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Flannery O'Connor's mystical salvation through external and internal conflicts.

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FLANNERY O'CONNOR'S MYSTICAL SALVATION THROUGH EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL CONFLICTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Flannery O'Connor died in 1963 when she was thirty-nine. Her life and her career were short. Her canon consists of thirty-one short stories, two novels, and a scattered number of essays which were collected after her death and published under the title Mystery and Manners. Although her short stories were first published in 1946, it was not until the early 1950's that the first distinctive O'Connor story appeared: "A Good Man Is Hard to Find."[1] An O'Connor story typically deals with man, the evil within, the misplaced emphasis on external "goodness," and man's final integration with God which comes when he realizes that he is by nature evil. Spiritually, O'Connor's thinking coincides somewhat with the French theologian, Teilhard de Chardin. They both believe in man's ultimate integration with the whole. O'Connor read Teilhard relatively late in her life, after she had already established her own theology. Thus, O'Connor was not influenced by Teilhard; she just agreed with some of his theology.

Flannery O'Connor believes that man gains a mystical salvation from the conflict between the good and evil and the passive and active

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[1]Robert Giroux, "Introduction," The Complete Stories of Flannery O'Connor, ed. Robert Giroux (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1971), pp. viii and xii.

forces within himself. For O'Connor, man is naturally evil. Since he is separated from God and not good, a war exists between the forces of evil and the forces of good. The evil, which O'Connor exhibits in her fiction, is inherent to the fall of man. With the fall, sin came into the world. Evil comes when man seeks to deny the fall. In doing this, he tries to make himself equal to God. Also, he places himself in the position of denying his need for grace, which for O'Connor is a mortal sin.

Evil is innate to the existence of man. Man, being apart from God, experiences temptation; and every man must admit his own fall. By admitting this, he becomes capable of overcoming the animal within. O'Connor does not say that man should glory in his animalism, rather that he should admit it into existence and then by action overcome or conquer the animalistic aspect of his being. Those who fail to conquer their animalism remain on a physical level. Enoch Emery in Wise Blood, for example, can not shed his physical desires, and he becomes even more animalistic through a gorilla costume. Physicality then, a key term in understanding O'Connor's fiction, is paradoxical in meaning, for O'Connor believes that fiction, or any meaning in life, can not be divorced from the material world that it indicates. In Mystery and Manners, she said,

> Christ didn't redeem us by a direct intellectual act, but became incarnate in human form, and he speaks to us now through the mediation of a visible Church. All this may seem a long way from the subject of fiction, but it is not, for the main concern of the fiction writer is with mystery as it is incarnated in human life.[2]

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[2]Flannery O'Connor. Mystery and Manners, ed. Sally and

Thus, spirituality or integration, for an O'Connor character, can never be divorced from the physical world. Characters who try to achieve this otherworldly divorcement of self ultimately become evil. Finally, those who become totally immersed in physical values also achieve perverse physicality or sensuality, to use a better term, and this to O'Connor is evil.

For O'Connor evil results when man denies the existence of God and tries, through pride, to become his own god. O'Connor believed then that evil poses an intense drama in the ordering of human events and that

> the Christian novelist is distinguished from his pagan colleagues by recognizing sin as sin. According to his heritage he sees it not as sickness or an accident of environment, but as a responsible choice of offense against God which involves his eternal future.[3]

At this point, O'Connor and Teilhard part company, for Teilhard believes that evil is ultimately meaningless,[4] and O'Connor believes that the intense drama or struggle toward salvation evolves around the innate evil of mankind. This principle of evil plays a fundamental role in Enoch Emery's dissipation in Wise Blood and in Shiftlett's disintegration in "The Life You Save May Be Your Own."

When an O'Connor character admits that he is naturally evil and that he is not his own god, a state of grace exists which is O'Connor's

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Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), p. 176.

[3] Mystery and Manners, p. 167.

[4] See Marion Montgomery's article, "O'Connor and Teilhard de Chardin: The Problem of Evil," Renascence 22:1 (1969), 34-42 for further explication of the differences between O'Connor and Teilhard concerning evil.

ultimate definition of good. O'Connor believes that good exists, along with evil, but that it is often crowded out by man's attempt to deny evil. In O'Connor's fiction, good only comes after man, because of a violent moment thrust on him by external forces, recognizes the evil within himself and conquers it.

Furthermore, O'Connor's characters, such as Mrs. Turpin in "Revelation" and the Grandmother in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," often distort the ultimate meaning of evil and good. No longer an internal feeling which can result in external benefits, good becomes an external act; and the internal feeling is denied. The grandmother, for example, says that Red Sammy is a good man because he extends credit. Therefore, O'Connor's misguided characters try to gain immortality through the external act or through external possessions.

Good or spirituality can only be realized when man has gained salvation or a union with God and his fellow man. Teilhard says that the "whole," or this union, can not be totally realized in this world, for the world is in the process of becoming. Because the world is constantly becoming, it is not in a perfect state (". . . neither in the present universe, nor in the restored world, can any Whole be said to truly exist.")[5] Thus, O'Connor's characters who become "good" often gain salvation in the process. When they do gain salvation or recognition, it often comes at the end of life--when they are facing death or a death-like situation and are no longer becoming but must come to

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[5]Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Christianity and Evolution, trans. Rene Hague (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1971), p. 69.

terms with a final realization or acceptance of evil and of self.

If the characters in O'Connor's stories who, through grace, become good are not dying, they are at least faced with a situation in which a serious crisis absorbs them. This crisis is so shocking that the particular character is unable to comprehend anything apart from that moment--similar to a death-like experience. This occurs in "Revelation." Here, Mrs. Turpin is attacked by a half-crazed girl in a doctor's office. Mrs. Turpin lives on after this experience, but she has a less self-deluding concept of herself in relationship to the world and to God.

Violence then has a dual, often contradictory, meaning in O'Connor's fiction. In its true sense, violence denotes the way or the means through which God's grace becomes evident to humanity; but by not understanding or by denying that it is a valid part of his life, mankind calls it evil. Although evil is often equated with violence, all violence is not necessarily evil. From this inability to comprehend God, two types of violence arise. The corrupted form of violence is that of evil, while the pure form is the violence of returning to God. The former causes man to disassociate himself from all violence, and it causes him to try to effect a passivity within himself--a passivity which results in the character's inability to form or initiate meaningful action. The person afflicted with this disease, as O'Connor believes it to be, retreats from God, from evil, from contact with either one, and finally from himself. Likewise, the violence of God causes man to act. Indeed, the struggle between God's violence and passivity is a war between the two types of violence--the violence which causes some men to retreat into passivity and the violence which causes other men to

to act.

O'Connor's salvation, which is equated to a drastic change in an individual's perspective, occurs when a character through violence realizes that he is not superior to other humans and that he is, in point of fact, part of that struggling, often cruel, humanity which he had earlier sought detachment from. In "Revelation," Mrs. Turpin sees that she and Mary Grace are equal in God's sight, and the Grandmother in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" must finally accept the Misfit.

In order for an O'Connor character to gain salvation, both the physical and spiritual forces within himself must have a total awareness of each other. O'Connor's characters can never achieve spirituality unless they are first aware of their own physicality. O'Connor's fiction exemplifies the mystery of grace. In describing the holy, O'Connor at no time neglects the physical incarnation of man in the moment of grace. In alliance with Teilhard, her pictured salvation is, indeed, a super-materialism in that the characters who achieve salvation must accept themselves as human beings. Indeed, O'Connor believes that it is impossible to show the supernatural taking place unless it is done on a physical level. Furthermore, O'Connor's characters can not achieve salvation on their own. When they attempt to make themselves holy, they either fail or adopt other gods. In so doing, they mistakenly convert finite objects into their false gods.[6] Enoch Emery in Wise Blood has his monkey suit, and Hazel Motes, through external forces, loses his

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[6]David Eggenschwiler, The Christian Humanism of Flannery O'Connor (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1972), p. 33.

car before he accepts salvation.

Since salvation or integration comes to some characters and eludes others, the reader must sometimes play an active role in the salvation process, for he at times discerns the imminence of grace before the character even recognizes his need for salvation. In this the reader does not become a god of judgment. He becomes, instead, part of the character who gains salvation. Examples of reader identification are Mrs. Turpin and the Grandmother. In fact, these characters will serve as a unifying element in discussing them in relationship to their pride, their violent revelations, and their final acceptance of grace.

In the desire for fusion with the whole, O'Connor's salvation, on a metaphysical level, shares similar terms with the Dionysian concept of the shattering of the individual perspective. In order for an O'Connor character to gain salvation, he must no longer believe himself to be a total individualist, without a need nor a desire for God. He must see that he is part of all other men, and this results in his participation in a metaphysical type of Dionysian reveling.

Again, this salvation for O'Connor does not center on reveling alone. While reveling in man's oneness is innate to the salvation process, it is not the only aspect of his salvation. If this were true, the salvation would ultimately result in primitivity and materialism, for the Dionysian glorification does not consider man's desire for individuality within the integration of man with God. In O'Connor's cosmology, man desires absorption; but at the same time, he wants to be recognized or to achieve individuality in integration. Yes, O'Connor's holy man must relinquish his desire to be his own god, and he must rid

himself of his pride or hubris. Yet, he must also retain his identity in his salvation. Thus, many O'Connor characters, such as Hazel Motes in Wise Blood and Tarwater in The Violent Bear It Away, revolt against the grace of God because they mistakenly believe that they will forfeit their identity if they accept it.

The Dionysian aspects of O'Connor's integration culminates in her Paulinian belief that the natural man will ultimately, and mystically, change and become incorruptible and immortal. Hazel Motes, for example, experiences salvation, and he lives an earthy existence after this experience. He must live in the world because he is physically alive. Similarly Tarwater in his journey to Salvation endures temptations and violation of self from evil sources before he finally accepts his great-uncle Mason Tarwater's vision of God.

Thus, O'Connor portrays a salvation or union of man with God which is the result of a constant struggle of good against evil and of the violence of God against the violence of conflict between external and internal forces. At times the conflict is open and recognizable. At other times, it goes unrecognized by the character involved in the struggle. No matter what the form, the conflict between these forces of God and of evil form a cohesive drama in O'Connor's fiction.

CHAPTER II

THE CONFLICT OF EVIL--PHYSICAL REVELRY AND SPIRITUAL ISOLATION

Evil in O'Connor's fiction occurs when sensuality conquers spirituality. Sensuality, exemplary of man accepting fleshly concepts of self rather than spiritual integration, occurs when man totally accepts material values which become in turn the "new jesus" of Wise Blood or the lesser gods of cars and machinery in such stories as "The Life You Save May Be Your Own." This acceptance enables man to escape from the call of God and results in the final acceptance of physical values.

In much of O'Connor's fiction this deification of the physical takes the form of a materialistic desire for mechanistic devices--especially cars--through which the characters attempt to obliterate spiritual values and to in turn align themselves with a fleshly concept of man. This object becomes, essentially, a "new jesus," a savior made of, by, and for man. Indeed, physical deification is a desire for something made of man and through his finite experience; thus, evil results, for man can not worship or achieve absorption by his own creations.[1] Although the desire for mechanistic objects is not a form

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[1]Eggenschwiler, p. 33.

of overt physicality, it is nonetheless, a desire for something not God, for something made of man and through man's knowledge. This form of godlessness becomes physicality or materialism.

Shiftlet, the central character in "The Life You Save May Be Your Own," in his quest for his "new jesus," says words which he does not understand and which seem hypocritical. Indeed, Shiftlet's name suggests this duality, for it is, first of all, symbolic of a shifty rascal. Secondly, the name Shiftlet embodies his false search for a "new jesus," his automobile, for it is reminiscent of the shifting of gears. A man-made, physical sense of power is achieved here.

Shiftlet himself is mechanistic in that he acts on the level of instinct. In his words, he says what his instinct tells him to say. He often contradicts himself, but he does not really know what he is saying or the implication of it. In the opening pages, he tells Mrs. Crater, "Lady, I'd give a fortune to live where I could see me a sun do that every evening."[2] Essentially, he is saying that he wants to settle down, to have a "house" as his spirit rather than his body. Often, he says that the body is like a house, going nowhere; and, conversely, the spirit is like an automobile, constantly moving and never stopping. This is a perversion on his part of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, he has aligned his spirit with a man-conceived, mechanistic object.[3]

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[2]Flannery O'Connor, "The Life You Save May Be Your Own," in The Complete Stories of Flannery O'Connor, ed. Robert Giroux (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971), p. 146. All subsequent references accompanied by the notation Complete Stories are from this edition.

[3]Leon V. Driskell and Joan T. Brittain, The Eternal Crossroads: The Art of Flannery O'Connor (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1971), p. 72.

In so doing, he denies his spirit, he becomes motivated by physical instinct alone, and he is evil because of his deification of physical values.

At one point, Shiftlet tells Mrs. Crater about a doctor who cut into the heart and who still does not know any more about it than they do. Here, he admits that man can never obtain absolute knowledge. Shiftlet himself does not truly know what he is; and this is evil, for he resorts to physicality by instinct alone without a conscience. Indeed, as Sister Kathleen Feeley asserts, he is a role player, a man who must continually try on different roles in order to hide both his physical and spiritual incompleteness, for he has only one arm.[4] When he arrives at the Crater place, he is a tramp. Later, he becomes a philosopher. He becomes a teacher when he teaches Lucynell to talk.[5] Ultimately, he is none of these things, and the words he mouths are meaningless phrases put together to sound good and to hide his spiritual deformity.

Shiftlett leaves the retarded Lucynell Crater at the Hot Spot Diner, calling her a hitch-hiker when the boy behind the counter calls her an "angel of Gawd." Furthermore, Shiftlett transfers this name from Lucynell to his mother. With the girl, however, it implies her innocence, a state which people such as Shiftlett, are unable to explain. Lucynell, by virtue of her mindless retardation, lives in a

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[4] Sister Kathleen Feeley, Flannery O'Connor: Voice of the Peacock (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1972), p. 28.

[5] Feeley, p. 29.

state of grace; and she further represents, as Carter Martin has said, "Mr. Shiftlett's opportunity to accept grace--an opportunity which he rejects."[6] As Shiftlett proceeds, he feels a sense of responsibility for the real hitch-hikers. He feels that he must pick them up; yet, he has left his wife in a cheap diner with no one to turn to, for the only word that she can say is a distorted "burrttddt ddbirrttdt" for bird. Shiftlet has taught her this word. Ironically, "bird" serves as the touchstone of true, unperverted spirituality and of the Holy Ghost, for the bird moves and truly flies, while the car can only give Shiftlet the illusions of flying and of speed which is his perverted definition of spirituality and which is a reversion to physical deification.

Nonetheless, Shiftlet leaves Lucynell alone. Thus, he negates his duty to his wife, although he does say that the marriage is just a piece of paper and not of his blood. "That was just something a woman in an office did, nothing but paper work and blood tests. What do they know about my blood? If they was to take my heart and cut it out," he said, "they wouldn't know a thing about me. It didn't satisfy me at all." (Complete Stories, p. 153) His mother-in-law tells him that it is legal; and he says that the law does not satisfy him, indicating that he does yearn for grace which is outside the law. The restrictive law was changed by the coming of Christ and, thus, grace. In this way, Shiftlett aligns himself with traditional Western thought concerning the law and grace.

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[6] Carter W. Martin, The True Country: Themes in the Fiction of Flannery O'Connor (Kingsport, Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968), p. 88.

> The Law cannot produce righteousness, because it was not designed to that end. It was given in order that men, through their servitude to it, might come to know the significance of the freedom brought by Christ. That it cannot offer any expectation of life is evident from the fact that Scripture (Hab.ii.4) says only that the righteous-by-faith shall live.
>
> The Law, since it is impossible of fulfilment, only makes sin manifest and thereby brings with it a curse.[7]

Shiftlet realizes the curse, and he is searching for a judgment beyond the law; yet, he does not achieve a total realization of the implication of his words. His desire for no law results in his absorption in a physical world. As a role player, he condemns the slime of the world--asking that they be washed from the earth when the hitch-hiker calls his own mother a flea-bag and Shiftlet's, a stinking pole-cat; but Shiftlet does not realize that he himself is part of that slime. Thus, Shiftlet mouths meaningless words and phrases, for he does not realize that the concept of washing is one of baptism or of cleansing man of his sins. Thus, the words become meaningless when he says them because he talks by instinct without thinking about the implications of what he is saying. The words sound good, so he says them. In this, he is evil; and, at the end, he is racing to Mobile in his "false jesus." By all means he has retreated into a world of total physicality, rushing just ahead of the flood into Mobile and refusing to be washed or baptized into a state of repentance and of recognition that he is, indeed, slime and not a philosopher, a teacher, or any of the roles which he has attempted to play.

Whereas Shiftlet's false "jesus" is his automobile, in Wise

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[7]Albert Schweitzer, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, trans. William Montgomery (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), p. 209.

Blood Enoch Emery's is a monkey suit. Rather than gaining spirituality, Enoch too becomes a totally physical creature. The monkey suit is the final step in the development of a creature who has been evolving from the very beginning. The primary indication of Enoch's physicality is his "wise blood" or the fact that he relies on his instinct alone. Enoch is a creature of habit; his patterns of movement are done according to rote method; he acts without thinking. In becoming the monkey, he knows that he is going to do something and that it is going to be something terrible and horrifying, but he can not stop himself.

In the novel, Enoch undergoes the process of animalization. His very habits are indicative of his instinctive nature. He ironically chooses to call this instinct his "wise blood," however, because he believes that he has inherited this blood from his father. In his process of animalization, Enoch undergoes a transformation. Rather than acquiring a new spirit, Enoch retreats further into deification of the physical. At first he only satisfies his physical wants. By drinking orange crushes or by his job of caring for animals at the zoo, he is a physically oriented person; but he is not lost in the beginning because he indulges in his physical wants, for he does not celebrate his physicality. At the end of the process, he does, in fact, revel in his spiritual disintegration and in his demonic acceptance of total physical values, symbolized by the monkey suit. To O'Connor Enoch's disintegration is evil because it is at this point that Enoch is beyond redemption. Turning from God and becoming totally demonic, as Enoch does, does not occur in a single act of malicious or demonic intent. Rather, this disintegration is a process.[8]

Enoch's ritual in the museum illustrates the self-indulgent, though not condemned, man. He is ritualistic, saving the most heightened part of his afternoon, or the museum with its stuffed representations of life, until the end. The museum becomes essentially a symbol of Enoch's reversed sacramental view of life, the temple of his physicality.

Enoch's ritualistic process, moreover, begins with his job. As an employee of the city, he comes in contact with the zoo animals; and he hates them, but he is himself animalistic in nature. After work he would often go to the city swimming pool to see if there were any women there. Like Shiftlet, Enoch is shocked by the depravity of other people. Shiftlet wishes the slime to be washed from the earth, not understanding that he is that slime. Enoch is shocked by women with slits in their bathingsuits, although he visits a whore "when he feels like it."[9] Both Enoch and Shiftlet are baser than the habits which they condemn. Both are incapable of making the judgments which they try to pronounce on others. In this they are truly evil. For O'Connor, evil exists when man will not admit his own depravity, when he will not see that he is no better nor no worse than his other human counterparts. The tragedy for Enoch and Shiftlet is that they are physically oriented persons who, through a process of reveling in physical values, become condemned.

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[8]Eggenschwiler, p. 33.

[9]Flannery O'Connor, Wise Blood in Three (New York: Signet Classics, The New American Library, Inc., no date listed), p. 47. All subsequent references to either Wise Blood or The Violent Bear It Away accompanied by the notation Three are from this edition.

Ironically, they think that they have come to a fuller understanding through their "new jesuses," and they both mistakenly feel themselves capable of making judgments of their fellow man. They indulge in half-framed cant while not realizing the full extent of their judgments because they are unselfrecognized indulgers in physicality.

Finally, Enoch is compelled to share his false gospel of physicality, and Hazel Motes is his intended victim or convert. So, Enoch brings Haze to his dark center of the park, ritualistically escorting Haze through his sacramental routine of going to the museum. All that Enoch does in the process builds up to this heightened experience. Usually after he leaves the bushes, he goes to the Frosty Bottle, a hot dog stand. Then he goes to see the animals and finally to the museum to view his "new jesus," his false incarnate of physical values. Enoch gulls Haze through this same sacramental rote by promising to give him the address of Asa Hawks, the missioner. At the same time, however, Enoch's instinct still pervades, for he must wait for the sign which tells him that he must take someone with him. "I go to see it ever' day," Enoch says, "I go ever' day but I ain't ever been able to take nobody else with me. I had to wait on the sign. I'll tell you them people's address just as soon as you see it." (Three, p. 53)

Enoch's sign then comes from his own sense of physical loneliness. He is alone, his father having deserted him to live with a woman. Thus, Enoch's father has forced him to come to the lonely city to find a job. Through his own loneliness, he feels compelled to seek out a friend and to keep this person with him as long as possible to ward off this sense of spiritual and physical aloneness. Enoch uses Haze towards this end,

but he misguidedly assumes the role of prophet for the "new jesus" of physicality. When Enoch shows his convert the shrunken man, Haze rejects it. The mummy is a shriveled essence of the man which Enoch will later become when he spiritually disintegrates. O'Connor uses the mummy to symbolize the way in which man does become shrunken when he participates wholly and without reservation in his own physical nature. The mummy, in fact, has been a man. At one time he was whole; now he is miniscule and trivial. The mummy then has been man, and he has been made small by physical forces. There is, moreover, an overt connection between the man who has been shrunken and Enoch who will eventually become a disheveled skeleton of man because of his deification of physical values.

When they approach the shrunken man, Enoch speaks in a "church whisper," indicative of his false temple and of his "false jesus." "See theter notice," Enoch said in a church whisper, pointing to a typewritten card at the man's foot, "it says he was once as tall as you or me. Some A-rabs did it to him in six months." (Three, p. 57) Enoch takes pleasure in the disintegration of man; in fact, he worships this displaced man. Enoch is inexplicably intrigued by physical forces, physical disintegration, rather than by spiritual unity. Thus, this episode foreshadows the physical displacement of Enoch when he finally revels in a total physical concept of self. At first, he is drawn toward materialism, and this temptation finally results in his spiritual downfall. Haze, however, is appalled. At first he looks, but then he runs when Enoch can not give him the missioner's address. Thus, Enoch's attempt to obtain a convert to physicality fails.

After this point, Enoch's own process of disintegration begins to take shape. The process is oblique because Enoch does not himself know the course of his action, for he acts by instinct. "Sometimes he didn't think, he only wondered; then before long he would find himself doing this or that, like a bird finds itself building a nest when it hasn't actually been planning to." (Three, p. 72) Enoch knows that he will do something, and he knows that it will be awful; yet, he does not actually know what this something will be.

Furthermore, the image of the bird, in the preceding quotation from Wise Blood, adds emphasis to Enoch's final outcome. O'Connor compares his instinct to the bird who in building a nest does not know what he is doing. Later, Enoch begins to clean his room; and he does not know why, he just does it. In his room there is a washstand, built in three parts and standing on bird legs six inches high. "The legs had clawed feet that were each one gripped around a small cannon ball." (Three, p. 73) Indeed, Enoch's instinctive behavior in cleaning and painting his room is comparable to a bird. Furthermore, Enoch's so called "wise blood" commands him to buy a can of paint. He would rather buy clothes, but he can not deny his instinct.

Finally, Enoch gains his physical reward. He follows his instinctive blood and waits in line with a group of children to shake hands with Gonga the Gorilla, the star of a jungle movie. Earlier in his disintegration process, Enoch sees a movie about Lonnie, a kindly baboon who rescues children from a burning orphanage. This first monkey offers the illusion of kindness to Enoch who wants to be helpful and who wants to overcome his physical loneliness. The first monkey gives Enoch

the illusion of acceptance, while the second monkey, Gonga, scorns him. Gonga tells Enoch to go to hell, and he jerks his hand away. (Three, p. 99) Still Enoch sees that Gonga, a distorted figure of man, gains acceptance. Children come fearfully up to shake his hand. So, Enoch follows Gonga to another theater, the Victory. Here old women, men, and children come to shake the monkey's hand. (Three, p. 106) Enoch ironically sees that this figure of depravity gains converts, while he has failed with his only potential convert. Thus, Enoch takes the body and the figure of the monkey.[10] Enoch chooses the monkey suit because it is analogous to his early worship of the mummy. While the mummy has been man, the monkey is what man fears he actually is. As Louise Gossett in Violence in Recent Southern Fiction said, "Instead of being merely subhuman [as the mummy was], Enoch resorts to a prehuman state."[11]

Furthermore, Enoch becomes his own "new jesus" of physicality when he steals the monkey suit. Ironically, he fails. He does not realize his failure, because he has not failed in acquiring a totally physical self-concept. He fails, rather, in that he denies the dual nature of man. Finally, Enoch is, in point of fact, nothing. "The figure extended its hand, clutched nothing, and shook its arm vigorously; it withdrew its hand, clutched nothing, and shook." (Three, p. 107) In his shriveled, nothing form, Enoch fails in his main purpose. The people at the theater accept the gorilla because they can rationalize and say that this distorted figure is not man. When they

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[10]Feeley, p. 63.

[11]Louise Gossett, Violence in Recent Southern Fiction (Durham, N. C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1965), p. 95.

have to face the totally physical man, the person who they have the potentiality of becoming, they run away. In Enoch's final scene, a man and a woman sitting on a rock in the woods run away from the "new jesus." "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." (Three, p. 108) Here, Enoch has a new identity. He is no longer called Enoch in the narrative, rather O'Connor calls him the gorilla or it. He has, indeed, become his own "new jesus." He is at this point incapable of redemption, and he is truly evil, for he has progressed from a state of simple temptation to a figure of total revelry in the perverse and distorted concept of man as his own god. In the beginning, he looked for physical objects, such as the mummy, to worship. In the end, he becomes his own object of worship.

Indeed, both Enoch and Shiftlet become demonic in their shunning of God and replacing him with creations of their own finite conceptions. David Eggenschwiler in The Christian Humanism of Flannery O'Connor asserts that the man who turns from God is demonic and that in so doing he casts the eternal from him and must find, instead, a finite symbol of worship.[12] In these cases, the adherents of physicality have chosen a monkey suit and a rebuilt automobile as their finite objects of worship.

Both Shiftlet and Enoch try to obtain their new savior through physical, materialistic means. And, this is where they fall; they have accepted as their god an extension of themselves. The monkey suit is an

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[12]Eggenschwiler, p. 33.

extension of Enoch Emery; and the car most certainly becomes a bodily extension of Shiftlet, although he calls it an extension of his spirit. Indeed, the car implies Shiftlet's materialism.[13] Both Enoch and Shiftlet are driven, and both do not really know the force which motivates them--they act and that is all which is of any importance to them. They act on instinct; and this, for O'Connor, is evil, for she sees that man, based upon his paradoxical humanity, must be able to transcend this lower physicality in the struggle between evil and good. Although O'Connor's holy man will often return temporarily to his former state of physical reveling, he will have no permanent nor lasting reliance upon this lower state; and this is untrue of Shiftlet and Enoch Emery in their search for a "new jesus."

Physical reveling in O'Connor's fiction produces warped, distorted, often grotesque characters. Sensuality in O'Connor's characters produces mummified versions of men, such as Enoch and Shiftlet. Physical or materialistic reveling alone, however, is not the only way in which man's identity becomes perverted. Spiritual isolation or other worldliness, man without a concept of his own humanity, is an equal source of evil. Here man attempts to deny that Christ has a human identity. Teilhard said that man comes to God through Christ and, in so doing, that he partakes of the body of Christ.[14] To deny that Christ had a human identity is to limit the duality of man's physical and spiritual nature, and to O'Connor this is an evil as vast and as

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[13]Driskell and Brittain, p. 72.

[14]Teilhard, p. 16.

inclusive as the evil of total physical deification. Although O'Connor agreed with Teilhard's Omega point or his belief in the convergence of man through Christ as the ultimate in man's experience, a disparity exists in their concepts of evil. For Teilhard, evil ultimately had no meaning, and it could be overcome in this world, and O'Connor believed that evil was one of the dramatic elements in man's struggle toward redemption.[15]

This evil of spiritual isolation is seen in Parker's wife in the story "Parker's Back." Characteristically she is a hard-nosed, hard-hearted Puritan who believes that any physical manifestation of Christ is idolatry.[16] This is related to O'Connor's satire of the Protestant sects which try to deny that Christ had a physical existence. Through this attempt of denial, the individual ultimately denies his own humanity, and the O'Connor character who attempts this denial commits just as great an evil as the warped, distorted Enochs who revel in physicality. The other worldly character ultimately must live in the world, and he becomes quite miserable trying to maintain the facade of spiritual perfection which can not be achieved on earth. The missioner Asa Hawks in Wise Blood puts on a mask of spirituality, and the reader later learns that his is a false blindness and, thus, a false faith.

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[15]For a more explicit delineation between O'Connor and Teilhard, see Marion Montgomery's "O'Connor and Teilhard de Chardin: The Problem of Evil," Renascence, 22, No. 1 (1969), 34-42.

[16]Caroline Gordon in "Heresy in Dixie," Sewanee Review LXXVI, No. 2 (Spring, 1968), p. 297, says that Sarah Ruth denies that Christ had a corporal body and she refers to past Christian heresies to support her point.

Finally, the "jesus" of Parker's wife and of Asa Hawks is no more true than Enoch's gorilla suit or Shiftlet's automobile, the other "new jesuses" of physicality.

At the beginning of the story, Parker, the central figure of "Parker's Back," is a physically oriented man. To avoid or cover the gap between his physical and spiritual existence, he has tattooes placed randomly over the front of his body, and he does not have any tattooes on his back. But, he quickly becomes dissatisfied with one tattoo, and he must have another until his back is the only place left for one.

> He had stopped having lifeless ones like anchors and crossed rifles. He had a tiger and a panther on each shoulder, a cobra coiled about a torch on his chest, hawks on his thighs, Elizabeth II and Philip over where his stomach and liver were respectively. He did not care much what the subject was so long as it was colorful; on his abdomen he had a few obscenities but only because that seemed the proper place for them. Parker would be satisfied with each tattoo about a month, then something about it that had attracted him would wear off. Whenever a decent-sized mirror was available, he would get in front of it and study his overall look. The effect was not of one intricate arabesque of colors but of something haphazard and botched. A huge dissatisfaction would come over him and he would go off and find another tattooist and have another space filled up. The front of Parker was almost completely covered but there were no tattooes on his back. He had no desire for one anywhere he could not readily see it himself. As the space on the front of him for tattooes decreased, his dissatisfaction grew and became general. (Complete Stories, p. 514)

Randomly, Parker seeks a meaning outside of himself; unknowingly he does not realize his search. Parker is indeed unknowingly searching for a meaningful combination of his physical humanity and of his spiritual yearnings. Parker gains this by having a Byzantine, all-demanding Christ tattooed on his back. Indeed, he has inexplicably, through grace, combined his physical humanity and his spiritual yearnings. Parker wants, in point of fact, a spiritual transformation that will match his outward change which has been effected through his tattooed

body.[17]

Parker's wife, Sarah Ruth, on the other hand, is the antithesis of Parker. He meets her on her father's farm while he is selling apples. Her father, who is away in Florida, is a Straight Gospel preacher. Sarah Ruth's initial reaction to Parker's tattooes is one of overt dislike. She calls them a "vanity of vanities!" and, rather than seeing the majestic power of the eagle on Parker's chest, she calls it a chicken.

> "I rackon you like one of these better than another anyway," he said, dallying until he thought of something that would impress her. He thrust the arm back at her. "Which you like best?"
> "None of them," she said, "but the chicken is not as bad as the rest."
> "What chicken?" Parker almost yelled.
> She pointed to the eagle.
> "That's an eagle," Parker said. "What fool would waste their time having a chicken put on themself?"
> "What fool would have any of it?" the girl said and turned away. (Complete Stories, p. 515)

Sarah Ruth is literal in her acceptance of faith. An eagle is not a symbol of power--it is just another bird to her. Although she has alienated herself from human experience through her other-worldliness, she does not have an integration of the spiritual and physical forces within herself, for she has no comprehension of human weaknesses and vanities. When Parker comes again, she does not acknowledge his presence as a human. "He might have been a stray pig or goat that had wondered into the yard and she too tired to take up the broom and send it off." (Complete Stories, p. 515) By denegrating Parker's humanity and by considering him on the same level as farm animals, she loses her

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[17]Dorothy Walters, Flannery O'Connor (New York: Twayne's United States' Authors Series, Twayne Pubs., Inc., 1973), p. 113.

own humanity; and her own sense of Christ becomes distorted. O'Connor herself says in Mystery and Manners, "When the physical fact is separated from the spiritual reality, the dissolution of belief is inevitable."[18] Sarah Ruth then exhibits an inverted sense of spirituality through trying to place Christ on a totally literal level and by, thus, making Him inaccessible to anyone but herself.

After their marriage, Sarah Ruth continues to berate Parker and to tell him that at the Judgment Seat of God he will be punished. Thus, judgment is to her a punitive measure alone. She does not see in it the traditional union with Christ. No, she makes it a physical judgment, whereby God will dish out punishment to all those, including Parker, that she disapproves of.

When Parker first meets Sarah Ruth, he is enchanted, against his will. He comes to see her often, not understanding why. He marries her, not understanding why. As a physically oriented man searching for spirituality, he senses in her the opposite of his carnal lust for tattooes. After marriage, he grows dissatisfied with her, partially because he is still dissatisfied with himself and his one-sided physicality and partially because her spiritual aloofness to humanity does not allow for a convergence of the physical and spiritual forces within himself. Finally, he begins to envision a religious tattoo, a Holy Bible with a verse under it, to impress his wife. Her reaction is "Ain't I already got a real Bible? What you think I want to read the same verse over and over for when I can read it all?" (Complete Stories, p. 519) She effectively denies a physical representation of the Bible. She is contemptuous of Parker's resolve, and he should have realized

what her reaction of a tattooed Christ would be. He continues, nonetheless, to search for a means to impress her. Rather, he tells himself that he is doing it to please her. In reality, he is searching for spiritual and physical integration, but he does not realize this fact. Finally, he does have a Byzantine representation of Christ tattooed on his back, and Sarah Ruth runs him out of the house, beating him with a broom as though she has finally gotten the energy to chase him away as she would a stray pig or goat.

> "Idolatry!" Sarah Ruth screamed. "Idolatry! Enflaming yourself with idols under every green tree! I can put up with lies and vanity but I don't want no idolator in this house!" and she grabbed up the broom and began to thrash him across the shoulders with it. (Complete Stories, p. 529)

In all of this, Sarah Ruth does not have or receive the reader's sympathies, but she is the one who brings Parker to his self-realization of the total Christ. Her "ice-pick" eyes prepare the way for Parker's Byzantine tattooed Christ, who is all-demanding. Sarah Ruth then brings Parker to his salvation and afterwards attempts to undermine his final recognition.[19] Therefore, Sarah Ruth retreats into a world of denying the humanity of Christ and, thus, of denying the existence of salvation. In this, she is truly evil, for her acts affect not only herself but that quivering mass of humanity of which she is a part. In denying the validity of a pictorial representation of Christ, she denies her own fallibility and weakness. In turn, she tries to become her own "new

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[19] Preston M. Browning, Jr., "Parker's Back": Flannery O'Connor's Iconography of Salvation by Profanity," Studies in Short Fiction, 6:5 (Fall, 1969), p. 534.

jesus" of judgment and condemnation of her fellow man. Finally, this is no less evil than Enoch or Shiftlet's concepts of a physical "new jesus."

CHAPTER III

THE CONFLICT OF GOOD--PERVERSION AND ULTIMACY

While Sarah Ruth errs in believing that no man can discern or make physical representations of Christ, Mr. Head in "The Artificial Nigger" unknowingly attempts to set himself up as a false mirror of spiritual values. Because of his pride, Mr. Head is no true guide of youth, as he believes himself to be with Nelson, his grandson.

> They were grandfather and grandson but they looked enough alike to be brothers and brothers not too far apart in age, for Mr. Head had a youthful expression by daylight, while the boy's look was ancient, as if he knew everything already and would be pleased to forget it. (Complete Stories, p. 251)

Mr. Head does not have the withered face of experience; yet, he intends to be Nelson's instructor on the ways of the city. Thus, he plans a train trip to the city to educate Nelson. When they reach their destination, Mr. Head and Nelson weigh themselves on a penny scale. Mr. Head's ticket says that he is upright and brave and that all his friends admire him. "He put the ticket in his pocket, surprised that the machine should have got his character correct but his weight wrong." (Complete Stories, p. 259) He does not see that this mechanistic device has lied about his weight and that the character description could also be inaccurate. He proudly chooses to believe, however, that the machine describes his character to a tee and that it

accidentally missed his weight.[1]

Unlike Enoch and Shiftlett, Mr. Head does not base his total identity on mechanical or artificial devices, for he does not depend on the alarm clock alone to awaken him. Rather, he depends on his own sense of time and uses the clock only as a further reassurance of his own infallibility. Though his sin is not one of fleshly revelry, he still sets himself apart from God by taking pride in his fleshly attributes; and he is, by description, a man of strong character.

> Sixty years had not dulled his responses; his physical reactions, like his moral ones, were guided by his will and strong character, and these could be seen plainly in his features. He had a long tube-like face with a long rounded open jaw and a long depressed nose. His eyes were alert but quiet, and in the miraculous moonlight they had a look of composure and of ancient wisdom as if they belonged to one of the great guides of men. He might have been Vergil summoned in the middle of the night to go to Dante, or better, Raphael awakened by a blast of God's light to fly to the side of Tobias. (Complete Stories, pp. 249-250)

Although Mr. Head does take pride in his towering physical frame, he is not evil because he does not set out to purposely deceive himself and others. He is no hypocrite, for he actually believes himself to be Nelson's true guide. In Romans 2:17-21, Paul condemns the near-sightedness of the Jews in their faulty self-concepts.

> But if you bear the name "Jew," and rely upon the Law, and boast in God, and know His will, and approve the things that are essential being instructed out of the Law, and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of truth, you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one should not steal, do you steal?

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[1]Sister M. Bernetta Quinn, "Flannery O'Connor, a Realist of Distances," in The Added Dimension: The Art and Mind of Flannery O'Connor, eds. Melvin J. Friedman and Lewis A. Lawson (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), p. 159.

In the same way, Mr. Head had attempted to call himself a true guide of youth, and he should have realized that his instruction was faulty when Nelson saw a Negro and did not recognize him. When Mr. Head asks Nelson what kind of man the Negro is, the boy tells him that it is a fat man and an old man, but he does not say Negro. Mr. Head blames this failure on the boy's ignorance; he does not see that this is the result of his faulty instruction. Nelson tells him, "You never said they were tan. How do you expect me to know anything when you don't tell me right?" (Complete Stories, p. 255) Indeed, Mr. Head should have told Nelson that some blacks are tan.

Mr. Head, moreover, believes that this trip will be his way of educating his grandson, of showing Nelson that he has no reason to be proud of his city birthplace.[2] Nelson learns his lesson; however, it does not deal solely with the evils of the city. Rather, it concerns the inert evil of all mankind, for Nelson sees that the city is large, that it is bustling, that it is uncaring. This discovery comes through his grandfather, because Mr. Head is the one who brought Nelson to the city; but he is only the precipitator of the discovery, for he can not make the discovery for Nelson. As a guide, he can only take the boy so far; then Nelson must make his own discoveries about evil.

Mr. Head's mistake comes when he attempts, because of his pride in his own flawless character, to make Nelson as eclectic and intelligent as he considers himself to be. Therefore, for Mr. Head to achieve goodness, he must see that he is not an unflawed man. Mr. Head does,

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[2]Ironically, the trip becomes a revelation to Mr. Head also.

in fact, possess some of the attributes which he assumes that he has, but he is not humble. Thus, Mr. Head must realize that he himself is still in need of a guide. In the city, he pretends to have knowledge and to know his way around, but he does not let the putty colored dome of the railway station out of his sight.

> "The direction just slipped my mind for a minute," Mr. Head said and they turned down a different street. He still did not intend to let the dome get too far away and after two blocks in the new direction, he turned left. (Complete Stories, p. 260)

Mr. Head pretends that he was just temporarily side-tracked when he becomes lost; yet, he too needs a guide, for he is not infallible, and he must learn this from the experience. This happens when he accepts the failure of his instruction. Earlier, with the Negro on the train, he blamed the failure on Nelson's ignorance. At the end, however, he is to blame when his abandonment of the sleeping Nelson fails as a learning device. Mr. Head hides, leaving Nelson to awake, discover himself alone, and learn that he is not so smart. When Nelson wakes up, he is scared and he wildly dashes into the street with Mr. Head hopelessly trailing behind. In the confusion, Nelson trips an elderly woman, causing her to break her ankle. Mr. Head slowly ambles over and denies that the pleading boy is his grandson. (Complete Stories, p. 265) In this Mr. Head denies his own fallibility, for he does not recognize that his instruction of Nelson has failed. This denial parallels Peter's denial of Christ. Because of their appearance, the crowd links Mr. Head to Nelson. Peter, in his denial, was linked with Christ, and he denied the connection. In the same way, Mr. Head denies his obvious kinship with the boy.

Later, however, he repents, and he tries to make atonement by

offering to buy Nelson a "Co'Cola." Nelson refuses, and Mr. Head envisions a comfortless old age.

> Mr. Head began to feel the depth of his denial. His face as they walked on became all hollows and bare ridges. He saw nothing they were passing but he perceived that they had lost the car tracks. There was no dome to be seen anywhere and the afternoon was advancing. 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. (Complete Stories, p. 266)

Momentarily, Mr. Head has lost his dome; he has lost sight of his guide. In losing sight, however, he gains, for he sees that his instruction was leading the boy to doom. He sees that he is fallible; and, for the first time, he questions himself. Finally, he admits his fallibility aloud.

> A loud bark jarred him to attention and he looked up to see a fat man approaching with two bulldogs. He waved both arms like someone shipwrecked on a desert island. "I'm lost!" he called. "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!" (Complete Stories, p. 267)

He no longer relies on himself or a putty colored dome, but on the supernatural grace of God. He admits to the boy and to the world that he is ignorant, that his wisdom is of the world, and that he is in need of supernatural grace. Therefore, the evil, the proud Mr. Head experiences grace. He is still evil, for he still lives, and he still makes color judgments. He and Nelson, for example, are united over the figure of an artificial nigger. Here something outside of their own experience intrudes upon their lives. In his contact with Negroes, Nelson has passed from non-recognition to irrational hatred, and from this to revulsion. In his final encounter with the "artificial nigger," he will share with Mr. Head a total bewilderment.[3] Thus, the figure

links Mr. Head and Nelson, and it is something more than a sociological symbol of inequality.

> Mr. Head looked like an ancient child and Nelson like a miniature old man. 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. 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. (Complete Stories, p. 269)

They both realize that they are in need of God's grace. Mr. Head no longer accepts himself without some questioning. The inexplicable element here is one of mystery, which is beyond human comprehension. Earlier, Mr. Head's stereotyped description of Negroes does not prove true in the face of reality. With pride, he has instructed Nelson on what Negroes are, but an element of mystery makes his descriptions invalid, for Nelson sees a Negro and does not recognize him. Eventually, Mr. Head and Nelson are united by the artificial Negro.

> Since all of his expectations concerning Negroes have been frustrated by contact with real ones, the discovery that there are also "artificial" ones implies a world far more mysterious than he had dreamt possible. . . .as equalizer, the statue becomes a medium of grace. The marvelous appropriateness of this--that the Negro, a traditional symbol in the American South of inequality among men, should be the agent of effecting an acknowledgment of essential human equality--can scarcely be exaggerated . . . . For this "crucified" Negro, made of clay and grotesque in the contrast of its intended expression of happiness and its actual look of affliction, constitutes an analogue of the Christian belief that the lowly, the despised, the insignificant ("the least of these") may well be the chosen means of divine grace.[4]

In terms of pride, Christ's disciples once asked him who would

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[3]Miles Orvell, Invisible Parade: The Fiction of Flannery O'Connor (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1972), p. 155.

[4]Preston M. Browning, Jr., Flannery O'Connor (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Ill. Univ. Press, 1974), p. 68-69.

sit on the left and right hand of God. Directly, they were asking for the place of honor. He answered, telling them that the least would become the greatest and that those who would be greatest would be made the least. (Matt. 20:20-28) Further, He says that the man of faith accepts as a child. "Whosoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 18:4) To try to be more than a child is to become a man of pride, wallowing in self-knowledge. Often the struggle between good and evil is a struggle, a constant battle, between forces within oneself.

With Mrs. Turpin in "Revelation," the struggle with pride involves her concept of herself in relation to her fellow man. Effectually, this pride results in self-satisfaction, for she makes up complete systems of society of which she is at the top.

> Sometimes Mrs. Turpin occupied herself at night naming the classes of people. 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 were 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. (Complete Stories, p. 491)

Mrs. Turpin's error is two-fold. Primarily, she is proud of her physical state in life. Her distinctions are physical delineations, differences which she has established in her mind. In the introductory pages, O'Connor describes the people in the doctor's waiting room in the same calculating method with which Mrs. Turpin observed the people. In noticing people's shoes, Mrs. Turpin makes further physical distinctions between herself and her counterparts.

> Without appearing to Mrs. Turpin always noticed people's feet. The well-dressed lady had on red and gray suede shoes to match her dress. Mrs. Turpin had on her good black patent leather pumps.

> The ugly girl had on Girl Scout shoes and heavy socks. The old woman had on tennis shoes and the white-trashy mother had on what appeared to be bedroom slippers, black straw with gold braid threaded through them--exactly what you would have expected her to have on. (Complete Stories, pp. 490-491)

The shoes indicate Mrs. Turpin's class distinctions. Further, Mrs. Turpin does not say that Negroes are sub-standard by virtue of their color alone, but the implication is that blacks can be acceptable if they work hard. According to Preston M. Browning, Jr., characters such as Mrs. Turpin have a restricted concept of themselves in regard to their universe.[5] Here, she has restricted her concept of blacks and whites, for she sees herself as a magnaminous benefactor of the blacks and white trash, and she considers herself superior to them because she and Claud are property owners.

Secondly, she misinterprets the meaning of "good." Instead of accepting good as being a spiritual quality which results in physical acts, she chooses to make it a physical quality alone of doing good to everyone and of not hurting anyone.

> To help anybody out that needed it was her philosophy of life. She never spared herself when she found somebody in need, whether they were white or black, trash or decent. And of all she had to be thankful for, she was most thankful that this was so. (Complete Stories, p. 497)

On the face of it, this philosophy of life sounds very nice; Mrs. Turpin's folly, however, is the pride she takes in thinking of herself as a good woman who is willing to help anyone who needs it. Based on this physical self-concept, Mrs. Turpin sees herself as incapable of making false judgments. The white trash woman says that her son and

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[5]Browning, Flannery O'Connor, p. 58.

mother only drink "Co'Cola" and will not eat "good" food, and Mrs. Turpin says to herself, "That's all you try to get down em." (Complete Stories, p. 497) Mrs. Turpin is making judgments which, by reason of her finite perceptions, she is incapable of making. Finitely, she thinks herself superior to Negroes, whether they are trashy or not, and to all white trash. She perceives that she is at the top of the class structure. The only people above her are superior only in that they have more land and money, not more virtue. Virtue, to her, is only a physical quality, a quality through which she attempts to become a god of pride and judgment, assessing people on the physical basis of shoes, clothes, and land. These earthly possessions constitute her idea of good. Misguided, she conceives of good as being physical well-being which is gained through material possessions; and, thus, she limits her view of good and of evil. Characters, such as Mrs. Turpin, "try to evade their selves by living in a spiritless world of objects, duties, and restricted conceptions of what they are."[6] Because of her physical possessions, she must wrong-headedly call herself a "good" woman, and this is a facet of her pride and her misguided concept of self. To acquire ultimate goodness, Mrs. Turpin has to overthrow her wrong self-concept; she must see herself as "an old wart-hog from hell," as the pimple scarred Mary Grace has called her. Initially, however, Mrs. Turpin does pervert the true meaning of good by turning it into a class system.

Holding a similarly distorted view of goodness, the grandmother

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[6]Eggenschwiler, p. 45.

in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," who in the beginning views good in clichéd terms, eventually transcends this narrow concept and undergoes a process or construction, much like Enoch's physical transformation. While Enoch becomes totally immersed in physicality, the grandmother acquires ultimate goodness. This acquisition is, indeed, a process, for the grandmother initially believes that good is a matter of one act or of several disparate, often unconnected physical acts rather than seeing that good, or the acquisition of such, is a continual process. Primarily, she views herself as a lady. She misinterprets the meaning of goodness by mistakenly connecting it with ladyship or of being "not common."

> Her collars and cuffs were white organdy trimmed with lace and at her neckline she had pinned a purple spray of cloth violets containing a sachet. In case of an accident, anyone seeing her dead on the highway would know at once that she was a lady. (Complete Stories, p. 118)

This forms the basis of her criteria for good.

Furthermore, she regards Mr. Teagarden, one of her former beaus, as a gentleman because he bought Coca-Cola stock when it first came out and made a fortune. Red Sammy, according to her criteria, is good because he gives credit.[7]

> "Two fellers come in here last week," Red Sammy said, "driving a Chrysler. It was a old beat-up car but it was a good one and these boys looked all right to me. Said they worked at the mill and you know I let them fellers charge the gas they bought? Now why did I do that?"
>
> "Because you're a good man!" the grandmother said at once.
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> "Yes'm, I suppose so," Red Sam said as if he were struck with this answer. (Complete Stories, p. 122)

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[7] Driskell and Brittain, p. 68.

The grandmother calls him a gentleman after his outburst, ignoring his mistreatment of his wife when he tells her to quit lounging around and to bring the customers' orders. In other words, the grandmother has her own eclectic view of reality--she sees what she wants to see and ignores that which could be contradictory. Earlier in their travels, the family passed a blackchild, and the grandmother had wanted to take a picture of the cute little "pickaninny."

> "Oh look at the cute little pickaninny!" she said and pointed to a Negro child standing in the door of a shack. "Wouldn't that make a picture, now?" she asked and they all turned and looked at the little Negro out of the back window. He waved.
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> "He didn't have any britches on," June Star said.
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> "He probably didn't have any," the grandmother explained. "Little niggers in the country don't have things like we do. If I could paint, I'd paint that picture," she said. (Complete Stories, p. 119)

The grandmother, thus, blocks out and refuses to focus her attention on the ugly realities of life. She does not see the extreme poverty of the Negro tenants; rather, she romanticizes these conditions and wishes to paint a one-sided picture of the scene.

The "pickaninny," therefore, serves as a touchstone to the grandmother's nearsighted concept of good and evil; and in much the same way, her lavish praise of Red Sammy's goodness provides insight into the grandmother's misguided cosmology of good and evil. Although the grandmother is not a good woman in the beginning, the hidden, obscurred potentiality for good still exists. In other words, she is not beyond redemption; her potential for good has just been obscurred, almost lost because of her perversion of good by believing that it is a matter of ladyship, of being "not common." Significantly, her final acquisition of good is foreshadowed in the beginning of the story.

"The grandmother offered to hold the baby and the children's mother passed him over the front seat to her. She set him on her knee and bounced him and told him about the things they were passing." (Complete Stories, p. 119) Although the grandmother continually threatens the children and although she constantly reminds them, "In my day children respected their elders," she dotes on them; and she does perform acts of love which go, for the most part, unappreciated. As they travel, she tells John Wesley and June Star stories they refuse to listen to. These vestiges of love go unnoticed because she refuses to see that good is under construction and that it is not one single act alone.[8] Essentially, her acts which are good do not form a progression; rather, her love for the children is tempered with selfish desires to find an old mansion which does not exist, and this eventually causes their deaths. They accidentally skid off the road when the grandmother's stow-away cat, Pitty Sing, becomes excited by one of the grandmother's sudden moves. No one is hurt, but they encounter the Misfit, a convict seeking both internal and external law in a physical balance of the punishment and the act which brings about this punishment.

The grandmother tries to label the Misfit good because he is "not common." The Misfit, however, denies her external view of goodness. He seeks for a judgement which weighs in balance the good and evil that he has done.[9] For the grandmother, goodness is settling down. She does not care whether the Misfit achieves his balance of good and evil; she

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[8]Eggenschwiler, p. 92.

[9]Driskell and Brittain, pp. 71-72.

only cares that he stay in one place and "get a good job." The Misfit, however, must keep on moving in order to escape himself or judgment. For all who misconstrue, such as the grandmother, or who can not gain salvation, such as the Misfit, good and evil are a matter of external movement, rather than inward progression. The grandmother obviously misconstrues good. The Misfit knows the definition of ultimate good, but he can not gain it because of a spiritual flaw which occurs when he demands physical proof of Christ's existence. "Jesus was the only One that ever raised the dead." The Misfit continued,

> "and He shouldn't have done it. He thrown everything off balance. If He did what He said, then it's nothing for you to do but throw away everything and follow Him, and if He didn't, then it's nothing for you to do but enjoy the few minutes you got left the best way you can. . . ."[10] (Complete Stories, p. 132)

The grandmother, who originally had no concept of ultimate good, ironically gains it through a sharp push or prod toward recognition. Initially, she is a selfish woman with only slight, almost microscopic, vestiges of good in her personality, and she brings about her family's deaths by insisting that they take a detour to see a non-existent mansion with a secret panel. While facing the Misfit, she still clings to her selfish cant in an uncommon situation.[11] "If you would pray," the old lady said, "Jesus would help you." (Complete Stories, p. 130)

Her process of becoming good takes three specific forms. Whereas formerly she has been a selfish, uncaring mother, she experiences

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[10]The Misfit's version contradicts the Teilhardian idea that Christ is the ultimate in man's existence.

[11]Frederick J. Hoffman, "The Search for Redemption," in The Added Dimension: The Art and Mind of Flannery O'Connor (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1966), p. 34.

real pain when she hears the shots which take her son's life. "There were two more pistol reports and the grandmother raised her head like a parched old turkey hen crying for water and called, 'Bailey Boy, Bailey Boy!' as if her heart would break." (Complete Stories, p. 132) So, she must first experience unselfish love for her family, for her own son before she can become capable of taking on metaphoric sons. Secondly, she must face the possibility that Jesus did not die; she must come to terms with her meaningless cant. "Maybe He didn't raise the dead," the old lady mumbled, not knowing what she was saying and feeling so dizzy that she sank down in the ditch with her legs twisted under her." (Complete Stories, p. 132) Once she faces the possibility that Christ is either all powerful or impotent, she is free to have faith, and she is no longer a mumbling fool who accepts without questioning. Finally, she must realize her kinship to all mankind, and accept her metaphorical sons. She must realize that she can not limit this kinship to the few that she considers "quality" folks.

> She saw the man's face twisted close to her own as if he were going to cry and she murmured, "Why you're one of my babies. You're one of my own children!" She reached out and touched him on the shoulder. (Complete Stories, p. 132)

In this act, her process of goodness is completed, and the frightened Misfit orders that she die. As an epitaph, he says, "She would of been a good woman, if it had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life." (Complete Stories, p. 133)

CHAPTER IV

THE VIOLENCE OF EVIL AND THE VIOLENCE OF GOD IN CONFLICT

O'Connor used violence for two, often contradictory, purposes, and she believed that violence could be used as both an instrument of grace and of destruction. "Violence is a force which can be used for good or evil, and among the things taken by it is the kingdom of heaven."[1] Indeed, O'Connor believed that violence was dualistic in nature because it could be used as an instrument of demonic destruction and as a means of obtaining God's grace. Critics in defining O'Connor's violence emphasize spiritual violence, or the violence indicative of the godly choice. One critic says that violence illustrates the urgency of the choice--Christ or nothing.[2] Indeed, this choice is emblematic of the dilemma which the Misfit faces. In Nightmares and Visions, the critic states that violence is both a real and a metaphysical aspect of man's loss of a theological identity and that the acts of violence illuminate a world of continual spiritual warfare.[3] In her use of violence then, O'Connor illustrates the continual battle between God

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[1] Mystery and Manners, p. 113. [2] Gossett, p. 81.

[3] Gilbert H. Muller, Nightmares and Visions: Flannery O'Connor and the Catholic Grotesque (Athens, Ga.: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1972), pp. 77-78.

and the forces of evil. In the context of this struggle, characters, such as Rayber, attempt to remove themselves, or to alienate themselves, from this battle; and they attempt to achieve passivity, or a denial of violence. For O'Connor, this false removal of oneself from humanity, or from the human struggle, is evil. Violence, furthermore, indicates spiritual warfare; to try to remove oneself from this warfare is an incomprehensible evil, as vast and self-enveloping as Enoch's physical revelry.

In The Violent Bear It Away, Rayber attempts, and succeeds, in removing himself from violence. He believes that violence has no place in the development of modern man, since it is primitive and reflects an undeveloped mind. Ironically, in his struggle to deny violence, he becomes involved in an equally violent war, which takes place in his head. He fails to see that real love is a violent, often irrational struggle between spirituality and passivity.

> Love is a struggle; life is a struggle against death; spiritual life is a struggle against the inertia of matter and the sloth of the body. The person attains self-consciousness, not through some ecstacy, but by force of mortal combat; and force is one of its principal attributes. Not the brute force of mere power and aggression, in which man forsakes his own action and imitates the behavior of matter; but human force, which is at once internal and efficacious, spiritual and manifest.[4]

Sr. Feeley, in Voice of the Peacock, records that O'Connor had marked in the margins of this excerpt "The Violent Bear It Away." Indeed, in O'Connor's cosmology existence involves a dramatic war between the forces of God and of violence. Continually, Rayber tries to deny the passionate,

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[4]Emmanuel Mounier's Personalism as quoted by Sister Kathleen Feeley in Voice of the Peacock, pp. 160-161.

irrational love that he has for his retarded son, Bishop, or for anyone.[5] This struggle to maintain passivity in his head is no less violent than the external acts of violence which old Mason Tarwater or any of the prophets of God commit. Rayber, however, does not understand this, and he foolhardily strives for passive "perfection"--a state of being where he no longer feels twinges of irrational love for Bishop or an intense, though inexplicable, yearning for the old man. Rayber feels somehow connected to the old man. As Mason Tarwater said, "He (Rayber) loved me like a daddy and he was ashamed of it!" (Three, p. 345) When Tarwater tells Rayber of the old man's death, Rayber is surprised, then pained. Finally, he hides his pain by pretending to laugh. Initially, he can not completely overcome these irrational surges of complex emotions.

> Rayber's urge for Christ is also manifest in several other actions which indicate that he is not the indifferent rational atheist he wishes to be. His attempted "violent . . . self" which he forcibly tries to keep under control. Although his stated reason for taking Tarwater back to Powderhead is to force the boy to "face what he had done," thus revealing his "irrational fears and impulses" for Rayber to explain away, the context clearly indicates that the trip is actually Rayber's own pilgrimage--a return to that explosive shrine where "he had been born again, where his head had been thrust by his uncle into the water and brought up again into a new life" . . . Likewise, his blasphemous baptism of Tarwater suggests a consciousness haunted by that which he wishes to deny.[6]

Furthermore, Rayber never initiates positive, open action. He only contemplates saving the kidnapped baby Tarwater from the old man.

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[5]Gossett, p. 93.

[6]Stuart Burns, "Freaks in a Circus Tent: Flannery O'Connor's Christ-Haunted Characters," Flannery O'Connor Bulletin, I (1972), p. 6.

Even though he and the welfare lady form a junket to the woods to retrieve the baby, he is easily convinced by the woman to return to civilization and try having a baby of their own. In his head, Rayber can make plans for the baby's future, but he can never carry them out. In explaining why Rayber does not return for Tarwater, the old man says, " . . . . he found you a heap of trouble. He wanted it all in his head. You can't change a child's pants in your head." (Three, p. 347) All action begins in Rayber's head, and the struggle between violence and passivity is not an open battle; rather, it too is a battle which occurs in Rayber's head. Sometimes, he begins to anger, but he always checks any outward show of violence or of irrational love.

> "Oh yes it was," the nephew said, advancing across the room, his face very red. "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'm not always myself, I'm not al . . . " but he stopped. He wouldn't admit what the old man knew. "There's nothing wrong with me," he said. "I've straightened the tangle you made. Straightened it by pure will power. I've made myself straight." (Three, p. 346)

Rayber calls the old man's violence foolish, but he deludes himself in thinking that his struggle toward passivity is any less violent. Indeed, he must constantly struggle to maintain his passive equilibrium.

> He knew that he was the stuff of which fanatics and madmen are made and that he had turned his destiny as if with his bare will. He kept himself upright on a very narrow line between madness and emptiness, and when the time came for him to lose his balance, he intended to lurch toward emptiness and fall on the side of his choice. (Three, p. 373)

At first, Rayber experiences inexplicable love for Bishop, for the old man, for any object on which he contemplates for an extended length of time. To obliterate these feelings of passion, Rayber becomes cloistered

in his lifestyle, stripping his house of all but the bare necessities--his books, a bed, a desk. Rayber is foolish to believe that he can by an act of self-will make himself a rational, well-adjusted secular man, and his ascetic denial of the spiritual is an effort to escape from what he actually is.[7]

Thus, Rayber misguidedly seeks to correct himself and the effects which old Mason Tarwater had on him, and this is ultimately a deep-rooted self-destruction. Rayber believes himself capable of in-depth analysis or thought; yet, ironically, he blames his mental imbalance on the old man and God, rather than understanding that this indicates the spiritual warfare going on within himself and that it can not be isolated to either God or the forces of evil alone. When Rayber sees the child-evangelist, he mistakenly believes that God is exploiting her in the same way that the old man exploited him.

> Rayber's fury encompassed the parents, the preacher, all the idiots he could not see who were sitting in front of the child, parties to her degradation. She believed it, she was locked in it, chained hand and foot, exactly as he had been, exactly as only a child could be. He felt the taste of his own childhood pain laid again on his tongue like a bitter wafer. (Three, p. 382)

When Rayber is seven and his father comes to take him back to the "real" world, Rayber does not want to leave Powderhead, and the old man tells him that he will never leave Powderhead, for it will always be with him in spirit.

> "He's going to take me back with him," he said.
> "Back with him where?" his uncle growled. "He ain't got any place to take you back to."
> "He can't take me back with him?"

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[7]Muller, p. 25.

"Not where you were before."
"He can't take me back to town?"
"I never said nothing about town," his uncle said. (Three, p. 380)

As a boy, Rayber wants to return to an earthly paradise. Later he continually fights against an earthly Powderhead as he tries to limit it to material confines where he will not have to face the inexplicable or irrational. Rayber misguidedly blames his spiritual near-sightedness on God and His violence; in reality, he is involved in a spiritual battle between the forces of God and of evil, and he is exploited by his insurance-selling father, who forces him to return to the "real" world.

Finally, to Rayber, Jehovah is a god of violence and, hence, evil, for he believes that God, not Herod, killed the children. ". . .And he had a vision of himself moving like an avenging angel through the world, gathering up all the children that the Lord, not Herod, had slain." (Three, p. 384) Essentially, Rayber thinks that God is the exploiter of children, and he limits his view of God by thinking of Him as the destroyer or the blind agent of the destruction of children. "His flaw, like that of Melville's Ahab, is that he demands of God the justice of man, not the justice of mercy."[8] Furthermore, Rayber forgets that God, through sending his son, raised the dead. Rayber, because of his self-will, refuses to acknowledge the transcendency of God; accordingly, he then neglects the whole man, and Rayber finally becomes only half a man through his pig-headed denial of the spiritual man. The child evangelist, in speaking of Rayber, says, "His head is in the window but his ear is deaf to the Holy Word!" (Three, p. 385)

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[8]Burns, "Freaks in a Circus Tent," p. 7.

Out of this misplaced interpretation of God and of spiritual violence, Rayber seeks false peace through passivity, and at one time, he achieves this peace.

> All he would be was an observer. He waited with serenity. Life had never been good enough to him for him to wince at its destruction. He told himself that he was indifferent even to his own dissolution. It seemed to him that this indifference was the most that human dignity could achieve, and for the moment forgetting his lapses, forgetting even his narrow escape of the afternoon, he felt he had achieved it. To feel nothing was peace. (Three, p. 421)

This false peace foreshadows the final dissolution of Rayber. It comes as Rayber is making plans to tell Tarwater that he must leave, and this illusion of security comes before Bishop's death. Rayber's secular attempts to deny pain then is a "denial of salvation."[9] When the final catastrophic event occurs, and he knows about Tarwater drowning Bishop, Rayber vainly waits for the raging, inexplicable pain of sorrow and loss, and feels nothing.

> He stood waiting for the raging pain, the intolerable hurt that was his due, to begin, so that he could ignore it, but he continued to feel nothing. He stood light-headed at the window and it was not until he realized there would be no pain that he collapsed. (Three, p. 423)

Bishop's death then reveals Rayber as "a man incapable of action or feeling, limited to a surface view of reality and, like his half-vision, only half a man."[10] Indeed, the narrator does not tell the reader

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[9]Thelma J. Shinn, "Flannery O'Connor and the Violence of Grace," Contemporary Literature 10:1 (Winter, 1968), p. 62.

[10]Albert Duhamel, "The Novelist as Prophet," in The Added Dimension: The Art and Mind of Flannery O'Connor, Ed. Melvin J. Friedman and Lewis A. Lawson (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1966), p. 98.

whether Rayber's collapse is fatal on a physical level; but physical death is not important, for Rayber is dead spiritually; and spiritually there is no hope for him.[11]

While Rayber becomes immersed in total passivity, some characters, such as Mrs. Turpin in "Revelation" and the grandmother in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," come, through a violent struggle, to accept salvation. This acceptance comes, moreover, after a violent revelation; and the instruments of these revelations often come in the most unexpected forms. Though seemingly gratuitous, the violence of God affects a change upon the so-called victims, and the instruments of this violence are often not themselves sanctified or holy. The Misfit, for example, forces the grandmother to accept her kinship with all mankind through acts of apparently purposeless violence. Indeed, no rational mind can clearly define the Misfit's motives, and his violence is, in fact, irrational. Gossett in Violence in Recent Southern Fiction points out that the violence of the Misfit seems gratuitous but that it is, in actuality, the outcome of his decision that Christ's existence is either all or nothing.[12] Because of this decision, he and his agents murder an entire family, showing no other signs of remorse or offering

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[11]Beside the following section of The Character of Man, O'Connor wrote "Rayber's thought has ceased to be dialogue--no voice answers him; no voice questions."

"The inner wondering around in the same spot. Even if immobilized by crises from time to time, the inner dialogue moves toward an aim."

This account occured in Sister Kathleen Feeley's book Flannery O'Connor: The Voice of the Peacock, p. 165.

[12]Gosset, p. 81.

no excuse except that meanness is the only pleasure there is in life. That, for the Misfit, is really no pleasure--just a feeble excuse for living.

The Misfit is, in point of fact, a condemned criminal and a lost sinner, searching for a legalistic concept of justice and, thus, of Jesus. The Misfit continually looks for a balance between the good and bad deeds that he has committed.

> "I said long ago, you get you a signature and sign everything you do and keep a copy of it. Then you'll know what you done and you can hold up the crime to the punishment and see do they match and in the end you'll have something to prove you ain't been treated right,"

the Misfit says. (Complete Stories, p. 131) The Misfit also demands physical proof of the existence of Jesus, and he can not accept by faith alone. According to Samuel Orvell,

> What the Misfit lacks is a vision of grace: and, nostalgically, he yearns for just that; but the language in which he phrases his desire points to his implicit denial of the ongoing action of mercy, and, instead, fixes the redemptive act (Jesus' raising the dead) in a single historical moment of time.[13]

Thus, as a man, he stands on the outside of God's mercy through his demand for physical proof and for a balance sheet morality. Indeed, according to Sr. Bernetta Quinn, he "is a fallen idealist, since at one time he was a Gospel singer though now he is the most heartless of killers."[14] Yet, for all his defiance of God's mercy, he serves as the violent prod through which the grandmother comes to accept God's grace. In the end, he retorts to Bobby Lee, "She would of been a good women if

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[13]Orvell, p. 133.

[14]Quinn, p. 175.

it had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life." (Complete Stories, p. 133) He forces the grandmother into recognition and he serves then as the violent instrument of God's revelation. As an instrument of God's violence, he does not force the ultimate recognition on the grandmother. She must discover this for herself. He serves only as the prod through which she must come to accept the fact that she is part of this degenerate humanity, and this comes when she finally accepts the Misfit as her metaphoric son. Although the Misfit can not accept God's mercy, he does expedite the grandmother's recognition of God and of self at a violent moment.

In a Master's thesis, Mary Fitzpatrick Tucker has said,

> These violent moments, which have the cleansing effect of a baptism--they have been called "baptisms of awareness"--are frequently precipitated by someone who is not religious himself, such as Mary Grace in "Revelation."[15]

Mrs. Turpin then suffers from the sin of pride--pride of ownership, pride of or in self-achievement--and Mary Grace is the instrument through which Mrs. Turpin learns to accept herself as being no better than the Negro tenants, the white trash, or any other person in society. As they sit in the doctor's waiting room, Mary Grace, buried behind a copy of Human Development, scowls at Mrs. Turpin.

> Next to her (Mrs. Turpin) was a fat girl of eighteen or nineteen, scowling into a thick blue book which Mrs. Turpin saw was entitled Human Development. The girl raised her head and directed her scowl at Mrs. Turpin as if she did not like her looks. She appeared annoyed that anyone should speak while she tried to read. The poor girl's face was blue with acne and Mrs. Turpin thought how pitiful

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[15]Mary Fitzpatrick Tucker, "Redemptive Violence in the Short Stories of Flannery O'Connor," Master's Thesis, St. Joseph College, West Hartford, Ct., 1969, p. 8.

> it was to have a face like that at that age. She gave the girl a friendly smile but the girl only scowled the harder. Mrs. Turpin herself was fat but she had always had good skin, and, though she was forty-seven years old, there was not a wrinkle in her face except around her eyes from laughing too much. (Complete Stories, p. 490)

Mary Grace is an ugly, acne-scarred girl, not the traditional concept of the vehicle through which revelation comes.

Mrs. Turpin, the clear-faced, hefty woman with a good disposition, tries to deny her own humanity, or at least her capacity of being grotesque, through her nearsighted pride that she is not black, white trash, or ugly. In this denial, Mrs. Turpin has tried to maintain a finite perfection through her possessions and her "good physical characteristics." Then, for Mrs. Turpin to realize that these impermanent materials do not constitute total good, she must undergo a violent revelation which comes about through her exact opposite or through that which she denies. In this case, Mary Grace is Mrs. Turpin's opposite, for she does not have a "good" disposition and her face is acne-scarred. Thus, Mrs. Turpin must realize that she too is grotesque, and Mary Grace is the violent instrument of this revelation.

Ironically enough, this realization comes just after Mrs. Turpin has loudly proclaimed her gratitude to Jesus for making life the way it is, for giving her "a little bit of everything"--a good disposition, a good home, and, most of all, a good husband.

> The book struck her directly over her left eye. It struck almost the same instant that she realized the girl was about to hurl it. Before she could utter a sound, the raw face came crashing across the table toward her, howling. The girl's fingers sank like clamps into the soft flesh of her neck. She heard the mother cry out and Claud shout, "Whoa!" There was an instant when she was certain that she was about to be in an earthquake. (Complete Stories, p. 499)

The violent moment of realization comes; and according to Louise Gossett, O'Connor "substantiates her belief that man can never dictate the condition under which truth is revealed."[16] The girl seems at first far removed and distant from Mrs. Turpin; yet, she brings the revelation, or she is the one who, through a violent act, causes Mrs. Turpin to question her self-satisfaction. Mary Grace does not bring Mrs. Turpin an easy salvation; rather she takes Mrs. Turpin to the point of questioning her former assumptions. After the violence, Mrs. Turpin must ask Mary Grace, "What do you have to say to me?" The girl tells her that she is "an old wart hog from hell." (Complete Stories, p. 500) Before this point, Mrs. Turpin thought that she could learn nothing from the Mary Graces, the white trash, or the "niggers" of the world. After the violence, Mrs. Turpin becomes open to the knowledge that she can obtain from Mary Grace. Still, Mary Grace does not force Mrs. Turpin to ask this question. The messengers of grace can only bring the revelation about evil and grace; they can not force either the audience or the intended receiver of the knowledge to accept their revelation. Mrs. Turpin, for example, must ask for this knowledge after her violent experience with the girl.

Finally, the violence of God does appear in unexpected forms. In the case of Mrs. Turpin, God's grace comes through her opposite. For the grandmother, the Misfit serves the same purpose. Although both instruments bring the violent realization to their victims, they are not themselves sanctified. The Misfit surely does not receive God's grace,

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[16]Gossett, p. 94.

even though he does at times have spiritual perceptions. Mary Grace reverts to a frenzied state and must be quieted with a needle. The world calls her crazy and sends her to a mental institution. These are, none the less, the means through which God shows His power in the world and through which He manifests His knowledge to those who are made ready to accept salvation. Therefore, the purveyors of God's violence are often grotesque men and girls, seemingly the exact opposite of the recipient of grace.

CHAPTER V

SALVATION, THE ULTIMATE OUTCOME OF CONFLICT

Finally, O'Connor's sinners, become sanctified through spiritual warfare, which is both internal and external; and they are, in fact, made ready for this final conversion or reunion with God. Indeed, this acquisition of grace comes from an active conflict with the forces of evil. Some characters are incapable of achieving this grace, and they do undergo a demonic progression. Enoch Emery and Shiftlett, for example, eventually become totally immersed in physical values, and Sarah Ruth consistently refuses to admit the physical manifestation of Christ. Rayber, in becoming rationalistic, denies his need for external spiritual warfare, and finally he alienates himself from violence. O'Connor, then, effectually describes two states of men, according to one critic. The first of these is man's need for redemption, and the second is the absence of this redemption in man's existence.[1] While those characters who deny redemption become immersed in total physicality and alienation from God, O'Connor's repentant sinners commit acts in violation of God's will, but they do not revel in these acts, nor do they

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[1]Hoffman, p. 41.

seek their total identity through these violations. These characters are, in fact, sinners; they are capable of extreme pride, self-glorification, and initial renunciation of God. Characters, such as Mrs. Turpin and the grandmother, through pride of ownership, initially renounce their need for God, while others (Hazel Motes in Wise Blood and Tarwater in The Violent Bear It Away) question the existence of God and, then, vainly attempt to deny His omnipresence. Mrs. Turpin and the grandmother accept physical value and standards in the beginning. They have a materialistic concept of man in that they believe themselves capable of exercising moral judgments of their fellow man, and they must lose these concepts before they can become capable of salvation.[2] While the grandmother and Mrs. Turpin try to establish their own finite concept of man, based on land, personality, or material traits, Haze and Tarwater renounce God through defying or through initially attempting to cast aside their early training, for they believe this training to be ineffectual and invalid in the real world. In order for both types to gain salvation, they must undergo a progression toward God's grace.[3]

This progression then is Paulinian in nature in that it emphasizes, as Schweitzer says, a paradoxical life in Christ.

> The experience which Paul sets before us as the gateway to the eternal is the dying and rising again with Christ. . . .If the Elect who belong to the Kingdom of God are already in the resurrection state of existence, their redemption, conceived of as anticipatory participation in the Kingdom while still in their natural being, must consist in their undergoing, through the union with Christ, a hidden dying and rising again, by which they become new men raised above the world and their own natural being, and

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[2]Driskell and Brittain, pp. 75-76.

[3]Eggenschwiler, p. 117.

> are translated into the state of existence proper to the Kingdom of God. This conception of redemption, with its naturalistic realism, due to its embodiment in the thought-forms of the eschatological world-view, at the same time carries within it an intensely spiritual realism. Whereas the idea of rebirth remains a metaphor, imported into primitive Christian beliefs out of another world of thought, the conception of dying and rising again with Christ was born out of Christianity itself, and becomes for every man who seeks new life in Christ a truth continually renewed, at once primitive and permanent.[4]

In a primitive and permanent manner, O'Connor's characters must continually renew their awareness of God's existence in their lives if they exist physically after their salvation experience. Mason Tarwater dies in the beginning of The Violent Bear It Away; but during his life, he must ceaselessly reassure himself of God's grace. Rayber at one point claims that the old man, out of his own insecurity, called himself to be a prophet. The old man must perpetually come to terms with this possibility. Even though he still lives, he must continuously cast out the old Adam.[5] Though the old man has already achieved his salvation and the reader does not see his salvation process, characters, such as Mrs. Turpin, Hazel Motes, and the young Tarwater, go through this process, live afterwards, and must come to terms with the complicity of being in the world, but not of the world.

Often, characters--the grandmother in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" in particular--face a life-threatening situation and do not live after they have acquired self-knowledge. The important matter, though, is not that the grandmother dies physically but that she is forced to become spiritually aware of herself in relation to her fellow man. She comes to accept the Misfit as part of her own experience, and she sees

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[4]Schweitzer, pp. 386-387.

[5]Eggenschwiler, p. 117.

that she too is a misfit--far from God and in need of His grace. Inevitably, the Misfit forces her to know herself and, thus, God. He forces her to question the existence of Christ; and through this questioning, her final conversion is meaningful. Initially, as one critic suggests, the grandmother has developed a set of responses, of cliches which preclude her from a view of reality. In the same way the reader develops a set of literary responses which keep him from partaking in the salvation process.[6] As the grandmother must be forced into sight by the Misfit, so must the reader be forced to accept the grandmother's salvation as part of himself.

Mrs. Turpin, another self-satisfied woman, initially considers herself too good for salvation, and she continuously reasserts her own worthiness through being like the prideful Pharisee. In the end, though, she questions her self-concept because of Mary Grace's attack on her in the doctor's office. While she dies after her discovery, Mrs. Turpin lives after; and she must have a living acceptance of her human fallibility. In this acceptance, she sees that she is not superior to other humans and that she is, in fact, a "wart hog from hell." After her encounter, Mrs. Turpin tries, without success, to deny its validity.

> "I am not," she said tearfully, "a wart hog. From hell." But the words had no force. The girl's eyes and her words, even the tone of her voice, low but clear, directed only to her, brooked no repudiation. She had been singled out for the message, though there was trash in the room to whom it might justly have been applied. The full force of this fact struck her only now. There was a woman who was neglecting her own child but she had been

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[6]Richard Pearce, Stages of the Clown: Perspectives on Modern Fiction from Dostoyevsky to Beckett (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Ill. Univ. Press, 1970), p. 70.

> overlooked. The message had been given to Ruby Turpin, a respectable, hard-working, church-going woman. The tears dried. Her eyes began to burn instead with wrath. (Complete Stories, p. 502)

She still denies that she is in need of grace and that the revelation was meant for her. Now, this is a vain denial, and she must inevitably admit that she is not a "good" woman because of her false pride. The black farm women flatter Mrs. Turpin, falsely telling her that she is a sweet woman and that Jesus is satisfied with her. Finally, though, she accepts Mary Grace's revelation.

> A visionary light settled in her eyes. She saw the streak as a vast swinging bridge extending upward from the earth through a field of living fire. Upon it a vast horde of souls were rumbling toward heaven. There were whole companies of white-trash, clean for the first time in their lives, and bands of black niggers in white robes, and battalions of freaks and lunatics shouting and clapping and leaping like frogs. And bringing up the end of the procession was a tribe of people whom she recognized at once as those who, like herself and Claud, had always had a little of everything and the God-given wit to use it right . . . . They were marching behind the others with great dignity, accountable as they had always been for good order and common sense and respectable behavior. (Complete Stories, p. 508)

In this vision, the respectable people are last in the procession, signifying that they must in the end undergo a transformation in which they are held responsible for their "little bit of everything." Ultimately, she sees that she and Claud are no better than the rest of humanity, and she is made ready for her final salvation. She must still live, but she now has the ability to cope with her awesome responsibility.

Furthermore, the reader is more aware of the implications of the revelation than Mrs. Turpin is. Mrs. Turpin questions, "Why me, Lord?" At first, she is unwilling to accept the moral implications of her revelation. The reader, on the other hand, knows that her transformation is imminent, and he becomes, in some sense, transformed with the

recognition that we too has experienced the

recognition that he too has experienced the salvation. Indeed, as in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," the reader must again break through his pre-set literary responses. In the reader's acceptance of salvation for both the character and himself, there is a brief but intense moment which "effects a violent disturbance in the reader, a radical change of response that will turn the recollection into a new story."[7] Inherent to this new story is purgation for the reader as well as the character. Indeed, Mrs. Turpin's final realization is not isolated to herself alone--rather, it is a realization in which the reader plays an active role.

In addition to reader participation, O'Connor's salvation is Paulinian in nature. By definition, Paulinian salvation involves the change of our earthly bodies into spiritual entities. Essentially, O'Connor's concept of salvation is a Paulinian culmination of Nietzsche's interpretation of the Dionysian elements in man. "The Dionysian Greek," according to Nietzsche, "wants truth and nature in their most forceful form--and sees himself changed, as by magic into a satyr."[8] While the Dionysian principle implies physical reveling, O'Connor thinks on a metaphysical level; but the terms of transformation are similar in the two. Thus, in much the same way, O'Connor's characters (the grandmother and Mrs. Turpin, as examples) are changed through a process of heightened awareness to spirituality. O'Connor believed, as Teilhard did,

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[7]Pearce, p. 71.

[8]Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner, Trans. and commentary Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 62.

that Christianity gives form to the pantheistic religions.

> The Christian's, without a shadow of doubt, since the believer who uses it as I have just done knows that in the powerful embrace of the omnipresent Christ, souls do not lose their personality, but win it. It is, indeed, a Christian who has thus stolen the pantheist's fire, the fire which he threatened to set the earth ablaze with an incandescence that would not have been Christ's.[9]

O'Connor accepted Teilhard's view of Christian form and meaning, and her characters in their salvation exhibit a converging awareness of Christ and of their union with God.

In Dionysian terms, O'Connor's men of faith move toward some sort of reveling or participation with all mankind, but they do not become physical revelers. Rather, they accept a reveling in Christ. Since Enoch in Wise Blood revels in man's physical disintegration, Haze is the exact opposite of Enoch, for he accepts at the end a Christian form in his life. But to say that Haze's transformation is Dionysian would only be a half-truth, for his change is paradoxical in nature. The change does occur suddenly, in a moment when God's grace is made manifest to him. At the same time, however, a slow progression has taken place in Haze in which he is made ready to accept God's grace. According to one critic, there are three stages in Haze's journey toward death; the first being his recognition of death, the second his rebellion against grace, and the third his individual move toward redemption.[10] Haze's transformation takes the form of a spiritual journey in which he

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[9]Teilhard, p. 74.

[10]Frederick J. Hoffman, The Art of Southern Fiction: A Study of Some Modern Novelists (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Ill. Univ. Press, 1967), p. 87.

initially attempts to achieve a balance-sheet morality.

In the beginning, Haze searches for meaning and existence,[11] He sins to prove that there is no such thing as sin.[12] He visits a prostitute and finds no pleasure in committing a traditional sin. As a child, he places stones in his shoes to keep himself from owing anyone outside himself anything.

> The next day he took his shoes in secret out into the woods. He didn't wear them except for revivals and in the winter. He took them out of the box and filled the bottoms of them with stones and small rocks and then he put them on. He laced them up tight and walked in them through the woods for what he knew to be a mile, until he came to a creek, and then he sat down and took them off and eased his feet in the wet sand. He thought, that ought to satisfy Him. Nothing happened. If a stone had fallen he would have taken it as a sign. (Three, p. 39)

Like the Misfit, Haze at this time misconstrues the meaning of Christ, and he attempts to deny the mercy of God and the need of man for something outside himself. As a child, Haze attempts to deny that sin is meaningful to man's existence. As an adult, he goes to the army and returns, believing in nothing; the initial seed of disbelief having been strengthened, Haze continually tries to deny Christ and becomes a Christ-haunted figure.[13] The misguided Haze professes to believe in a new jesus, "one that can't waste his blood redeeming people with it, because

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[11]This statement implies existentialism, and, indeed, Jane C. Keller has said that Haze is an empirical man, like the atheistic existentialists of the 1940's, in that he "is suffering from angst, from a loss of roots, and from his determination to decide through an act of will what is true and what is untrue." "The Figure of the Empiricist and the Rationalist in the Fiction of Flannery O'Connor," Arizona Quarterly 28 (Aut. 1972), p. 267.

[12]Gene Kellogg, The Vital Tradition: The Catholic Novel in a Period of Convergence (Chicago: Loyola Univ. Press, 1970), p. 185.

[13]Burns, "Freaks," p. 4.

he's all man and ain't got any God in him." (Three, p. 68) By making Christ all man, Haze can deny the holy or spiritual elements in himself; and he can achieve a momentary, although foolhardy, belief in nothingness. In this false belief, Haze only deludes himself, and his progression toward holiness involves his discarding the temporal items which he vainly proclaims as being a standard measure of value.

In opposition to the Dionysian, Haze and many O'Connor rebels fear salvation as being the complete destruction of self. They fail to see that the individual gains identity in his union with the ultimate Christ. Primarily, Haze clings to his car, an old Essex, as having transformational power. Stuart Burns attests, "In the same way that Haze has objectified sin as something extrinsic to himself, so he objectifies Salvation in the Essex."[14] Haze says that the car is non-destructible and tries to put his faith in something that he knows, in reality, to be destructible. Although he says that his car is powerful, he knows that it will eventually be destroyed and that he must then find another destructible object to believe in or finally accept an indestructible spirit. Ironically, Haze clings to his car in much the same way that Shiftlett does. While Shiftlett proclaims a mechanical device as his God, Haze's proclamations are shallow attempts to deny God. "Listen here," Haze said, "that's a good car. You just give me a push, that's all. That car'll get me anywhere I want to go." (Three, p. 71) The car does not work; yet, Haze continues to believe in it.

In his Paulinian progression toward spirituality, Haze emerges as

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[14]Stuart Burns, "Structural Patterns in Wise Blood," Xavier Univ. Studies (July, 1969), p. 42.

a man seeking for a truth separate from the shams and pretense of the world. He sins, but this is inherent to his search for truth. When he kills Solace Layfield, the false preacher who has perverted Haze's doctrine of the new jesus, Haze is not performing a meaningless act. Through his action, he is negating his belief in nothingness. "Two things I can't stand," Haze said, "--a man that ain't true and one that mocks what is. You shouldn't ever have tampered with me if you didn't want what you got." (Three, p. 111) Paradoxically, Haze has been untrue to himself through his attempted denial of the spirit. While Solace Layfield intentionally preaches a gospel which he does not believe in, Haze thinks that he believes in nothingness and that he is being true to himself. Haze preaches a gospel in which there was no Christ to begin with and, hence, no need for redemption. At this point, Haze makes a declaration which foreshadows, for the reader, his emergence as a man of faith. Like Mrs. Turpin, he fails to see the relevance of his initial revelation, and he misguidedly believes that he will go to another city and preach his Church Without Christ there. When he gets on the highway the next morning, he is stopped by two policemen who force him to face his Essex toward an embankment and who push it over the cliff, saying, "You'll be able to see better thataway." (Three, p. 113) The reader infers from this that the policeman is indirectly referring to Christ, and the reader has an insight which, at this moment, precludes Haze. Thus, having been rid of his false salvation, Haze is made ready to later accept Christ, and he no longer relies on false measures of value.[15]

After Haze has gained spirituality, he is capable of acts of faith which others, such as the missioner and Mrs. Flood, are either incapable of performing or unable to comprehend. Hawkes tried to blind himself as a means of attaining the faith which he professed but which, in reality, he lacked. Haze, on the other hand, blinds himself as an outgrowth of his faith and as a means of strengthening his belief, and Hawkes could not blind himself because of a lack of belief.[16] In The True Country, Carter Martin, further, asserts that Haze's self-blinding seems, to the casual observer, an act of despair; in actuality, it is an affirmation of faith.[17] The same is true of the stones which he places in his shoes and of the barbed wire which he ties around his chest; Haze goes beyond the balance-sheet morality which he had sought when he walked with the stones in his shoes as a child. These acts are symbols of a great faith; now, he is capable of greater faith than his landlady, Mrs. Flood.

> Still, instead of blinding herself, if she had felt that bad, she would have killed herself and she wondered why anybody wouldn't do that. She would simply have put her head in an oven or maybe have given herself too many painless sleeping pills and that would have been that. (Three, p. 114)

Mrs. Flood then is the last in a series of opposites to Haze, and she gives perspective to his actions even if the reader can not totally sanction his acts.[18] As an opposite, Mrs. Flood is no more appealing

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[15]Burns, "Structural Patterns," p. 42.

[16]Walter Sullivan, Death by Melancholy: Essays on Modern Southern Fiction (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1972), p. 24.

[17]Martin, p. 125.

[18]Browning, Flannery O'Connor, p. 37.

than Haze's terrifying blindness. Haze then lives after his acceptance, and he must be capable of higher acts of faith than the worldly characters who people this novel. He must live in the world, yet not become conformed to worldly standards. (Romans 12:2) While Haze's acts are self-destructive, they symbolically indicate his separateness from the world in the same way that his eyes finally evolve to a pin-hole of light in the darkness after his death.

> She (Mrs. Flood) had never observed his face more composed and she grabbed his hand and held it to her heart . . . . She shut her eyes and saw the pin point of light but so far away that she could not hold it steady in her mind. She felt as if she were blocked at the entrance of something. She sat staring with her eyes shut, into his eyes, and felt as if she had finally got to the beginning of something she couldn't begin, and she saw him moving farther and farther away, farther and farther into the darkness until he was the pin point of light. (Three, p. 126)

O'Connor distorted Haze's acts of faith so that the reader can see that his own view of normality is also distorted.[19] O'Connor herself once said,

> When you can assume that your audience holds the same beliefs you do, you can relax a little and use more normal ways of talking to it; when you have to assume that it does not, then you have to make your vision apparent by shock--to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost blind you draw large and startling figures.[20]

Indeed, Haze's salvation is a distorted shout for the modern reader. To some, it may seem amoral that a frequenter of prostitutes, a murderer, and a blasphemer should find salvation in the end, but Haze symbolizes the man who finds God's grace, even though society or man in his finite

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[19]Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., "Flannery O'Connor's Wise Blood: 'Unparalleled Prosperity' and Spiritual Chaos," Mississippi Quarterly, 23:2 (Spring, 1970), p. 124.

[20]Mystery and Manners, p. 34.

judgment would condemn him.

Another blasphemer, Tarwater in The Violent Bear It Away, tries to reject his place as a prophet of God. In the beginning, Tarwater's concept of a prophet is completely distorted. He does not want to be like his great uncle; and if he must be a prophet, he wants to be like the Old Testament ones--raising fire and performing miracles, instead of being ridiculed as the old man is.[21] Indeed, in the same way that Jonah tried to purge himself of God's influence, Tarwater tries to deny old Mason Tarwater's influence on him.[22] Little does he realize that in denying Mason he is denying both himself and God. In truth, Tarwater is originally an untried prophet; his faith has not been tested, and he does not have a complete understanding of God. Since he is untried, he naively attempts to promote the values of the secular world in his disdain for his prophet uncle and in his disregard for spiritual things. The novel then traces his acceptance of grace and his prophecy. In the end, he no longer views prophesying as doing what his great uncle wanted; rather, he sees that he is, in fact, fulfilling the role of Christ and not that of the old man's desires alone.[23]

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[21]Eggenschwiler, pp. 124-125.

[22]Jack and June Davis, "Tarwater and Jonah: Two Reluctant Prophets," Xavier Univ. Studies 9:i (Spring, 1970), p. 25.

[23]Louis D. Rubin states that Tarwater is not fated for the old man's prophesy, that he prophesies in the end because the world offers him no love. He also says that Rayber could have saved the boy when the child evangelist was preaching about God's love, if he (Rayber) had not been so wrapped up in destroying all love. "Flannery O'Connor and the Bible Belt," in The Added Dimension, pp. 63-64.

Tarwater then must progress toward salvation, and in this progression, he encounters seducers which are eventually counteracted by the forces of God. Each successive phase of Tarwater's resistence and final submission is marked by violence.[24] To become a prophet, the boy must be tempted. This seduction takes two specific forms, one being the voice of the stranger which is an other-worldly temptation and the other being the secular influences of the copper flue salesman, Rayber, and the homosexual. Each of these repeat the stranger's constant refrain to Tarwater that the dead must take care of themselves and that this world is for the living. When Tarwater begins to bury old Mason Tarwater, the stranger keeps trying to detain the boy; and he continually disputes the old man's prophesy, saying that a true prophet would not run a still.[25] The stranger also tells Tarwater that,

> The dead are a heap more trouble than the living. The schoolteacher wouldn't consider a minute that on the last day all the bodies marked by crosses will be gathered. In the rest of the world they do things different than what you been taught. (Three, p. 318)

The stranger echoes the ideas that the young Tarwater wants to believe, and he foreshadows the temptations which Tarwater will face from secular forces. As Stuart Burns implies, this voice is the boy's alter ego, his rational self. Ironically, the stranger speaks strongest to Tarwater when he is drunk, or incapable of totally rational reasoning.[26]

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[24]Gossett, p. 91.

[25]Gene Kellogg in The Vital Tradition: The Catholic Novel in a Period of Convergence (Chicago: Loyola Univ. Press, 1970), p. 201, says that this stranger is undoubtedly the devil.

[26]Stuart Burns, "Flannery O'Connor's The Violent Bear It Away: Apotheosis in Failure," Sewanee Review (Spring, 1968), p. 324. In this

The first secular force to tempt Tarwater is the copper flue salesman, Meeks. He offers Tarwater a cash and carry kind of love, and he would use the boy to further his own selfish, money-making ends. "He said love was the only policy that worked 95% of the time. He said when he went to sell a flue, he asked first about that man's wife's health and how the children were." (Three, p. 333) When a customer dies, he thanks God because "that's one less to remember." (Three, p. 333) Essentially, this man is Rayber's father re-incarnated. Rayber's father would offer to sell a person a life insurance policy when preached to about the loss of his soul.

> The man, an insurance salesman, wore a straw hat on the side of his head and smoked a cigar and when you told him his soul was in danger, he offered to sell you a policy against any contingency. He said he was a prophet too, a prophet of life insurance, for every right-thinking Christian. (Three, p. 338)

In confronting the salesman, Tarwater is facing one part of himself. Tarwater's grandfather was an insurance salesman, as practical and calculating as this copper flue salesman is when he tries to get Tarwater to work for him. Finally, although Meeks is not literally related to Tarwater, the salesman does serve as a false-grandfather figure for the boy.

The next and most obvious temptor is Rayber. Rayber thinks that he would burn the old man's body, rather than burying him, and Tarwater misguidedly believes himself to have carried out Rayber's wishes. Again, Rayber echoes the stranger's words about the dead being useless. When Tarwater condemns Rayber for leaving him in the woods with the old man,

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article, Burns also traces Tarwater's experience with the temptors similarly to the process outlined in this thesis.

Rayber rationalizes, "I don't believe in a senseless sacrifice. A dead man is not going to do you any good, don't you know that?" (Three, p. 367) Rayber blindly believes that he can help Tarwater in a secular way by giving the boy clothes, books, and IQ tests, and by sending him to school. While the salesman, or Tarwater's false grandfather, offers him material security, Rayber offers him secular security, and he continually urges the boy to call him "father." Rayber than attempts to take on the name of father without any sacrifice to himself. Essentially, Rayber wants to become Tarwater's false father, and he offers the boy a sterile security.

Both Rayber and Meeks are part of Tarwater's "bad" blood, as the old man would call it. Both attempt to seduce Tarwater into prostituting himself to a false vision of the world. Meeks offers the boy a job, and Rayber offers him an education. Both seek personal, self-promoting things from the boy, and both would use him to foster their own private goals. To counteract these forces and the forces of evil in the novel, Bishop, the retarded son of Rayber, continually reminds Tarwater of mystery in the world and keeps him from adopting the false values of his temptors.[27] When Tarwater first sees the retarded Bishop, he realizes that he can never totally deny his call to be a prophet, even though he attempts to deny its existence.

> The small white-haired boy shambled into the back of the hall and stood peering forward at the stranger. He had on the bottoms to a pair of blue pajamas drawn up as high as they would go, the string tied over his chest and then again, harness-like, around his neck to keep them on. His eyes were slightly sunken beneath his forehead and his cheekbones were lower than they should have

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[27]Muller, p. 63.

> been. He stood there, dim and ancient, like a child who had been a child for centuries.
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> Tarwater clenched his fists. He stood like one condemned, waiting at the spot of execution. Then the revelation came, silent, implacable, direct as a bullet. He did not look into the eyes of any fiery beast or see a burning bush. He only knew, with a certainty sunk in despair, that he was expected to baptize the child he saw and begin the life his great-uncle had prepared him for. (Three, p. 357)

Tarwater, however, continues to deny his mission, until he finally drowns Bishop. In performing the ritual, he says the words of baptism, but he tries to delude himself into believing that the words were just an accident and that he has broken away from what he believes to be the old man's curse--prophesying.

Tarwater believes that he has acted while Rayber can only contemplate action. Only when Tarwater is violated by the homosexual does he realize that it is just as much a part of life to be acted upon as acting.[28] Essentially, the homosexual, the last person to give Tarwater a ride, offers a different sort of temptation to Tarwater. While Meeks and Rayber offer Tarwater perverted familial love, the homosexual attempts to pervert Tarwater's concept of sexual love. He violates Tarwater sexually, and he too uses the boy, offering nothing in return and attempting to take away Tarwater's spiritual identity.

> In about an hour, the stranger emerged alone and looked furtively about him. He was carrying the boy's hat for a souvenir and also the corkscrew-bottle-opener. His delicate skin had acquired a faint pink tint as if he had refreshed himself on blood. He got quickly into his car and sped away. (Three, p. 441)

This last temptor is the human incarnation of Tarwater's supernatural temptor. Both are called "stranger" in the narration, and this

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[28] Feeley, p. 161.

homosexual advance has more than sexual implications. Tarwater is physically attacked, and finally he realizes the the stranger is, in reality, his enemy.[29]

Rather than embracing the forces of evil, though, Tarwater awakens from this experience, burns the land or anything which has been touched by the homosexual or by any of his temptors, and returns to Powderhead where he has a vision of the old man communing with the saints.

> Everywhere, he saw dim figures seated on the slope and as he gazed he saw that from a single basket the throng was being fed. His eyes searched the crowd for a long time as if he could not find the one he was looking for. Then he saw him. The old man was lowering himself to the ground. When he was down and his bulk had settled, he leaned forward, his face turned toward the basket, impatiently following its progress toward him. The boy too leaned forward, aware at last of the object of his hunger, aware that it was the same as the old man's and that nothing on earth would fill him. (Three, p. 446)

Finally, Tarwater accepts his role of prophet--he admits his hunger for spirituality, and he does not come, as Enoch does, to revel in total physicality. Tarwater then goes into the city to warn the children of God of His mercy, and to continue the mission of the old man.

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[29]Burns, "Apotheosis," p. 333. Burns, here, asserts that the homosexual is the living incarnation of the Devil.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

O'Connor's fiction then centers on the struggle between evil and good and the battle between passive and violent forces within man's nature. Evil and passivity are two co-equal terms, and violence often denotes the quality of the religious or spiritual act which results in the final acquisition of ultimate good for an O'Connor character.

The acquisition of anything, whether it be ultimate good or degenerate evil, occurs through a progression. Enoch Emery is not evil because of one act, rather he progressively reverts further and further into his pride, his animality, and his physical self. Evil in O'Connor's fiction then occurs when man attempts to deny God and through vain pride attempts to re-instate himself, or some mechanical manifestation of himself, as his alternate god. Enoch Emery in Wise Blood chooses a gorilla suit, while Shiftlett in "The Life You Save May Be Your Own" reconstructs a dilapidated old automobile. Although these men finally degenerate into a totally physical state, evil is not isolated to the totally degenerate. So called "good" people, such as Mrs. Turpin in "Revelation" and the grandmother in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," are guilty of pride and of misguidedly attempting to substitute finite values for God. At one time, they too have perverted the ultimacy of good by distorting it and by making it a finite perception. They label

physical acts as good, rather than seeing that good proceeds from within and, then, results in positive action. For these characters to obtain or understand ultimate good, they have to undergo a forceful, often violent revelation.

Indeed, this violence comes from God. In the same way that good is distorted and becomes the exact opposite of what man calls it, characters, such as Rayber, distort this violence in order to maintain a passive illusion of security. Rayber retreats from the violence of God, or the violence of revelation, into a world of passivity which keeps the truth of God from permeating his existence. While the Raybers reject the dynamics of the religious act of faith, other characters (the grandmother and Mrs. Turpin, as examples) face revelatory forces and accept their sin, and through this come to an awareness of God. The instruments of grace (i.e. The Misfit and Mary Grace) are not in and of themselves sanctified, but they are the misplaced and condemned people who cause these characters to experience the revelation that they (the grandmother and Mrs. Turpin) are not, and can not be, self-proclaimed gods.

Finally, these are the characters who accept or are made ready for salvation. They sin, but they come to accept their sinful humanity. The struggle between good and evil is not always a clear one for the O'Connor characters who engage in this strife. Haze, for example, initially does not see clearer when he loses his car. Mrs. Turpin, at first, tries to deny her revelation. Often, the reader feels, with O'Connor's man of faith, a sense of grace. Indeed, the reader plays an active role in the salvation process, for he comes to recognize himself

and his own humanity. These characters, who are made ready for salvation, sin and, initially, accept false values; but they undergo a transformation process. In the beginning, these characters, the grandmother and Mrs. Turpin for examples, maintain false materialistic values. Haze sins to prove that transgression and the need for redemption is non-existent; he tries to purposely believe in nothing, and he fails. Still, these characters must live in the world, and they must be tempted. Tarwater, particularly, must face temptors who try to undermine the influences of Old Mason Tarwater and Bishop. These characters face temptations and must, from this, understand that they are not separate from their fellow man and that they too are sinful and in need of grace. This realization is in one sense Dionysian in the reveling and oneness which it implies, but O'Connor's revelry is metaphysical rather than physical in nature. More than this, these characters experience a Paulinian change in their comprehension of humanity. The ones who do live must come to terms with their worldly natures, but they have acquired through their revelations a means, or a tool, for dealing with their human fallibilities. Essentially, they understand that they are fallible, and from this, they see their need for the ultimate or convergent Christ.

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