment of Ruby, and indeed all of her class, to the level of hogs strikes home. After leaving the waiting room, Ruby is changed; she is no longer the good-natured, smiling, complacent lady of "Revelation"'s beginning. On her truck ride home, the now grim Ruby has "gripped" the window ledge and looks out "suspiciously" (p. 502); later she is described as wearing a look of "ferocious concentration" (p. 503).

Later, challenging God to refute her system, Ruby receives enlightenment. In a vision, Ruby sees the ascension of souls into heaven, ranked in an order exactly the inverse of her own. Further, the last rank, the

respectable people, follow with shocked faces from which "even their virtues were being burned away" (p. 508), implying that what were considered virtues by Ruby are, in reality, barriers to God's salvation. Through this vision Ruby sees the "true" order of the world and the status of "respectable" people.

Before her vision, Ruby rebelled against the radical ideas slowly forcing themselves upon her: she shouted, "' . . . Call me a wart hog from hell. Put that bottom rail on top. There'll still be a top and bottom!'. A garbled echo returned to her" (p. 507). This is the essence of the grotesque: the bottom rail is on the top, a juxtaposition of opposites. The grotesque is often characterized by a fusion of separate realms and a suspension of categories,³⁸ here a result of the opposition of the view of virtue outlined in Ruby's beliefs and those inherent in her vision. In O'Connor's system, there is a top and bottom, a value system. This is an essential element of the grotesque of O'Connor;³⁹ there is an underlying structure. If there are no absolute values, the grotesque degenerates into the absurd.⁴⁰ The absurd assumes no norm and totally denies any frame of reference, whereas the grotesque plays against a standard, highlighting and exposing the extent of deviation from that standard.

The grotesque of Flannery O'Connor follows a logical system of cause and effect. The grotesque stems from the conflict between Ruby Turpin and Mary Grace, and the grotesqueness of Mary Grace's attack--its sudden, unexplained violence and the incongruity of her wart hog epithet for the very proper Ruby--serves to define the conflict and to force a confrontation. The action of Mary Grace can be seen as necessary in

O'Connor's world, where the "true" vision of life--as a place where man is grotesque without God, lost without a realization of the real presence of God--is held by the outcasts and demonic figures.

Another example of the "grotesque" character acting upon a "respectable" person can be seen in O'Connor's short story, "Good Country People." Mrs. Hopewell, a self-sufficient farming woman, her crippled daughter, Joy, and the Hopewell's hired woman, Mrs. Freeman, are visited by a traveling bible salesman, Manley Pointer. Joy, a self-absorbed intellectual who vindictively changes her name to Hulga, decides to seduce and ultimately "save" the young bible salesman by showing him the truth of ultimate nothingness. Instead, the bible salesman seduces Hulga and absconds with her wooden leg. By his triumph over Hulga, Manley effects a cathartic moment, revealing Hulga--as well as her mother--to be a true grotesque.

Hulga is an O'Connor intellectual--an individual confident in the inability of anyone to know anything. Though sharing in the "do-gooder"'s didactic tendencies (O'Connor's righteous do-gooders believe they hold the key to the nature of salvation, and they consider it their sacred duty to instruct others in their "truth"), Hulga is different in that she does not believe man to be the center of the universe. Though she willfully barricades herself from salvation by blind adherence to her wrong belief, Hulga is much closer to grace than many of O'Connor's characters; she realizes the inner deformity of man. Because of her recognition of basic human grotesqueness, Hulga is given a vision.

The intellectual Hulga is not as grotesque as her inhumanly conventional mother, through whose ludicrous vision O'Connor shows the accepted

views of the world. Since, according to O'Connor, any view that does not a priori establish the basic grotesqueness of godless man is false,⁴¹ the shallow optimism of Mrs. Hopewell is made particularly odious. In the tradition of Mary Grace's mother in "Revelation," Mrs. Hopewell is so far beyond any possibility of O'Connor's "true" vision that she believes her worn-out clichés to be her own original thought. Mrs. Hopewell is a living argument for the necessity of violent means to effect an awakening, though her character makes the reader despair of any shock violent enough to affect her. (Unless, perhaps, as in O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," Mrs. Hopewell could be done the inestimable courtesy of being shot.)

O'Connor uses physical description to emphasize the traits and functions of each character. One of the predominant characteristics used symbolically is vision. Mrs. Hopewell's gaze is suitably vague and vapid; she sees a hopelessly rosy vision of the world. The maxims of her life are "Nothing is perfect" and "That is life," ironic statements in that she really believes everything is perfect or could become so, and she has no idea of what life is. When confronted by unpleasantness, Mrs. Hopewell manages to avert her gaze by retreating into the safe refuge of pragmatism. Like her mother, Hulga's vision is also analogous to her philosophy: the girl "would stare just a little to the side . . . her eyes icy blue, with the look of someone who has achieved blindness by an act of will and means to keep it" (p. 273). Hulga's views are wrong, but not totally. Hulga's "sin" is her unwillingness to search further than her blanket condemnation of man.

In contrast to the escapism of Mrs. Hopewell and Hulga is the

realistic vision of Manley Pointer and Mrs. Freeman (who shares some of the cathartic grotesque's traits). Both are possessed of cold, steely eyes, eyes that see through Hulga and her mother. Mrs. Freeman's vision operates to her own advantage: she sees what she wants to see. Similarly, Manley's vision furthers his own end; he gazes reverently at Hulga until it is no longer to his advantage to admire her. The vision of Mrs. Hopewell and Hulga is static, a means of escape, while the vision of Manley and Mrs. Freeman is active, a shrewd manipulation of reality.

The general physical description of Hulga shows her potential for salvation. Hulga, realizing the inner deformity of man, dramatizes that inner deformity in her own intentionally ugly outer appearance. Hulga first appears as a "hulking" figure who "lumbers" and "stumps" through the Hopewell house. Her wooden leg would normally alert the reader to the possibility of a cathartic grotesque, but Hulga has not reached that stage yet. The wooden leg, glasses, and unlovely name--all typical of an O'Connor prophet--have instead become crutches for Hulga to lean on. Manley Pointer strips her of these barriers to "salvation." Defenseless, Hulga is left free to accept mystical grace, and, perhaps, reassume the badges of a true prophet.

Manley Pointer's physical description is overwhelmingly, almost comically sexual. From his name to his appearance from behind a bush as "suddenly he stood up, very tall," the phallic imagery is broad burlesque. The seduction and humbling of Hulga by this crude trickster demonstrates the fallacy of her smug belief that she has found ultimate truth. Here, as in many of O'Connor's stories, the demonic agent, by jolting a "lost soul"

into awareness of its state, works for Christ. The inverted method is the result of necessity; as Walter Sullivan points out, "it is easier for us to recognize the mask of the devil than to comprehend the workings of grace."⁴² Faced with a true nihilist, a devil, Hulga's philosophy is inadequate; she is made to realize, if not her need of God, at least her inability to resolve the problem of human grotesqueness alone.

The close of "Good Country People" is a vignette of the grotesque played out between Mrs. Hopewell and Mrs. Freeman as the "innocent" young bible salesman leaves with Hulga's leg. Beneath the surface irony of the two women's exchange on Manley's simplicity are deeper implications, revealed by the shift in perspective afforded the reader who has a more complete view of the story's action than the two speakers. The women speak absolute truth, though neither is totally aware of the implications of her statements. Mrs. Hopewell is closer to the truth than she could know when she labels Manley "simple," noting that "the world would be better off if we were all that simple." Manley Pointer is simply evil, and perhaps the world would be better off if the demonic was always as easily recognizable.

In all, the sordid, seamy, demonic Manley holds a strange fascination for the reader. As Arthur Clayborough astutely observes of the grotesque, "we are not only repelled by it, we are also fascinated."⁴³ Malin, in a similar vein, writes, "I am horrified by her [O'Connor's] use of the grotesque, but it also delights me. How can the grotesque be pleasureable? Is horror fun?"⁴⁴ He answers himself by proposing that an understanding of the horror and comic inversions puts the reader above the characters observed, and the ability to categorize, pigeonhole, the grotesque makes it enjoyable.

The action of "Good Country People" is largely comic, an extended traveling-salesman joke, until the tone suddenly turns dark and unsettling. The conclusion of the seduction scene abruptly shifts the surface stock comedy to black humor--the innocuous becomes the "ghastly kind of comic strip"⁴⁵ characteristic of O'Connor, and indeed, of much modern grotesque.

Another of O'Connor's targets is the self-righteous "do-gooder." A prime example of the "do-gooder" is Sheppard, a volunteer reformatory counselor in "The Lame Shall Enter First." Like the intellectual Hulga of "Good Country People," Sheppard relies entirely on himself. Like Hulga, Sheppard views religion as an "elemental warping of nature" (p. 450), and he attempts to "free" a bible-saturated youth named Rufus Johnson. Sheppard's aim is to give the boy a new view of life, a view free of religious "rubbage." Unlike Hulga, however, Sheppard's view of ultimate truth is not absolute nothingness. He believes in the ability of man to overcome everything by his own efforts. Everything is knowable and manipulatable.

The confident Sheppard meets his antithesis in Rufus, a lame street kid whom Sheppard takes into his home. Rufus functions as a cathartic agent; he is an embodiment of non-reasoning evil. Sheppard, smug optimist, cannot believe in evil, and he rationalizes the boy's vindictive acts: they result from a bad environment; the boy is attempting to test him; he has been brainwashed by religion. The central tension of "The Lame Shall Enter First" is the conflict between these two O'Connor types, the do-gooder (or Rationalist) and the cathartic grotesque.

O'Connor purposely makes the boy's evil excessive to emphasize, without possibility of mistake, the source of Rufus's actions--the devil.

Physically, demonic evil is symbolized by the boy's club-foot. Sheppard, strangely fascinated by the deformity, attempts to "fix" the foot with a corrective shoe, symbolic of his attempts to alleviate demonic evil by modern rationalism. The shoe's poor fit and Rufus's refusal to wear it reflect Sheppard's failure to dominate unreasoning evil. Traditionally, the club-foot is a sign of the devil, and Rufus "was as touchy about the foot as if it were a sacred object" (p. 459). As indicated by the limp, the boy functions as a devil, and, as O'Connor herself writes, "I suppose the devil teaches most of the lessons that lead to self-knowledge." Her devil goes around "piercing pretensions; [hers is] not the devil who goes about . . . seeking whom he may devour."⁴⁶

But there is a problem with O'Connor's demonic figures, Rufus in particular. The demonic often becomes more attractive than the good, and the narrative seems to support the devil. Hawkes observes that throughout O'Connor's fiction, "the creative process transforms the writer's objective Catholic knowledge of the devil into an authorial attitude in itself in some measure diabolical."⁴⁷ Rufus is certainly more interesting and attractive than the bland Sheppard; Sheppard seems alive only at the end of the story, whereas Rufus's earthy and irreverent presence vibrates throughout the work. This problem occurred in a prototype for the demonic figure, John Milton's Satan, and he partially solved it by making Satan physically ugly. O'Connor's solution is Rufus's final degeneration; he loses attraction, but not fascination, as the police drag him away screaming, "the lame'll carry off the prey!" (p. 481). Despite the author's efforts, at times the demonic manages to dominate her fiction.

Throughout "The Lame Shall Enter First," Sheppard and Rufus clash continually, each confrontation increasing in violence and intensity. Rufus continually taunts and torments Sheppard, trying to make him believe in the cliché of Satanic possession: "the devil has you in his power" (p. 478). As Kenneth Frieling points out, in O'Connor's fiction, "the realization of a cliché's true implications" is one of the means to an individual's realization of his own grotesqueness.⁴⁸

Rufus finally causes Sheppard to recognize demonic evil, a force outside himself. In one of the last struggles between the two, Sheppard begins to hate Rufus for his tenacious hold on his own truth in the face of popular "modern" views. Rufus believes that only Jesus can save man from his grotesque state, while Sheppard, holding a popular view, does not even see the "true" state of man. Finally, however, Sheppard looks at Rufus and sees that "the boy's eyes were like distorting mirrors in which he saw himself made hideous and grotesque" (p. 474). Sheppard sees himself as he is, but he cannot accept the vision as truth. But Sheppard's final revelation does reveal to him the actual value of his son, Norton. Sheppard runs to Norton, full of desperate love--runs to his salvation. In a deft ironic twist, Sheppard turns to Norton only to find the child has hanged himself only moments before.

At this point, it is useful to examine Norton's function in the story. Norton is an intentionally flat character, a symbol. Like the statue in O'Connor's "The Artificial Nigger," Norton represents the enigmatic nature of God. Through his son's innocence, Sheppard could have been saved. But Sheppard's realization came too late; he rejected his son only

moments before in his last chance for salvation.

Though the logic of the ending is reasonable--the telescope was Norton's link to truth beyond the knowable, beyond the narrow rationalism of his father--the effect is mystical, and intentionally so. The last sentence of the story is an abrupt shift in the narrator's previous realistic tone. O'Connor was attempting to evoke a mood of quiet mystery and a sense of the unknowable--the phenomenon of grace. Subjectively, the reader is meant to experience the same sort of awe that levels Mr. Head and his grandson before the jockey's statue. But the effect doesn't ring true--it seems too contrived. This is one of O'Connor's few missteps, though an intriguing and particularly lyrical one.

Another of Flannery O'Connor's short stories, "Enoch and the Gorilla," shows the beginning of a character's transformation into a cathartic grotesque. Enoch Emery is a seeker--like The Misfit of "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," Mr. Shiftlet of "The Life You Save May Be Your Own," and O. E. Parker of "Parker's Back"--after meaning. Throughout the story, Enoch believes he is on the verge of a revelation; he is confident in his own "wise blood" that something is about to happen to him. Alone in a strange city, Enoch searches for companionship, for love. He finds it in the warm, furry handshake of a fake gorilla, though the man inside tells him to "go to hell." Enoch determines to try, through use of the gorilla suit, to gain acceptance from other people. He knocks the original "gorilla" unconscious and, donning the gorilla suit, sets out to try his new identity. The first couple he approaches runs from him. The story ends with the image of a bewildered gorilla/man contemplating the distant city skyline.

The last image of "Enoch and the Gorilla" is pure grotesque, in both the traditional and the modern sense. "The monstrous fusion of human and nonhuman elements," evident in the combination of man and gorilla, is catalogued by Wolfgang Kayser as part of the original history of the word in the German language.⁴⁹ This fusion, resulting in incongruity, is pre-figured by the first appearance of the gorilla in a hat and raincoat. A more modern juxtaposition of opposites is also apparent in Enoch's actions--the combination of tragedy and comedy. As Kayser points out, the grotesque is "a play with the absurd; it begins gay and carefree, but carries the player away."⁵⁰ A similar technique is that of black humor, in which "often we are made to laugh at a character, then suddenly to recognize that we share his dilemma and therefore have been laughing at ourselves all along."⁵¹ Considering the plot line, it is amazing that the story is not comic; O'Connor's "audacious funambulism" is fascinating to watch.⁵² The barrier between comic and tragic is broken down by the presence of an underlying meaning.⁵³ The absurd--signaled by the comic--would result if there was no meaning behind Enoch's actions.⁵⁴ The meaning behind O'Connor's grotesque is that typical of most modern writers. Barasch states that since James Joyce, "most important writers address problems of modern man's search for meaning in a disoriented and confusing world."⁵⁵

The prevalent method for the portrayal of man's separation from the world is a grotesque mixture of the ludicrous and the terrible.⁵⁶ The bare outline of the story qualifies as ludicrous, but to avoid the absurd, the terrible and the sublime are introduced. The main agent of achieving this effect is distance.⁵⁷ The narrator remains aloof, detached,⁵⁸ but the

reader identifies with the protagonist to a certain extent; Enoch's desire to be liked, to belong, is common to everyone. The ending scene of the man/gorilla's contemplation of civilization indicates a meaning beyond the mere absurd. The grotesque image is an enigma, constructed out of ordinary life, but "disassociated into something incongruous."⁵⁹ This sublime quality is essential: if the link to reality is made, the grotesque becomes comic.⁶⁰ The idea of a gorilla strolling through the woods with a denuded terrier-head umbrella would be comic, except for the suggestion of the sublime. This sublime meaning can be seen in the modern conception of the grotesque--the "structure of estrangement."⁶¹ In literature, this estrangement becomes apparent in a scene or tableau; the situation is filled with "ominous tension," and "we are terrified because our world ceases to be reliable and we feel that we would be unable to live in this changed world."⁶² Enoch, repulsed by his fellow man, stares, uncomprehending, at the world. Yet he does not consider suicide, a logical alternative since he seems unable to function in this world. Instead, genuinely puzzled, Enoch seeks an answer.

Enoch is modern man, caught in his grotesque estrangement from God. Enoch, unlike most other men, realizes, if indistinctly, the presence of a problem, and he seeks a resolution to his state of grotesqueness. The manner in which he seeks this answer is ludicrous, but the motivation is deeply serious. Enoch is shown at a moment just preceding an epiphany; he is doubtful and puzzled, a state, as shown before, most receptive to revelations of "truth." O'Connor shows, in one brief image, man at the central dilemma of his existence--how to live and where to find meaning in

life. Following O'Connor's convictions, the successful resolution of Enoch's dilemma must be his discovery that he is in a grotesque state of existence, and further, that this condition is due to his separation from God.

If, as Gilbert Muller proposes, the literary grotesque is seen in the light of a journey motif,⁶³ there is hope for the reintegration of Enoch, and thus, symbolically, for all men. The grotesque episode of "Enoch and the Gorilla" can be seen as one episode in the journey toward "true" meaning in life. Logically, if Enoch should reach the point in his journey of realizing the actual state of man around him, he will become an O'Connor cathartic grotesque. This possible future evolution is suggested by the demonic signposts Enoch acquires during this leg of his journey. The umbrella, present in the opening scene of the story, is stripped down to resemble a fox-terrier walking stick, an allusion to the poodle-headed cane traditionally carried by Satan. Another sign of the demonic is Enoch's limp after he fights the former inhabitant of the gorilla suit.

Enoch's appearance, while signaling a demonic aspect, also indicates his future function as a prophet. After the struggle, Enoch's face is bloody and swollen, changing his aspect from inquisitive to dull. This change signals that Enoch is ready to receive outside revelation: he has become less eager to attempt to force a resolution by his own will. Enoch is being prepared to become the demonic anti-prophet of O'Connor's stories. The dark glasses--a hallmark of O'Connor prophets--are seen early in the story. The dark glasses point, in the Christian manner of paradox, to the individual who "sees" better in his blindness than those with sight. Of

course, the sightless prophet has overtones of the Greek seer, notably Teresias. Teresias prophesies the downfall of Oedipus, who does not fully see his own grotesqueness until he has blinded himself. The paradox of the grotesque agent--the demonic working for good; the sightless seeing for those with physical but not spiritual sight--is an ancient idea. In "Enoch and the Gorilla," the traditional and the modern conceptions of man and his world are brought to bear, fused, in the final desolation of Enoch:

The gorilla stood as though surprised and presently its arm fell to its side. It sat down on the rock where they had been sitting and stared over the valley at the uneven skyline of the city. (p. 116)

III

Two major distinctions exist between O'Connor's fiction and works of the grotesque tradition: in the relationship between visual or concrete grotesque and emotional or subjective grotesque and in the systematic, logical ordering of O'Connor's work. In the beginnings of grotesque, visual aspect assumed primary importance--emphasis was given to sculpture, painting, and architecture displaying distortions and unnatural fusions of elements. The emotions evoked by such works (constituting the grotesque impulse) was felt behind the works, but only vaguely defined. As the mode evolved, reflecting contemporary ideas, emphasis began to shift from visual to emotional; the impulse generated by the grotesque--a feeling of disassociation and estrangement--became the dominant hallmark. This emotional grotesque is expressed in modern writing, a medium equaling, if not exceed-

ing, all the more visual arts as representative of the grotesque. However, the modern emphasis does not eclipse the visual grotesque; on the contrary, the visual grotesque accompanies and often signals the emotional grotesque. Regardless of dominance, the two components of traditional grotesque function in tandem.

O'Connor reorders this relationship. Her visual grotesques are in opposition to the surging grotesque impulse. Yet the link between the two grotesques is intact: each is dependent on, and in a sense generated by, the other--for example, if there was no Ruby Turpin, there would be no need for Mary Grace.

O'Connor's use of opposed grotesques is inextricably linked to her strong religious belief. Given O'Connor's religious conviction that all people who do not believe in God are grotesque, the distinction between visual and subjective grotesque becomes clear. The visual grotesques see man's true state, and therefore they are not "true" grotesques. The subjective, or emotional, grotesques do not believe in God, and thus they are the "true" grotesques. This seems a simplistic key to O'Connor's fiction, but the door does not open quite so easily. Why is the visual grotesque necessary at all? The answer is again found in the author's religious background. The visual grotesques of O'Connor's fiction are inspired by the traditional Christian paradox and the religious concept of ultimate mystery. The paradox is a stock biblical device: the last shall be first; you must lose your life to find it; even the Messiah's birth--a king born in a stable--is a paradox. Familiarity with bible "logic" would lead a reader to expect not only opposition but also agreement underneath

apparent contradiction. Further, in the manner of paradox, the opposites are equivalent in intensity or degree as compared to an implied center. Like the ends of a see-saw, the two extremes balance each other, complements in an intimate relationship. In O'Connor's fiction, the visual and the emotional grotesques supply this balance. Often O'Connor's work contains nearly deranged visual grotesques, necessary to emphasize the extent of the emotional-grotesque character's deformity. Not only is there contrast and balance between characters, but often within each character. The most visually innocuous characters are often the most emotionally distorted; a very precisely ordered balance is maintained.

Christian mystery also influences the author's use of the visual grotesque, emphasizing the necessity of a "leap of faith," an acceptance of the unknowable mystery that God ultimately, to a devout Catholic, must be. O'Connor attempts, by the relentless repetition of the incomprehensibility of paradox, to exemplify the central mystery of God's will. O'Connor's fiction repeatedly attacks characters who believe they are, in some way, omnipotent. O'Connor's use of the paradox of visual and emotional grotesque serves her literary aim of showing man's need for God.

O'Connor's systematic use of the paradox is not typical of the grotesque tradition. Nor is a systematic ordering of events to conform to an underlying axiom a convention of the grotesque. Grotesque literature typically depicts a world made foreign, fragmented, and strange; characters appear lost and confused, wandering aimlessly on a foreign, yet terrifyingly familiar, landscape. However, the systematic nature of O'Connor's universe is inescapable. The "real" grotesques, intellectuals, do-gooders, and smug

hypocrites--in short, all who are separated from God--are acted on by a cathartic agent (sometimes aided or replaced by an emblem) who appears grotesque. This pattern appears again and again in O'Connor's fiction. In "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," a visual grotesque, The Misfit, effects a violent catharsis upon a smug grandmother, an emotional grotesque. In "The Artificial Nigger," Mr. Head and his grandson are jolted out of their false intellectualism when confronted with an emblem--a statue of a Negro--symbolizing the mystery of God. In "Everything That Rises Must Converge," Julian, an intellectual, is acted on by the grotesque visual aspect of his dying mother. In "The Life You Save May be Your Own," Mr. Shiftlet is a potential cathartic grotesque who refuses to accept his "calling," leaving a hypocritical country woman, Lucynell Crater, and her idiot daughter, an emblem, unsaved. In each of her two novels, The Violent Bear It Away and Wise Blood, the evolution of a cathartic agent is traced. In The Violent Bear It Away, the reluctant prophet Tarwater eventually baptizes and kills an idiot boy, performing his first act as a cathartic grotesque. In Wise Blood, Hazel Motes, the protagonist, finally accepts his role, deliberately mutilating his features to become a visual grotesque. O'Connor's fiction details a violent confrontation through which the "true" identity of each character is revealed, this identity dictated by religious conviction. The system--and the roles played in it--is fixed and inviolate.

O'Connor is unusual (an accomplishment in a decidedly unusual tradition) in her rigid, unfaltering adherence to one underlying principle and in her repetitive working out of this principle. Further, the principle dictates the means: the grotesque is chosen not solely for its shocking,

sensationalist characteristics, but also because these same characteristics further exemplify the author's premise. Likewise, O'Connor's use of other modes is dictated by need; realism, the complement of the grotesque, is employed when and only so far as it is useful. O'Connor herself states in one of her letters, "I will take just as much naturalness as I need to accomplish my purposes, no more. . . ." ⁶⁴ O'Connor is occupied in shaping her material into another reality, guided by rules unfamiliar to most. As Geoffrey Harpham notes, throughout history, what once was perceived as distorted, confused, or random is later seen to be interrelated or subject to previously unrecognized laws. ⁶⁵ The threatening sense of strangeness, of foreignness, disappears when a pattern of logic can be seen in operation; the grotesque effect disappears. Without extending to the inadvisable extreme of denying O'Connor's place in the grotesque tradition, it is yet necessary to delineate her relationship to the mode.

On close examination, O'Connor's work demonstrates a systematic organization and rational nature foreign to the grotesque. In most fiction of this mode, the grotesque impulse is the central theme; in O'Connor's fiction the grotesque fills a functional, subservient role. Given this central contrast, classification of O'Connor's work must include, or at the very least acknowledge, a fundamental distinction between O'Connor's work and that of the traditional grotesque. Ultimately it must be recognized that the fiction of Flannery O'Connor extends in an unorthodox direction, defining a singular category, that of the systematic grotesque.

Notes

¹ Wolfgang J. Kayser, The Grottesque in Art and Literature, trans. Ulrich Weisstein (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1963), p. 185.

² Geoffrey Harpham, "The Grottesque: First Principles," JAAC, 34 (1976), 462.

³ W. M. Frohock, "The Edge of Laughter: Some Modern Fiction and the Grottesque," in Veins of Humor, ed. Harry Levin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 250.

⁴ Kayser, p. 122.

⁵ C. Bower Alcock, preface, in Flowers of Evil, by Charles Baudelaire (New York: William Godwin, Inc., 1933), p. 9.

⁶ Arthur Clayborough, The Grottesque in English Literature (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 216.

⁷ Clayborough, p. 216.

⁸ See C. Hugh Holman, Three Modes of Southern Fiction (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1966), p. 34, on Poe's influence.

⁹ Michael Millgate, "William Faulkner: The Problem of Point of View," in Patterns of Commitment in American Literature, ed. Marston LaFrance (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), p. 191.

¹⁰ Frederick J. Hoffman, The Art of Southern Fiction: A Study of Some Modern Novelists (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967), pp. 11-12.

¹¹ William Van O'Connor, "The Grotesque in Modern American Fiction," College English, 20 (1959), 345.

¹² Caroline Gordon, "Flannery O'Connor's Wise Blood," Crit, 2, No. 2 (1958), 5.

¹³ William Van O'Connor, p. 345.

¹⁴ Lewis A. Lawson, "The Grotesque in Recent Southern Literature," in Patterns of Commitment, p. 169.

¹⁵ William Van O'Connor, p. 343.

¹⁶ Bernard Breyer, "A Diagnosis of Violence in Recent Southern Fiction," MissQ, 14 (1961), 62, 67.

¹⁷ Lawson, p. 178.

¹⁸ Marion Montgomery, "Flannery O'Connor's Transformation of the Sentimental," MissQ, 25 (1971), 10.

¹⁹ Sister Bertrande, "Four Stories of Flannery O'Connor," Thought 37 (1962), 412, 426.

²⁰ Robert Drake, "'The Bleeding Stinking Mad Shadow of Jesus' in the Fiction of Flannery O'Connor," CLS, 3 (1966), 188.

²¹ Irving Malin, "Flannery O'Connor and the Grotesque," in The Added Dimension: The Art and Mind of Flannery O'Connor, ed. Melvin J. Friedman and Lewis A. Lawson (New York: Forham University Press, 1966), p. 108.

²² Leon V. Driskell and Joan T. Brittain, The Eternal Crossroads: The Art of Flannery O'Connor (Lexington, Ky.: University of Kentucky Press, 1971), p. 23.

²³ Henry Taylor, "The Halt Shall Be Gathered Together: Physical Deformity in the Fiction of Flannery O'Connor," WHR, 22 (1968), 325-26.

²⁴ Montgomery, p. 2.

²⁵ Ted R. Spivey, "Religion and the Reintegration of Man in Flannery O'Connor and Walker Percy" in The Poetry of Community: Essays on the Southern Sensibility of History and Literature, ed. Lewis P. Simpson (Atlanta, Ga.: School of Arts and Sciences, Georgia State University, 1972), pp. 67-79.

²⁶ Frederick J. Hoffman, pp. 84-90.

²⁷ John Hawkes, "Flannery O'Connor's Devil," SR, 79 (1962), 396.

²⁸ Hawkes, p. 406. Hawkes is quoting from two of O'Connor's letters to him. These letters, dated 22 June 1961 and 20 April 1961, are reprinted in Flannery O'Connor's The Habit of Being, ed. Sally Fitzgerald (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979), pp. 443-44, 438-39.

²⁹ Preston M. Browning Jr., "Flannery O'Connor and the Demonic," MFS, 19 (1973), 33-41.

³⁰ William Van O'Connor, p. 346.

³¹ Elmo Howell, "The Developing Art of Flannery O'Connor," ArQ, 29 (1973), 268, 272.

³² Isaac Rosenfield, "To Win By Default," New Republic, 7 July 1952, pp. 120-21.

³³ Harpham, p. 463.

³⁴ Flannery O'Connor, The Complete Stories (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1946), p. 461. All quotations of O'Connor's short stories are taken from this edition. All further references to this work appear in the text.

³⁵ Gilbert H. Muller, Nightmares and Visions: Flannery O'Connor and the Catholic Grotesque (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1972), p. 2. Muller traces the development of the grotesque, stating that the "high gothic" form replaced the romanesque in the twelfth century, and that this high gothic form, characterized by a "juxtaposition of extremes, nurtured in itself an aesthetic which eventually found expression in the pure grotesque."

³⁶ Taylor, pp. 325-36.

³⁷ Mathew Winston, "'Humour noir' and Black Humor," in Veins of Humor, pp. 283-84.

³⁸ Kayser, p. 185.

³⁹ Gordon, p. 9. Gordon asserts that O'Connor's work is firmly based on an implicit theological framework, and further, that this framework is "so much a part of her direct gaze at human conduct that she seems herself to be scarcely aware of it."

⁴⁰ Harpham, p. 462. Harpham distinguishes the grotesque from the absurd by degree: the grotesque threatens convictions; the absurd destroys them. "We must be believers whose faith is shaken but not destroyed; otherwise we lose that fear of life and become resigned to absurdity, fantasy, or death." Philip Thomson, The Grotesque (USA: Methuen & Co., 1972), pp. 31-32, characterizes the absurd as devoid of formal pattern or structure.

⁴¹ Montgomery, p. 10.

⁴² Walter Sullivan, "Southerners in the City: Flannery O'Connor and Walker Percy," in The Comic Imagination in American Literature, ed. Louis D. Rubin, Jr. (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1973), p. 346.

⁴³ Clayborough, p. 73.

⁴⁴ Malin, p. 122.

⁴⁵ Nathan A. Scott, Jr., "Flannery O'Connor's Testimony: The Pressures of Glory," in The Added Dimension, p. 155.

⁴⁶ "To John Hawkes," 22 June 1961, and "To John Hawkes," 20 April 1961, in Habit of Being, pp. 443-44, 438-39.

⁴⁷ Hawkes, p. 401.

⁴⁸ Kenneth Frieling, "Flannery O'Connor's Vision: The Violence of Revelation," in The Fifties: Fiction, Poetry, Drama, ed. Warren French (DeLand, Fla.: Everett/Edwards, 1970), p. 114.

⁴⁹ Kayser, p. 24.

⁵⁰ Kayser, p. 187.

⁵¹ Winston, p. 276.

⁵² Scott, p. 155.

⁵³ William Van O'Connor, p. 342. O'Connor uses this definition in a discussion of one of Thomas Mann's essays in Past Masters.

⁵⁴ Harpham, p. 462.

⁵⁵ Barasch, p. 161.

⁵⁶ Barasch, p. 161.

⁵⁷ Frohock, p. 244.

58 Barasch, p. 163.

59 Frohock, p. 245.

60 Frohock, p. 245.

61 Harpham, p. 462.

62 Kayser, p. 185.

63 Muller, p. 52. According to Muller, the grotesque estranges man from his surroundings, but if the horrors of the journey can be overcome, there is hope of reintegration and regeneration at the journey's end.

64 "To A.," 25 July 1959, in Habit of Being, pp. 342-43.

65 Harpham, p. 463.

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VITA

Audrey I. Miller

Born in El Paso, Texas, September 4, 1958. Graduated from Gloucester High School, 1976; B.A., in Humanities from Shenandoah College and Conservatory of Music, 1980. Received the M.A. in English from the College of William and Mary in May 1982.

The author is currently editorial assistant, Office of Printing and Publications, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia.