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Moments of Grace: Redemption in Flannery O'Connor's Selected Short Stories

Okamžiky milosti: Spása ve vybraných povídkách Flannery O'Connor

Vedoucí práce (thesis supervisor): PhDr. Hana Ulmanová, Ph.D.

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Abstract

This thesis employs the theological concept of God's grace and explores through it the stories of the American Southern author, Flannery O'Connor. Roman-Catholicism and O'Connor's Southern heritage greatly influenced her own interpretation of this concept. The original focus on love shifted to violence and pain instead, giving rise to O'Connor's own concept of the moment of grace. In Christianity, God's grace is divided into *habitual grace* and *actual grace*. St. Augustine, the author of the original concept, focuses in his work primarily on habitual grace. O'Connor completes St. Augustine's doctrine by expanding on actual grace in her fiction. She links the former, which is expressed by pain, and explores its transformation into the latter, which is expressed by love. In the first part of the analysis, this thesis dissects twelve selected short stories and identifies the moment of grace in each. The second part is concerned with the classification of those moments of grace. Based on the characters' receptiveness of pain, both physical and emotional, and the subsequent psychological processes, the stories can be sorted into three categories. The characters 1) do not feel any pain, which means they cannot ever recognize grace and thus are exempt from salvation; 2) the result is unclear, but a stable pattern can be observed—the characters do feel physical or emotional pain, which means they are able to recognize grace, but for some reason the transformation of actual grace into habitual is not completed. Lastly, the characters 3) do feel the pain of grace and let it transform them, which might ultimately lead to their salvation; these characters exhibit appropriate psychological changes that indicate that actual grace has been transformed into the habitual. This thesis shows that pain and violence in O'Connor's work is not a mere educational tool but the core of the author's own interpretation of the Christian concept.

Key Words: actual grace, habitual grace, St. Augustine, Roman Catholicism, redemption

Abstrakt

Tato bakalářská práce využívá křesťanského konceptu boží milosti k analýze dvanácti krátkých povídek americké jižanské autorky a katoličky, Flannery O'Connor. Římskokatolická církev a jižanský původ autorky významně ovlivnily její vlastní interpretaci tohoto konceptu. Autorka se odvrací od původního konceptu milosti, který je zaměřený na lásku, a obrací své zaměření na násilí a bolest, čímž vzniká originální koncepce okamžiku milosti. V křesťanství je milost dělena na *habituální* a *aktuální*. Svatý Augustin, autor původního konceptu, se ve svém díle zabývá primárně milostí habituální. O'Connorová jej ve svém díle doplňuje tím, že rozvíjí koncept milosti aktuální. Autorka zkoumá, jak se aktuální milost, která je vyjádřena bolestí, v postavách dvanácti povídek transformuje v milost habituální, která je teprve vyjádřena láskou. První část analýzy identifikuje jednotlivé okamžiky milosti. Druhá část analýzy okamžiky klasifikuje do třech kategorií, které jsou určeny psychologií daných postav a tím, zda si bolest uvědomují a do jaké míry. Postavy buď 1) nejsou schopné cítit bolest, tudíž nemohou být spaseny, jelikož si neuvědomují boží milost, nebo 2) výsledek není jednoznačný, ale jistý vzorec naznačuje, že postavy bolest cítí, transformace pouze z nějakého důvodu neproběhla, a nebo si postavy 3) bolest uvědomují a dokážou ji náležitě přetransformovat v lásku—habituální milost—a proto mají naději na spásu. Tyto postavy prokazují náležité psychologické změny, které transformaci dokazují. Tato bakalářská práce ukazuje, že utrpení a násilí není pouhý edukační prostředek O'Connorové, speciálně vytvořený pro moderního (bezbožného) čtenáře, ale že je jádrem autorčiny vlastní teologické interpretace pojmu boží milosti.

Klíčová slova: aktuální milost, habituální milost, Sv. Augustin, Římsko-katolická církev, spása

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1. Introduction

1.1. Life of the Author

Mary Flannery O'Connor was born on March 25th 1925 in Savannah, Georgia, USA, to a prominent Roman Catholic family in the predominantly Protestant South, an origin which came to be one of the greatest assets to her work. She was considered a master of the short story medium, well known for her rural Southern setting, grotesque characters, and witty, unforgiving humor.

An avid reader since childhood, she graduated from Georgia State College for Women in 1945 and proceeded to follow her passion at the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop, where she studied creative writing. In 1951, a year before her first novel *Wise Blood* was published, she was diagnosed with lupus erythematosus, a disease that had also killed her father. She had to leave the city and move back to Georgia, where she would spend the rest of her days on crutches, writing consistently, tended to by her mother, Regina, and raising peafowls.

Her illness only allowed her to work for three hours a day but the days spent on the farm were her most productive.[1] She once wrote that she thought it necessary for her writing to stay away from the South and if she had not gotten sick, she would have persisted in staying away, but later she found her home to be the cradle of her best writing.[2] She died on August 3rd in 1963 in Milledgeville, aged only 39. She was buried next to her father.

[1] Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia, "Flannery O'Connor," accessed January 14, 2024. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Flannery-OConnor.
[2] Susan Balée, "Flannery O'Connor Resurrected," *The Hudson Review* 47, no. 3 (1994): 379. https://doi.org/10.2307/3851787.

1.2. The Modern World and the Hostile Reader: The Aim of Fiction according to Flannery O'Connor

Flannery O'Connor's writing covers predominantly religious themes such as man's relationship to God, faith, and lack thereof, sin, redemption, and others. She often employs deformed characters, in the physical sense as well as psychological and spiritual. Her work has been characterized as "notable for the seeming incongruity of a devout Catholic whose darkly comic works commonly feature startling acts of violence and unsympathetic often depraved characters."[3] A significant element of her writing is the humorous side of her stories, of which she has been often criticized for being overly grotesque.[4] To this O'Connor answers that "anything that comes out of the South is going to be called grotesque by the Northern reader, unless it is grotesque, in which case it is going to be called realistic,"[5] showcasing her biting wit and overt disgust with the misunderstanding of Southern fiction.

In the second half of the 20th century—the age of progress, prosperity, and post-war disillusionment— O'Connor expresses dissatisfaction with the modern reader as well as the publishing houses of America. The publishers demand of American writers to represent the country which is, she writes sarcastically, "enjoying an almost unparalleled prosperity"[6] being "the strongest nation in the world,"[7] which has "almost produced a classless society"[8] according to polls and statistics. O'Connor asks why, given so much prosperity and wealth, do Americans see so little of it in the modern world.[9] She sees the decay of manners and morality. According to her, "it is the peculiar burden of the fiction writer that he has to make one country do for all

[3] Britannica, "Flannery O'Connor," accessed on Sep 13 2023, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Flannery-OConnor
[4] Ibid.
[5] Flannery O'Connor, "The Grotesque in Southern Fiction," *Mystery and Manners* (London: Faber and Faber, 2014), 40.
[6] Flannery O'Connor, "The Fiction Writer & His Country," *Mystery and Manners* (London: Faber and Faber, 2014), 25-26.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] O'Connor, "Fiction Writer," *Manners*, pp. 30.

and that he has to evoke that one country through concrete particulars of a life that he can make believable."[10] O'Connor is of the opinion that depicting America as the surveys dictate is the occupation of advertising companies, not the serious Christian writer, whose cause is humble and often loathed by the public,[11] should he reveal the discrepancies between reality and statistics.[12]

According to O'Connor, the modern man has lost himself and stopped looking up to God, seeking religious meaning in his everyday life; he is now drowning in a blind search for purpose which can, unbeknownst to him, only be found once he returns to God. O'Connor believes that in a world that no longer searches for religious signs, which will ultimately lead to our redemption, it is the duty of the Christian writer to hold a mirror to society as he is uniquely trained to see the unacceptable and the perverse. He is able to uncover the blindfolds of fleeting joy and promises of prosperity.

> The novelist with Christian concerns will find in modern life distortions which are repugnant to him, and his problem will be to make these appear as distortions to an audience which is used to seeing them as natural; and he may well be forced to take ever more violent means to get his vision across to this hostile audience. [...] To the heard of hearing you shout, and for the almost-blind you draw large and startling figures.[13]

O'Connor describes the audience as "hostile,"[14] putting the Christian writer in opposition to readership which he is appealing to. O'Connor values mystery in fiction and believes that one should find their own incentive to follow the signs of God. The modern man is according to her "lopsidedly spiritual;"[15] he is either 1) a self-concerned unbeliever, having replaced his own self in place of God, 2) a believer in an entity higher than himself that is abstract,

[10] O'Connor, "Fiction Writer," *Manners*, pp. 27.
[11] Flannery O'Connor, "The Teaching of Literature," *Mystery & Manners* (London: Faber and Faber, 2014), pp. 121.
[12] O'Connor, "Fiction Writer," *Manners*, pp. 34.
[13] O'Connor, "Fiction Writer," *Manners*, pp. 33-34.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Flannery O'Connor, "Novelist and Believer," *Mystery & Manners* (London: Faber and Faber, 2014), pp. 159.

dogmatically undefinable, and unable to project into one's everyday life, or 3) an unbelieving believer who amidst his crisis of identity "searches desperately [...] for the lost God."[16]

Capturing the attention of a "hostile audience" in an age that is "at its best an age of searchers and discoverers, and at its worst, an age that has domesticated despair and learned to live with it happily"[17] is not an easy task for the "novelist with Christian concerns."[18] The "violent means"[19] with which O'Connor approaches this problem is through the use of the prevalent theme of brutality, death and suffering that we can find in all of her stories. As Shinn writes, "O'Connor used violence to convey her vision because she knew that the violence of rejection in the modern world demands an equal violence of redemption—man needs to be 'struck' by mercy; God must overpower him."[20]

The blind modern reader requires different modes of communication than the sighted Christian—he would not pay attention to any more minute manifestations of grace in his everyday life, much less ascribe any special value to them. It is therefore necessary for the Christian writer to let such manifestations burst in the reader's face. Serious fiction is, according to O'Connor, a destabilizing experience for the modern reader because the Christian writer does not point fingers to the discrepancies between reality and statistics; he is not concerned with an overt criticism of the modern world, instead he strives to address the reader personally, challenging the reader to follow and let God be reintroduced to him. O'Connor views the reading of the Christian writer as a kind of a test for the reader, a "passage past the dragon" [21] that guards the way to God, and it "requires considerable courage at any time, in any country, not to turn away from the storyteller."[22]

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[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Flannery O'Connor, "The Fiction Writer," *Mystery & Manners*, 26.
[19] O'Connor, "Fiction Writer," *Manners*, pp. 33-34.
[20] Thelma J. Shinn, "Flannery O'Connor and the Violence of Grace," *Contemporary Literature* 9, no. 1 (1968), 58.
[21] Flannery O'Connor, "The Fiction Writer," *Mystery & Manners*, 35.
[22] Ibid.

1.3. The Role of the South and Religion in Flannery O'Connor's Fiction

Burton in his essay "South as 'Other,' and Southerner as 'Stranger,'" which is concerned with the myth of Southern exceptionalism, writes "that there is still a South"[23] and that he can recognize it anytime he visits the North. The South embodies a unique presence in America, one that O'Connor captures in her short stories. Not only do the culture and manners differ between the South and the North, so does the face of Christianity.

Brauer zooms in on the differences in American Christianity, which have been, since the times of revivalism, perceived largely as united under the Puritan rubric in its development. During a period of great uncertainty, Puritanism brought coherence into the lives of people anxious about their work and future. Because Puritans were highly literate, they left a great deal of material that historians could work with, which was both convenient and dangerous because of potential generalizations.[24]

Brauer mentions the different conceptions of how "the Puritan vision for America" was reflected in the North versus the South, in relation to faith and society. The North "envisioned holiness as touching the whole nation and reflected that vision in their numerous organizations created to perfect both the individual and the nation as well."[25] The Northener's approach to Christianity was much more radical because of its national scope; it was much more revolutionary and imposing than its Southern counterpart who "settled for transforming and disciplining the individual."[26] The South was more contained, identifying faith with the sense of the self rather than the whole nation. Moreover, while the Northerner was busy "achieving

[23] Orville Vernon Burton, "The South as 'Other,' the Southerner as 'Stranger,'" *The Journal of Southern History* 79, no. 1 (February 2013), 9.
[24] Jerald C. Brauer, "Regionalism and Religion in America," *Church History* 54, no. 3 (September 1985), 370.
[25] Brauer, "Regionalism," 375.
[26] Ibid.

a Christian America or establishing a 'righteous empire,'"[27] the Southerner concentrated on his kingdom within himself.

O'Connor was a devout Catholic in the predominantly Protestant South. Although Roman Catholicism was not particularly widespread in the South, by the 1850s it had expanded rapidly over the North, making up the largest church in America. Brauer writes that Roman Catholics were even "feared in the South,"[28] which marks O'Connor as somewhat of an outsider among outsiders. She does not seem to perceive herself in such a way. Quite the opposite. In her essay "The Catholic Novelist in the Protestant South," she stresses the importance of community over individualism,[29] echoing Brauer. She believes her Catholic and Southern roots complement each other in a remarkably unique fashion, providing a special basis for her writing.[30]

Rather critical towards the Church, O'Connor is unhappy with the demands placed on the Catholic novelist to be as impersonal and objective as possible. As a result, he is failing to reflect the virtue of hope, show the Church's interest in justice, and to portray the beliefs in a light that would make them desirable to others.[31] She is dissatisfied with the Church's abstract and general spiritual worldview as opposed to the concrete and cultural. The Catholic novel "does not grapple with any particular culture,"[32] it has "no sense of place"[33] and "its action occurs in an abstracted setting."[34] The average American Catholic lacks "regional self-consciousness"[35] in comparison with the Southerner. He has "not great geographical extent,"[36]

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[27] Brauer, "Regionalism," 376.
[28] Brauer, "Regionalism," 374.
[29] Flannery O'Connor, "The Catholic Novelist in the Protestant South," *Mystery & Manners* (London: Faber and Faber, 2014), pp. 199.
[30] O'Connor, "Protestant South," 196.
[31] O'Connor, "Protestant South," 194.
[32] O'Connor, "Protestant South," 199.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] O'Connor, "Protestant South," 201.
[36] Ibid.

nor history, much less a "history of defeat,"[37] a history which, O'Connor maintains, has stripped the South of its innocence and thus provides the Southerner with an "inburnt knowledge of human limitations."[38] Limitations are central for the imagination. Therefore, they are central for the novelist. Accordingly, the Southerner has an advantage over the Catholic.

The Southern writer does not rely upon an orthodoxy of any official authority. His main focus will always be his region and the community. Evoking Brauer, O'Connor remarks that "when one Southern character speaks, regardless of his station in life, an echo of all Southern life is heard."[39] The hero cannot be an outsider who "belongs nowhere"[40] and "can go anywhere"[41] as most modern fiction depicts. He will inevitably end up completely alienated from any kind of community at all.

O'Connor admits that Catholicism provides the novelist with "natural laws and teachings"[42] to serve as a moral guide, but something more is needed for a great story. Hence, she values her Southern heritage—it gives form and detail, particularity and culture, to the abstract Catholic notions. She writes that in the South, "belief is made believable."[43] The grotesque, the religious enthusiasm, and the violence of the South as well as its thriving literary tradition provide the novelist with something to measure himself against.

The Catholic novelist, according to O'Connor, is expected to be the "handmaid"[44] of the Church and the whole of America as well. But the writer equipped with the proper Southern background when "given the function of domestic"[45] will "set the public's luggage down in puddle after puddle."[46] The Southern writer will not conform to any majority, acting as a vessel

[37] Ibid.
[38] Flannery O'Connor, "The Regional Writer," *Mystery & Manners* (London: Faber and Faber, 2014), 59.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] O'Connor, "Protestant South," 202.
[43] Ibid.
[44] O'Connor, "The Grotesque," 46.
[45] O'Connor, "The Grotesque," 47.
[46] Ibid.

for them. O'Connor, being a novelist with both Catholic and Southern upbringing, is therefore capable of transforming the abstract laws and teachings of the Church and projecting them into the unique reality of the South. She especially stresses the importance of regional language[47], community and an oppositional attitude.[48] Particular situations and conflicts of the South ascend to a higher meaning when observed through a religious scope.

2. Theoretical Part

2.1. Catholic Church on Grace: The Official Definition

The official definition as listed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes grace as a "favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children"[49] and it equals "a participation in the life of God."[50] It is further differentiated into *habitual grace* and *actual grace*. The former is described as the "permanent disposition to live and act in keeping with God's call,"[51] while the latter refers to "God's divine interventions, whether at the beginning of conversion or in the course of the work of sanctification."[52]

Habitual grace is therefore embedded within the individual. It is his innate nature to feel the presence of God, heavier in some moments in life than others, and it is his decision to accept and adjust his life accordingly. St. Augustine focuses his doctrine mostly on this kind of grace but, as will be shown later, O'Connor did not conceptualize her theme around that, herself struggling to find it. *Actual grace,* on the other hand, does not seem to depend on the individual, as it refers to those moments in which grace presents itself; it is the domain of God as opposed to the individual. Flannery O'Connor's moment of grace reflects this official

[47] Flannery O'Connor, "Writing Short Stories," *Mystery & Manners* (London: Faber and Faber, 2014), 103.
[48] O'Connor, "The Regional Writer," 53.
[49] Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church: Revised in Accordance with the Official Latin Text Promulgated by Pope John Paul II* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 483.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.

definition well; the author directs the control of the trajectory of grace away from the character, transforming it into something that happens *to* them rather than being an action that the characters consciously take, which *habitual grace* presents.

In this thesis, I will mostly focus on *actual grace* as it corresponds better with Flannery O'Connor's concept of the moment of grace, wherein grace manifests itself in a specific event and is accompanied by rich symbolism. *Actual grace* is a tangible, perceivable and recordable realization of grace as opposed to the inherently covert nature of *habitual grace*.

2.2. St. Augustine's Doctrine of Divine Grace & the Question of Free Will and Determinism

St. Augustine of Hippo has produced a vast assembly of knowledge and interpretations on grace. Part of his teaching was the assertion that one should never attribute merits that come out of accepting grace to themselves. The only thing that is truly 'ours' is the desire to be closer to God, always act with God in mind, and exercise the eternal, undeserving love that has been granted to us in our everyday lives without expecting any kind of reward or recognition. Grace is given to us *gratis* and can only be expressed *gratis* in order to bring an individual closer to God.[53]

> God, said Augustine, gave Adam perfect freedom to choose both good and evil. Adam chose evil and was justly punished by the corruption of his nature and the consequent loss of freedom to choose the good. Now Adam was the representative of the race and all his descendants sinned in him and justly inherited from him his corrupted nature and his inability to choose the right. Therefore, as all men are necessarily sinners, it would only be just if all were eternally damned. But, God out of his mercy has provided for some a way of escape by sending His Son, the Second Person in the Trinity, to offer Himself as an atoning sacrifice and so to satisfy divine justice. As a result of this, God is enabled by the application of grace and of the water of baptism to save certain members of this corrupted and undeserving race whom from all eternity he foreknew and elected unto life. Nor are the elect chosen from any merit of their own, but purely by the will of God. The rest, the great majority of the race, are to receive throughout eternity the punishment which all deserved.[54]

[53] Lenka Karfíková, *Milost a vůle podle Augustina* (Praha: Oikoymenh. 2006), 119-127.
[54] James Bissett Pratt, "The Ethics of St. Augustine," *International Journal of Ethics* 13, no. 2 (1903): 225. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2376453.

The question of free will and divine grace are closely intertwined in Augustine's teaching. "The will was still free, he maintained, but 'the will makes use of its freedom only for evil and could not do the good without the help of grace."[55] Essentially, the modern man does not have a free will per se because of Adam's sin. Even though Augustine vehemently tried to maintain the opposite, personal free will—as the inherent capacity to choose bad *or* good—*is* absent in Augustine's doctrine. An individual will, ultimately, always choose what is bad.

Adam was the only human who had the option of true choice between the two poles and he chose evil. His descendants thus became cursed with the original sin and rendered unable to choose good for themselves. Pratt writes that "the will was thoroughly corrupted; man of his own strength could not be perfect."[56] In other words, it is not within our ability to redeem our corrupted nature alone. But that does not mean we are unredeemable; we only need a little help. God, in his infinite mercy, has provided us with a divine gift—grace—which enables us to achieve salvation if we so wish.

Augustine primarily discusses *habitual grace*, which has essentially been defined in the last chapter as the very desire to return to God: "even those who have led the worst lives"[57] are afforded the "desire of the good."[58] Our wills are inclined by God "where He pleases, either to good according to His mercy, or to evil according to their merits."[59] In other words, one's good deeds and merits cannot be attributed to the individual, but bad deeds can and are. Pratt writes that "no man [...] need accept grace if he does not want to, but the power of God is so great that he will want to."[60]

Put simply, grace functions as an extension of God within each individual. We have been undeservingly gifted the present of His mercy, which manifests within us as, not only the

[55] Pratt, "Ethics," 226.
[56] Pratt, "Ethics," 226.
[57] Pratt, "Ethics," 228.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.

ability, but also the desire to do good, to enact what is good without pride, to extend the love that touches our hearts unto other beings, to turn to God and have faith, to have hope and to be raised from sorrows. All of this is, in fact, God, exhibiting His power through us.

The question of determinism poses a slight problem in Augustine's doctrine. His writing maintains that grace is given only to the elect, of which there is a definite number, and "those to whom this grace is not given, cannot do right. [...] The most perfect man without grace cannot do right any more than the most perfect eye cannot see without light."[61] Not only is, then, the question of freedom itself tricky, but freedom cannot coexist well with the inclusion of determinism as self-contradictions arise.

> We are free and yet not free, like the Trinity who are one yet not one. The elect are above all possibility of sin, yet cannot know they are elected or they would sin. Evil is founded on freedom, yet there is no freedom. Sin cannot be natural, yet it is natural. Religious effort is necessary, yet is not necessary, since everything is determined from all eternity, and we cannot change the result. God is merciful, yet He condemns to eternal punishment innocent babes for the lack of a few drops of water. He is just, yet He damns multitudes of men because He has 'inclined their will to evil.'"[62]

Because Augustine's interpretation of these concepts—determinism, free will—is rather complicated and often contradictory, the focus will be primarily on grace itself. Per Augustine's doctrine, grace will remain the extension of God and the characters keep the ability to reject it. Freedom of will shall, therefore, remain conditioned by grace, but that is merely a formal statement as it will not have an effect on whether grace has been accepted or not. It merely attributes the merits of accepting grace and choosing love to God, instead of the character.

2.3. Flannery O'Connor's Interpretation of Grace & Augustine's Influence

The most useful source of Flannery O'Connor's interpretation of divine grace and its meaning to her fiction is her *Prayer Journal*, which consists of a series of entries addressed to God over the period of a year and a half when she was only twenty-one and her first story, "The

[61] Pratt, "Ethics," 227.
[62] Pratt, "Ethics," 235.

Geranium," had just been accepted for publication. The journal describes her complicated relationship with faith, her doubts, and the resulting deep religious dilemma, as she struggled to find evidence of God's grace in her own life. The sorrow and hopelessness, as well as a deep longing, accompany the reader throughout the whole diary. In spite of those negative feelings, O'Connor does not lose her sharp wit and confidence in herself as an author. Although frequent self-doubts are present, she mostly exhibits her irreplaceable sense of humor and biting straightforwardness. Even though Augustine's influence is much apparent in O'Connor's interpretation of grace, she makes a vital connection with pain and suffering, which is necessary to understand in order to further analyze her fiction.

> We are dependent on God for our adoration of Him, adoration, that is, in the fullest sense of the term. Give me the grace, dear God, to adore You, for even this I cannot do for myself. Give me the grace to adore You with the excitement of the old priests when they sacrificed a lamb to You. Give me the grace to adore You with the awe that fills Your priests when they sacrifice a Lamb on our altars. Give me the grace to be impatient for the time when I shall see You face to face and need no stimulus than that to adore You. Give me the grace, dear God, to see the bareness and the misery of the places where You are not adored but desecrated.[63]

O'Connor here asks for grace as St. Augustine understands it; in other words, she is asking to experience the desire to be with God and adore him and to experience grace as the extension of God within herself without any "stimulus." The author struggles to connect with Augustine's interpretation as it offers no true tangible sign in one's everyday life, in the external world.

> Please let Christian principle permeate my writing and please let there be enough of my writing (published) for Christian principle to permeate. I dread, oh Lord, losing my faith. My mind is not strong. It is a prey to all sorts of intellectual quackery. I do not want it to be fear which keeps me in the Church. I don't want to be a coward, staying with You because I fear hell. I should reason that if I fear hell, I can be assured of the author of it. But learned people can analyze for me why I fear hell and their implication is that there is no hell. But I believe in hell. [...] I can fancy the tortures of the damned but I cannot imagine the disembodied souls hanging in a crystal for all eternity praising God. [...] I don't want to fear to be out, I want to love to be in; I don't want to believe in hell but in heaven. [...] It is a matter of the gift of grace. Help me to feel that I will give up every earthly thing for this. I do not mean becoming a nun.[64]

For O'Connor, it is much easier to imagine hell than heaven and this negative focus makes her interpretation very different from the doctrine of Augustine, who attributes to God nothing but

[63] Flannery O'Connor, "My Dear God," *The New Yorker Magazine* (September 16, 2013). https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/09/16/my-dear-god
[64] Ibid.

love and focuses mainly on the positive connotations of grace. Clearly, it is precisely this conception of love and desire for faith that O'Connor yearns for, who finds wanting "to love to be in" essentially impossible. One cannot experience what is good without having experienced what is bad. Joy is only a bliss if one knows what sorrow feels like and grace is conditioned by torment of the realization of one's inherently sinful nature in order to make one return to God. Thus, O'Connor finds employment for her signature theme, as pain not only begins to signal God's grace, it becomes it.

In her fiction, the author's interpretation of grace is profoundly intertwined with the suffering of her characters, accompanying each moment of grace, enabling the characters to either reject or accept the divine gift.

> The Msgr. today said it was the business of reason, not emotion—the love of God. The emotion would be a help. I realized last time that it would be a selfish one. Oh dear God, the reason is very empty. I suppose mine is also lazy. But I want to get near You. Yet it seems almost a sin to suggest such a thing even. Perhaps Communion doesn't give the nearness I mean. The nearness I mean comes after death perhaps. It is what we are struggling for and if I found it either I would be dead or I would have seen it for a second and life would be intolerable.[65]

O'Connor admits that after reading Kafka, she can "feel his problem of getting grace."[66] Her feelings of guilt interlace with the lack of divine presence in her life. It is completely logical for the author to look for tangible evidence that she can make use of, instead of blindly struggling, failing to see the good. In the excerpt above, she comes to the realization that wanting to *feel* grace—the good—is a selfish desire, and if she could experience it in her time, life would become a nightmare in comparison, even dangerous. She must, therefore, abandon the idea of feeling the goodness of grace and instead, she finds it in pain and suffering, of which there is a surplus in the world.

She writes that contrition in her is "largely imperfect;"[67] she is sorry for asking to be a good writer, but she does not know whether she has ever been "sorry for a sin because it hurt"[68]

[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.

God, meaning she does not feel remorse for Adam's sin and the subsequent fall of man. She writes that to achieve that kind of contrition, "it is necessary to have knowledge, faith extraordinary."[69] According to her, "asking God to help us be sorry for having hurt Him"[70] ultimately "boils down to grace,"[71] which, as it has been made clear, she cannot find.

In her journal, O'Connor explicitly expresses her stance on grace: "I am afraid of pain and I suppose that is what we have to have to get grace. Give me the courage to stand the pain to get grace, Oh Lord. Help me with this life that seems so treacherous, so disappointing."[72] O'Connor at last abandons Augustine's definition, which finds grace in love and the desire of the good, instead turning to pain, transforming it into a catalyst of Redemption; a way to recognize grace, repent for the original sin and achieve Salvation.

Shinn gives O'Connor's use of violence a rather instructional character.[73] But I would argue that O'Connor's use of suffering and violence in her fiction is much more than a didactic necessity, a hyperbole, whereby the unbelieving reader is made aware of religious context in his everyday life, which is perfectly clear to the Christian.

O'Connor turns to suffering in her fiction, not only because an unbeliever needs to be "struck" with grace, but because in employing this theme, O'Connor utilizes the most "humble material"[74] available to the writer: the world around him as well as his own experience. She exploits what was abundant in her life—suffering—and interprets through it the signs of what she was missing in her life—grace. She could not imagine grace as the all-embracing love that flows through each child of God's heart like Augustine. Instead, she substituted it for the theme of immense pain, disillusionment, and, in some cases, even death. It is a theme that showcases

[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Shinn, "Violence," 58–73.
[74] Flannery O'Connor, "The Nature and Aim of Fiction," *Mystery & Manners* (London: Faber & Faber, 2014), 68.

her own personal interpretation of grace and the means to recognize it in the world, accompanying every single moment of grace in the short stories analyzed.

2.4. Application of Grace on Literary Analysis

In my reading, the moment of grace functions as a device, always accompanied by violence or suffering, whereby the characters are given a chance to accept it and thus return to God. I will argue that it is a theme that is present in all of the stories and can be divided into three categories.

The characters either 1) do not get grace, 2) the result is unclear, or 3) they do recognize it. Also, due to the sinful nature of many of the characters analyzed, the author seems to accept Augustine's doctrine of determinism because every single one of them does ultimately receive their moment of grace—*actual grace*. O'Connor's interpretation of grace however renders some characters unable to ever reach salvation because of their inability to feel *actual grace*; we come to the conclusion that these characters are therefore not one of the elect. *Habitual grace* is left mostly unconsidered, except for the few characters who ultimately do recognize grace. This suggests that *habitual grace* is the only way one can redeem oneself and reach salvation.

Moreover, since the moments of grace seem to be exclusively accompanied by the sins of greed and/or pride, O'Connor's stories thus criticize two most prevalent deficiencies of modern society that the author perceives. They encapsulate a wide range of issues like Godlessness, arrogance, exploitation, among others. Being of a very general nature though, they do not dissect and thoroughly analyze particular societal topics, instead they express a general disappointment of a Christian with the perceived decay of the modern morale.

Overall, I will argue that the short stories that will be analyzed, although rich in plot and characters, can all be reduced to a set blueprint. In all stories, pain is the direct

manifestation of grace. *Actual grace* is not enough for redemption and the realization of *habitual grace* is needed in order to reach salvation.

3. Analysis

3.1. Part One: Manifestation of the Moment of Grace

3.1.1. "The Geranium"

O'Connor's first story already showcases the aim that will proceed to pierce all of her work. Old Dudley's moment of grace comes when he is most vulnerable—in the process of disillusionment upon meeting a black gentleman. Unfortunately, he is unable to recognize his suffering as a merciful chance to repent. The broken geranium pot, six feet below the apartment Old Dudley occupies, symbolizes the wasted potential of his opportunity. Firstly, the focus will be solely on the manifestation of Old Dudley's moment in the story. The details of its significance will be examined thoroughly in the second part of the analysis.

> He was waiting for the geranium. They put it out every morning at about ten and they took it in at five-thirty. Mrs. Carson back home had a geranium in her window. There were plenty of geraniums at home, better looking geraniums. [...] He didn't like flowers, but the geranium didn't look like a flower. It looked like the sick Grisby boy at home and it was the color of the drapes the old ladies had in the parlor and the paper bow on it looked like the one behind Lutish's uniform she wore on Sundays.[75]

Dudley feels nostalgic for the South; he feels that the good old values that he was accustomed to back home are not appreciated anymore in the modern world, which is reflected in the character of his daughter and the city. New York, the Northern city as well as the Northern society are cold, self-absorbed, grimly inhumane, quintessentially faithless and "deficient in family solidarity, reverence for age and religion."[76] The large city and its society create a claustrophobic feeling within Dudley who is used to a slower pace of life. In a strange, careless

[75] Flannery O'Connor, "The Geranium," *The Complete Stories of Flannery O'Connor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971), 3-9.
[76] Ralph C. Wood, "From Fashionable Tolerance to Unfashionable Redemption: A Reading of Flannery O'Connor's First and Last Stories," *The Flannery O'Connor Bulletin* 7 (1978), 14. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26669963.

world, the geranium becomes an anchor which he unknowingly associates with home and the familiar.

Unfortunately, Old Dudley's good and proper values come hand in hand with a degree of prejudice and sinfulness. Crushed under the vastness of the city and the self-absorbedness of people he feels small and unimportant. Even his own daughter merely tolerates him out of duty.

> Sometimes [...] she would sit down and talk to him. First she would have to think of something to say. [...] he would have to say something. He always tried to think of something he hadn't said before. She never listened the second time. She was seeing that her father spent his last years with his own family and not in a decayed boarding house full of old women whose heads jiggled. She was doing her duty. She had brothers and sisters who were not.[77]

In her, the proper Southern values survive but do not thrive. She is impatient with her father, who actually does seem to try to nurture some kind of connection. Just like the geranium is a reminder of home to Old Dudley, which he recalls with comfort and pleasure, he is a reminder of home to the daughter, one that she would much rather not have to entertain. He is "too slow"[78] for the "too tight"[79] modern city.

Old Dudley reminisces about Rabie, a black man who might have been his only friend. He is the only character shown to admire the old Southerner. The two would go fishing and hunting together, sneaking out of domestic duties. Rabie "liked to listen, he liked to hear about Atlanta when Old Dudley had been there and about how guns were put together on the inside and all the other things the old man knew."[80] He would watch and marvel "at the way he could put it together again,"[81] which made Old Dudley feel needed and respected. Moreover, it shows considerable trust on Dudley's part as he is a white man explaining weapons and going hunting with a black man.

[77] O'Connor, "The Geranium," 6.
[78] O'Connor, "The Geranium," 7.
[79] Ibid.
[80] O'Connor, "The Geranium," 5.
[81] O'Connor, "The Geranium," 6.

Provided Dudley's later behavior towards the black neighbor, though, this trust seems to be superficially connected to the pride that he feels in himself. He not only felt admired and respected, he also felt superior to Rabie by birthright. This is no longer true in the modern world and the old man's encounter with the black gentleman proves that. The old Southerner painfully discovers that the observable conventions of Southern racial reality no longer hold up; black people can now wear "shiny shoes"[82] and live next door to whites instead of "down in the basement."[83] In fact, Old Dudley suddenly finds himself in Rabie's role, "sitting down" having "slid three steps and landing"[84] on his behind. Suddenly, the tables are turned and guns are being explained to him. Meeting the black gentleman causes Dudley enormous distress and the "pain in his throat" [85] is "all over his face,"[86] "leaking out his eyes."[87] Suffering and grace are intimately intertwined in O'Connor's writing. Dudley's most prized belonging, his pride, is shattered in this moment and the pain that he feels is the violent indicator that grace is being offered, in the most personally excruciating way.

3.1.2. "Good Country People"

The character of Hulga/Joy is a smug intellectual with a condescending attitude towards the good, model Christians from the South. Her lack of faith is symbolized in her lack of leg, rendering her an incomplete human being.[88] McCarthy observes that O'Connor's intellectuals are secular, atheist, and "frequently attempt, with the power of their minds, to be God"[89] and Hulga seems to be no exception. Unlike Dudley, Hulga/Joy is "highly educated,"[90] even

[82] O'Connor, "The Geranium," 8.
[83] O'Connor, "The Geranium," 5.
[84] O'Connor, "The Geranium," 12.
[85] O'Connor, "The Geranium," 13.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] John F. McCarthy, "Human Intelligence versus Divine Truth: The Intellectual in Flannery O'Connor's Works," *The English Journal* 55, no. 9 (1966): 1143.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Flannery O'Connor, "Good Country People," *The Complete Stories of Flannery O'Connor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971), 271.

overeducated due to her "number of degrees"[91], and thinks herself above religion and faith, replacing it instead with theory and philosophy. She is not concerned with life after death and remains mostly passive, accepting only seemingly easy challenges of her intellect—like being clever to her mother or attempting to educate an innocent boy on the matters of love. Assured of her own superiority, she does not challenge her abilities and does not face her weaknesses—like her lack of social life, insecurities about her looks or feeling misunderstood. She mostly stays at home with her mother, whom she disrespects, in a prison of her own making. Hulga's moment comes when she is stripped of the thing that shows her weakness most and simultaneously marks her as incomplete—her pride. Seduced by the vision of possessing an almost ultimate knowledge of the world, she is lured outside where the real world forces her to understand her delusion.

> "Give me my leg!" she screeched. He jumped up so quickly that she barely saw him sweep the cards and the blue box into the Bible and throw the Bible into the valise. She saw him grab the leg and then she saw it for an instant slanted forlornly across the inside of the suitcase with a Bible at either side of its opposite ends. He slammed the lid shut and snatched up the valise and swung it down the hole and then stepped through himself. [...] and the girl was left, sitting on the straw in the dusty sunlight. When she turned her churning face towards the opening, she saw his blue figure struggling successfully over the green speckled lake.[92]

Hulga does not seem to realize her own innocence. She seems quite confident in herself, flashing off her brilliance and pitying the good Christians, her mother and Mrs. Freeman included, for their blindness. For example, when Mrs. Hopewell tells Hulga that "a little smile never hurt anyone,"[93] Hulga/Joy passionately comments on her mother's ignorance in a way she knows Mrs. Hopewell will not understand, asserting herself above her mother in terms of intellect.

She is confident until someone turns her confidence against her. When Mrs. Freeman uses her legal name in Mrs. Hopewell's absence, Hulga/Joy is taken aback because she

[91] O'Connor, "Good Country People," 288.
[92] O'Connor, "Good Country People," 290-291.
[93] O'Connor, "Good Country People," 276.

considers her name "a personal affair."[94] It shows how fragile her grasp on her perception of reality is. She cannot understand that the things playing out in her head are not entirely invisible to others and that "good country people recognize pretense when they see it."[95] Her leg is stolen by one of these good country people, but only after her intellectual pride is taken away. This is symbolized in the part when Manley takes off her glasses and puts them in his pocket[96] as glasses are often associated with the intellectual. Now that the tokens of her pride are gone, she is free to reevaluate her perception of reality. This is her moment of grace as "redemption is possible only through an extreme act, an act of absolute irrevocable sacrifice."[97]

3.1.3. "A Good Man Is Hard To Find"

On their way to Florida is a family of six—a grandmother, a mother, father Bailey, three children June Star, John Wesley and a baby. The Grandmother is immediately introduced in a rather unlikeable way. She is a shallow woman with a "sentimentally naive view of life"[98] that is "devoid of sensitivity."[99] Passing a black boy, she points to him calling him a "cute little pickaninny,"[100] elaborating that "little niggers in the country don't have things like we do."[101] The grandmother displays some typical traits that can be found in O'Connor's numerous other characters like Julian's mother in "Everything That Rises Must Converge" or Mrs. Turpin in "Revelation." These include racism, selfishness, recklessness, entitlement, surface gratitude and a performative kindness. In her article, Whitt links the Grandmother and the other two

[94] O'Connor, "Good Country People," 275.
[95] Ralph C. Wood, "Flannery O'Connor, Martin Heidegger, and Modern Nihilism: A Reading of 'Good Country People," *The Flannery O'Connor Bulletin 21* (1992), 107.
[96] O'Connor, "Good Country People," 287.
[97] Jonathan Baumbach, "The Acid of God's Grace: The Fiction of Flannery O'Connor," *Georgia Review* 17 (Fall 1963), 345.
[98] A. R. Coulthard, "Flannery O'Connor's Deadly Conversions," *The Flannery O'Connor Bulletin* 13 (1984): 94. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26669841.
[99] Ibid.
[100] O'Connor, "Good Man," 119.
[101] Ibid.

female characters together under the role of the Southern lady, explaining many of those features as a part of the "Southern code of manners."[102]

The Southern lady "automatically assumes her own importance"[103] and "feels that she deserves special treatment; somehow this is her due, and she has given no thought to why she expects it."[104] According to the code of manners, the Southern lady places the greatest value on "being 'nice,'"[105] all the time, under any circumstances. The Grandmother, while her family is being murdered one by one, insists that the Misfit is "a good man"[106] and must have been imprisoned "by mistake."[107] The Southern lady also often engages in "substanceless conversation"[108] and the Grandmother is no exception. In fact, the substanceless conversation regarding her old house contributed to her family's death. The conversation style of the Southern Lady makes her appear clueless and dependent on some form of guidance, mostly a man's. When she hides away Pitty Sing or exposes the Misfit's identity, it might seem that she does not "think logically beyond the surface."[109] Logic is not required by the code of manners.

A true Southern lady has a "passion for fashion"[110] and the Grandmother is no exception. She obsessively wears her Sunday best for the trip so that if harm should befall her, "anyone seeing her dead on the highway would know at once that she was a lady."[111] Even when contemplating her own death, the Grandmother is more concerned with clothes and status, ensuring that it shall be known who her corpse used to be.

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[102] Margaret Whitt, "Flannery O'Connor's Ladies," *The Flannery O'Connor Bulletin* 15 (1986): 44. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26670391.
[103] Ibid
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.
[106] O'Connor, "Good Man," 128.
[107] O'Connor, "Good Man," 130.
[108] Whitt, "Ladies," 45.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Flannery O'Connor, "A Good Man Is Hard To Find," *The Complete Stories of Flannery O'Connor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971), 118.

Men usually treat the Southern lady as though she is "empty-headed."[112] The Misfit apologizes for having no shirt on, condescendingly mirroring the code of manners that the Grandmother subscribes to. Bailey also treats his mother accordingly. The Southern lady is usually dismissed by men, who believe her not to be up to par with their intelligence; the behavior of the ladies' sons can be described at best as "hostile tolerance."[113] Bailey knows that his mother "should want to continue to serve"[114] him, therefore he is not afraid of losing her, as the code prohibits her from abandoning him.

Although the men's behavior toward the Grandmother does vindicate the character of the Southern lady, O'Connor in "A Good Man Is Hard To Find" does not challenge its misogynistic assumption. The Grandmother is a Southern lady to the bone, almost caricature-like. Her abidance of the code of manners is an object of irony and sarcasm. It also symbolizes a mortal flaw of her character—her pride.

> [...] she woke up and recalled an old plantation that she had visited in this neighborhood once when she was a young lady. [...] She recalled exactly which road to turn off to get to it. She knew that Bailey would not be willing to lose any time looking at an old house, but the more she talked about it, the more she wanted to see it once again [...]. "It's not much farther," the grandmother said and just as she said it, a horrible thought came to her. The thought was so embarrassing that she turned red in the face and her eyes dilated and her feet jumped up, upsetting her valise in the corner.[115]

She insists that the family go see the house, luring the children with tales of a hidden treasure, despite the inconvenience simply because she has decided that that is what she wants to do. She exploits the weakest link because of a whim she impulsively wishes to fulfill.

It has been previously mentioned that the Southern lady does not usually think things through to their logical conclusion. What starts the series of unfortunate events is the grandmother's selfish decision to bring Patty Sing, the cat, along on the drive. The Grandmother was afraid that the cat "would miss her too much"[116] and that he could

[112] Whitt, "Ladies," 47.
[113] Whitt, "Ladies," 47.
[114] Whitt, "Ladies," 48.
[115] O'Connor, "Good Man," 124.
[116] O'Connor, "Good Man," 118.

accidentally kill himself, so she secretly smuggled him into the car. Almost as if she was more worried about losing the source of the prized affection than for the cat's safety. She manipulates Bailey's children, promising them "a secret panel"[117] filled with "family silver."[118] Bailey yields to his mother's wish to see her childhood home. The Grandmother is clearly only concerned about her own interests and easily disregards the family plans. Through deceit, she selfishly turns her son's children against him. Upon the realization that the house is, in fact, not "twenty minutes"[119] away, she feels embarrassed but decides that "she would not mention that the house was in Tennessee."[120] In order to keep face and protect her pride she overlooks the truth and continues to behave like a lady.

When a "big black battered hearse-like automobile"[121] releases three men, a shirtless "older man" whose hair is "just beginning to gray" [122] wearing "silver rimmed spectacles that (give) him a scholarly look"[123] and two other boys, all three equipped with guns, the Grandmother once again does not think things through, as the code of manners would have her. She "shriek(s)"[124] and "scramble(s) to her feet"[125] and immediately recognizes the strange man as the runaway fugitive called the Misfit. In doing so, she simultaneously sentences the whole family to death. The Misfit, "smiling slightly,"[126] admits that this was not necessary if they had not "reckernized"[127] (sic) him.

> There was a pistol shot from the woods, followed closely by another. Then silence. The old lady's head jerked around. She could hear the wind move through the tree tops like a long satisfied insuck of breath. "Bailey Boy!" she called. [...] 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. [...] The Misfit [...] shot her three times

[117] O'Connor, "Good Man," 123
[118] Ibid.
[119] O'Connor, "Good Man," 125.
[120] Ibid.
[121] O'Connor, "Good Man," 126.
[122] O'Connor, "Good Man," 127.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.

> through the chest. Then he put his gun down on the ground and took off his glasses and began to clean them.[128]

The Grandmother suffers as the Misfit murders her family one by one, especially at the loss of her son. The code of manners places the Southern lady for eternity under the service of her son, directing her to endure his abuse and never say a word. The Grandmother's identity as a Southern lady is tied to her son being the strongest. With him gone, so is her supposed identity and, thus, her pride as well. The pain which she experiences as she cries out "as if her heart would break,"[129] represents grace entering her heart. The grandmother's moment of grace occurs when the symbols of her pride are violently eliminated.

Although O'Connor writes that "there is a moment of grace [...] when the Grandmother recognizes the Misfit as one of her children and reaches out to touch him,"[130] I would argue that the moment O'Connor describes shows the Grandmother's decision about what to do with the offered grace—she is enacting it. This shall be elaborated on in the second part of my analysis. Because grace is signaled by pain and suffering, as O'Connor herself admits in her *Prayer Journal*, the moment of grace has to occur earlier and grace must take such a form that the Grandmother without fail can realize and let it permeate, so that it has the desired effect. The Grandmother suffers most when her son is killed and the pain that fills her symbolizes grace entering her body. She allows the pain to permeate and take root, which is why she recognizes the Misfit as one of her children and touches him. What O'Connor perceives to be the moment of grace is actually the Grandmother already enacting grace, the true moment comes earlier.

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[128] O'Connor, "Good Man," 129-132.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Flannery O'Connor, The Habit of Being, ed. Sally Fitzgerald (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1979), p. 373.

3.1.4. “A Late Encounter With The Enemy”

“A Late Encounter With The Enemy” is a story which is thematically very similar to “The Geranium” as it features a daughter who cares for her poor old father, providing him with a place to stay. The father, General Sash, is emotionally troubled. Fighting dark demons of the past, as well as the future, forces him to take drastic measures in order to overcome them. He decides to completely escape time, in the process constructing his own history based on a narcissistic desire. General Sash is, thanks to this delusional project, overflowing with self-confidence and eternally convinced of his own importance.

The most important theme is time, namely the past, and how it informs our present and shapes our future. There is a clash between the past and the present. General Sash rejects the true past, inventing a different one, one more to his liking. He excessively inflates his success and status. In enhancing his position, he reveals to the reader his mortal sin—pride. His sin subsides in the fact that he thwarts and molds the past to submit to his selfish wants, the pretty “gals”[131] (sic) and so on.

> This was not the state uniform he had worn in the War between the States. He had not actually been a general in that war. He had probably been a foot soldier; he didn’t remember what he had been; in fact, he didn’t remember that war at all. [...] he didn’t even remember the son. He didn’t have any use for history because he never expected to meet it again. [...] Since then, his life had not been very interesting. His feet were completely dead now, his knees worked like old hinges, his kidneys functioned when they would, but his heart persisted doggedly to beat. The past and the future were the same thing to him, one forgotten and the other not remembered.[132]

One could even say that such a project of creation and control figuratively places him in the position of God. General Sash disrespects the true God by assaulting His creation, not even for a moment concerned what this little game means for the present and the future. His pride blinds him to them—to reality, consequences, people, and God. This is depicted in the discrepancy

[131] O’Connor, “Enemy,” 136.
[132] Flannery O’Connor, “A Late Encounter With The Enemy,” *The Complete Stories of Flannery O’Connor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971), 139.

between his perception of reality and everyone else's. He regards himself as "handsome," [133] despite measuring only "five feet four inches,"[134] which he considers "pure game cock."[135] He refuses to wear his teeth as well, for he believes that his profile is "more striking" that way. General Sash is not even a general, during the Civil War he was "probably a foot soldier,"[136] but he does not remember it, nor the war.

Sash is very direct and radical in his rejection of the past. Sash "had forgotten history and he didn't intend to remember it again. He had forgotten the name and face of his wife and the names and faces of his children or even if he had a wife and children, and he had forgotten the names of places and the places themselves and what had happened at them."[137] Sash erased everything from his past that was important—his son, wife, career, accomplishments, and milestones. All that essentially made him a person has been erased and replaced by desire and pride, or perhaps desire and pride were the only things that remained. With fondness, he remembers being "surrounded with beautiful gals"[138] (sic) and "the big stars and the director and the author and the governor and the mayor and some less important stars,"[139] but he never mentions Sally, who was also present at the movie premiere twelve years ago.

Smith writes that Sally intends to use her grandfather as an "accessory"[140] to show that she is from a "once-prosperous family."[141] Knauer agrees, Sally wants to "appeal to the symbol of the bellum South,"[142] her uniformed grandfather with his sword, to divorce herself from a

[133] O'Connor, "Enemy," 135.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid.
[137] O'Connor, "Enemy," 142.
[138] O'Connor, "Enemy," 136.
[139] O'Connor, "Enemy," 137.
[140] Leanne E. Smith, "Head to Toe: Deliberate Dressing and Accentuated Accessories in Flannery O'Connor's 'Revelation,' 'A Late Encounter with the Enemy,' and 'Everything That Rises Must Converge.'" *Flannery O'Connor Review* 6 (2008): 46. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26671135.
[141] Ibid.
[142] David J. Knauer, "Flannery O'Connor: 'A Late Encounter' with Poststructuralism," *The Mississippi Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (1995): 281. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26475872.

society that supposedly rejects old values.[143] Sally feels nostalgic for the past. She imagines it to exceed the modern culture in prestige and glory. Her grandfather's status, phony as it can be, serves her purpose and connects her directly to the fame and cultivation. Sally thus mirrors her grandfather's rejection of the present while artificially enhancing her own status, albeit on a lesser scale and in a much less direct manner.

Sash's sword and uniform serve a similar purpose. They are the symbols of his pride, of false idols. He received the uniform, and supposedly the sword as well, at the movie premiere twelve years ago, revealing to the reader that the objects are, in fact, mere stage props, not real war artifacts. Like Sash, the sword and the uniform are not what others claim them to be, what they appear to be. Yet, at present, they fulfill their role as if they were the real deal, erasing the true past in the process.

In Sally, Sash's pride is also mirrored, which is evident when she plays along, subscribing to his delusion. She accepts General Sash's false identity when she tells the Dean that "General Tennessee Flintrock Sash of the Confederacy"[144] would be present at her graduation ceremony. Twelve years ago, however, she told Mr. Govisky that her grandfather's name is "George Poker Sash" and that "he had only been a major."[145] She wants to use him as an accessory to become an accomplice in his narcissistic project. But simultaneously, she represents a vehicle of sorts, whereby Sash can expose a much greater audience to his pride. To create an army of accomplices who believe his false past to be true. As such, Sash actually represents a destructive threat, potentially fatal, to humankind, which lies in the erasure of the divine creation, in forgetting history and replacing God.

[143] Ibid.
[144] O'Connor, "Enemy," 139.
[145] O'Connor, "Enemy," 137.

Sash sees a "black procession,"[146] sensing "something familiar about it."[147] There is "a little hole beginning to widen in the top of his head"[148] and there is also music, which seems "to be entering his head through the little hole."[149] Sash fears that "the procession would try to enter it too."[150] The familiarity that Sash describes points to the true past, hence he recognizes it. The true past indicates that God is present. Grace thus takes form of the music to which the black procession is connected, "forming stately to"[151] it. The music flows into Sash's head through the little hole, suggesting that grace is entering him.

> As the music swelled toward him, the entire past opened up on him out of nowhere and he felt his body riddled in a hundred places with sharp stabs of pain and he fell down, returning a curse for every hit. He saw his wife's narrow face, looking at him critically through her round gold-rimmed glasses; he saw one of his squinting bald-headed sons; and his mother ran toward him with an anxious look; then a succession of places—Chickamauga, Shiloh, Marthasville—rushed at him as if the past were the only future now and he had to endure it.[152]

Sash is suddenly overcome by what he has been avoiding and trying to erase as the true past ultimately catches up to him. This causes him much distress, as he describes the process in detail, relating the attack to "musket fire."[153] Against his will, Sash is forced to remember the long-forgotten memories. This is accompanied by the speaker's words, "if we forget our past, [...] we won't remember our future and it will be as well for we won't have one."[154] Since the speaker is a part of the black procession, his words equate a message from God. Sash is then attacked by grace, feeling its violence as "a little light" helps his memories, the true past "to live."[155] He can no longer infiltrate the divine territory.

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[146] O'Connor, "Enemy," 141.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid.
[152] O'Connor, "Enemy," 143.
[153] Ibid.
[154] O'Connor, "Enemy," 142.
[155] O'Connor, "Enemy," 143.

3.1.5. "The Life You Save May Be Your Own"

Mr. Shiftlet in "The Live You Save May Be Your Own" is another of O'Connor's disfigured characters. Much like Hulga, he also suffers from a lack of limb; in his case, it is only a half of his arm that is gone. In both his and Hulga's case, the missing limb symbolizes the characters' missing faith. That only a half of Mr. Shiftlet's arm is absent suggests that Mr. Shiftlet is not completely without faith, but he is on the verge, doubting it, which is emblematized by the way he is walking, "slightly to the side, as if the wind was pushing him."[156] The abandonment of his mother, who was an "angel of Gawd"[157] is another illustration of his flight from faith.

While Hulga's sin is her pride, Mr. Shiftlet suffers from greed, which was apparent from the very beginning as his "pale sharp glance had already passed over everything in the yard."[158] He immediately took a special liking to Mrs. Crater's car, as "he had always wanted an automobile but he had never been able to afford one before,"[159] showcasing his malevolent ulterior motives from the start. As if to mock Mrs. Crater, he even tells her that she should not trust him, for how "(they) know (he) ain't lying?"[160] He says that "all most people were interested in was money,"[161] implying that he might be of no exception. Still, Mrs. Crater was more worried about her own interests: whether Mr. Shiftlet, in his condition, would be able to fix her house.

Mrs. Crater in her ambitious quest to secure a son-in-law, whom she was "ravenous"[162] for, ignores Mr. Shiftlet's theatrically phony monologues and endless questions, unconcerned whether this strange man has evil intentions of his own. The two play a game in which both

[156] Flannery O'Connor, "The Life You Save May Be Your Own," *The Complete Stories of Flannery O'Connor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971), 145.
[157] O'Connor, "Life, 156.
[158] O'Connor, "Life," 146.
[159] O'Connor, "Life, 154.
[160] O'Connor, "Life," 147.
[161] O'Connor, "Life," 148.
[162] O'Connor, "Life," 150.

seek something to gain from the other: Mr. Shiftlet is aware of what Mrs. Crater desires, as she does not hide it very well, which gives him the upper hand and allows him to manipulate her. Mrs. Crater, on the other hand, remains blissfully oblivious. “In the darkness, Mr. Shiftlet’s smile stretched like a weary snake waking up by a fire”[163] as she offered him everything and more, most importantly, the “fine automobile.”[164] This metaphoric shift from Christ to a snake is further evidence of Mr. Shiftlet’s evil intentions. He tries to appear like a child of God but his mind is ruled by the devil.

Although Mrs. Crater does hurt Mr. Shiftlet’s feelings, causing him to recall old, unhealed scars, by saying that “there ain’t any place in the world for a poor disabled friendless drifting man,”[165] which he seemed to consider as they settled in his head “like a group of buzzards in the top of a tree.”[166] He is yet unable to have his moment of grace because the violence of the rejection of faith requires an equivalent violence of redemption and this moment was simply not powerful enough. The moment of grace is brutal in its unexpectedness, it completely disarms the sinner. Because Mr. Shiftlet is well aware of his condition, reminding him of it would not cause sufficient pain to let grace in.

As his name implies, Mr. Shiftlet is restless, always on the move in his flight from faith. He had been “a gospel singer, a foreman on the railroad, an assistant in an undertaking parlor, [...] he had fought and bled in the Arm Service of his country and visited every foreign land.”[167] It is apparent, though, that Mr. Shiftlet does have a strong connection to home, or rather the memory of it. He talks of his angel of a mother, imagines a world where people care for each other, mourns the modern world for its cruelty and hostility, and although his act is phony, these values seem valid.

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[163] O’Connor, “Life,” 152.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid.
[167] O’Connor, “Life,” 148.

> "My mother was an angel of Gawd," Mr. Shiftlet said in a very strained voice. "He took her from heaven and giver to me and I left her." His eyes were instantly clouded over with a mist of tears. The car was barely moving. The boy turned angrily in the seat. "You go to the devil!" he cried. "My old woman is a flea bag and yours is a stinking pole cat!" and with that he flung the door open and jumped out with his suitcase into the ditch.[168]

One could argue that Mr. Shiftlet's monologue about his mother in the car is just as phony as all the others before, when he was talking to Mrs. Crater. There are some textual clues which afford credibility, though. Firstly, Mr. Shiftlet does not talk about his flaws when he is being fake. His behavior is a performance, and he portray himself "as if he understood life thoroughly"[169] yet never reveals anything *real* about his past. Admitting to having abandoned his mother would not put him in the desirable light. Secondly, Mr. Shiftlet is, as Mrs. Crater has said, always drifting. The most he wanted from Mrs. Crater was her car. There is a link between the car, Mr. Shiftlet's flight, and his sinful, manipulative, and greedy nature. The car "barely moving" suggests a break from this pattern. It suggests a moment of realness. When the hitchhiker insults Mr. Shiftlet's mother, it is an unexpected blow for the man, underlined by the boy jumping out of the car. It surely must have felt like an assault.

Furthermore, the sun is frequently employed as the symbol for the "son" of God[170], thus for God Himself as well. Mr. Shiftlet calls the hitchhiker "son,"[171] which suggests that the hitchhiker symbolizes God's presence. It makes sense that in O'Connor's conception of grace, being linked to violence and suffering of all kinds, the hitchhiker's words represent grace assaulting Mr. Shiftlet, making him see that he is, in fact, no different from the modern man whom he seems to despise so much. He might realize his greed and recognize himself to be "the slime of this earth,"[172] which might awaken love in his heart, for he would realize all people, including himself and his angel of a mother, are "slime."[173] He might accept grace and

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[168] O'Connor, "Life," 156.
[169] O'Connor, "Life," 146.
[170] Mark S. Graybill, "'Ghosts Can Be Very Fierce and Instructive': The Manichean Impulse in Flannery O'Connor's 'The River,'" *CEA Critic* 74, no. 2/3 (2012): 28. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44378468.
[171] O'Connor, "Life," 155.
[172] O'Connor, "Life," 156.
[173] Ibid.

start enacting it and ultimately achieve salvation. Mr. Shiftlet is, in the end, so "shocked"[174] by mercy that he drives on "slowly with the door still open."[175]

3.1.6. "The River"

"The River" is not the typical example of O'Connor's fiction for it features a child protagonist, therefore problematizing the question of the protagonist's chief sin as well as the outcome of their moment of grace. This story is controversial not only for its ending in the destruction of a child, similarly to "The Lame Shall Enter First," but also from a theological perspective. Graybill agrees and discloses Barbara Zimmerman Bogue's explanation that little Harry is too young to understand his actions and their consequences when he is baptized.[176] This fact is problematic "vis-á-vis the issue of free will that was so critical to Augustine and remains so for most Christians."[177] It is unclear whether Harry's baptism had any effect at all since he is not aware of its meaning or consequences. I shall later show that Harry does, in fact, retain the right information that reveals his baptism had been successful. He does not need to understand the process itself, he only needs to understand that he is a child of God, too.

Apart from the question of validity of Harry's baptism, the question of sin makes "The River" unique. The latter is not easily answerable as children are usually considered pure and not (yet) corrupted by sin. Fortunately, St. Augustine does seem to have the answer we need. He believed that the Original Sin does not exempt children, hence the importance of baptism, which for them, and anyone, means the "forgiveness of sins; indeed, absolutely all sins are forgiven – even the killing of Christ."[178] Augustine also believed that sexual intercourse is the

[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Graybill, "Ghosts," 28.
[177] Ibid.
[178] R. Aasgaard, "Ambrose and Augustine. Two Bishops on Baptism and Christian Identity," In: Hellholm, D., Vegge, T., Norderval, Ø. and Hellholm, C. ed. *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism: Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2011), pp. 1270. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110247534.1253

vehicle whereby the original sin is transferred, thus sinful itself; that is why children are not excluded from it, as it is passed from generation to generation.

> In spite of Augustine's assertion to the contrary, he could only see it (marriage) as a kind of permission or toleration of sin. [...] In his eyes concupiscence was absolutely indistinguishable from a natural desire and enjoyment, an indulgence sinful as such. He did not pursue his ideas to their logical conclusion, and would probably have declined to accept it, if it had not been expressly stated; but it seems impossible, on his own premise, to avoid the conclusion that, if sexual intercourse is not to be sinful, it must cease to be attractive and pleasurable to man.[179]

In short, there is no sexual contact that is not sinful to Augustine. I would argue that, in "The River," Harry's original sin is portrayed through the sexual themes, external to himself. It is clever to express a child's sinful nature without including him in the sin himself. Instead, this external expression of his sin threatens him from the outside. As a sinner, Harry is reached by grace in his moment and offered a choice: either to accept grace or refuse it. Graybill also notices the sexual theme and explains that it threatens the innocent Harry, who is much too young for it. "His parents, especially his mother, practice an implicitly erotic debauchery that distances them emotionally from their son."[180] Harry's parents focus their marriage on sex, their own pleasure, rather than consider it only as the "hard purpose"[181] of marriage. Their son is neglected as a result. Graybill goes into detail, focusing on Harry's mother. Mrs. Ashfield is found in a suggestive position "lying on half the sofa, with her knees crossed in the air and her head propped on the arm," wearing "long black satin britches, [...] barefoot sandals and red toenails."[182] Graybill assigns "strong sexual connotations"[183] to satin and links Mrs. Ashfield's red toenails with harlotry. He adds that her ginger hair has been historically associated with danger and thus "signifies licentiousness."[184] In Harry's mother, the original sin is depicted in her natural sexuality and feminine items historically connected with sexual behavior.

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[179] Louis Bouyer, *Seat of Wisdom* (New York: Pantheon, 1962), p. 73; cited in John J. Hugo, *St. Augustine on Nature, Sex, and Marriage* (Chicago: Scepter, 1969), p. 84.
[180] Graybill, "Ghosts," 34.
[181] Ibid.
[182] O'Connor, "River," 169.
[183] Graybill, "Ghosts," 34-35.
[184] Ibid.

Mr. Ashfield is also found lying on the bed, a "white mound"[185] under the bed sheet. It is a strange form which, according to Graybill, represents "a parodic pregnancy and implies the emotional and spiritual sterility that results when sex is detached from it 'hard purpose.'"[186] Harry's father symbolizes unhealthy sexuality, detached from its only supposed and tolerable goal—procreation. Concupiscence is only tolerable in marriage when it is aligned with its "hard purpose," excluding pleasure. Mr. Ashfield—just as Mrs. Ashfield—fails in both categories, and as such, he also represents a threat to Harry.

Mr. and Mrs. Connin, assigned the role of "Harry's supposed surrogate parents,"[187] do not take the correct stance on marriage, sexuality, and the raising of a child, either. They "have no sexual connection with one another."[188] The "hard purpose" of sex is lost on them, too. In contrast to the Ashfields, though, they do not turn to the pleasure of sex but, rather, away from it, occupying the opposite end of the spectrum. Still, they fail the purpose of their marriage and, consequently, fail God, too. Graybill writes that "there are no healthy sexual relationships in the story, [...] sex only constitutes a sinister force from which Harry instinctively flees."[189] Sexuality, in any form stray from the intended one, means the perpetration of the original sin, which threatens the innocent Harry.

A character who poses the greatest sexual threat to Harry is, paradoxically, Mr. Paradise. His intentions are much more sinister; it is heavily implied that he wants to rape Harry. Graybill writes that, like the child's parents, Mr. Paradise represents "distorted sexuality"[190] when he "appears as a 'giant pig,' [...] signifying 'sensuality and gluttony'"[191] as he "suggestively and repulsively 'wipe(s) his sleeve over his mouth' at the sight of the child."[192]

[185] O'Connor, "River," 172.
[186] Graybill, "Ghosts," 35.
[187] Graybill, "Ghosts," 34.
[188] Ibid.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Graybill, "Ghosts," 35.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid.

The piece of candy which he carries is supposed to "seduce"[193] the boy, "a peppermint stick, a foot long and two inches thick,"[194] which is a "blatant phallic symbol."[195] He then stalks Harry like a prey, in his car.

Because Harry has lived his whole life in a rotten environment, neglected and rejected, he does not know that there is a better option, since he has no comparison. There is no other option through which he could understand his dire situation. In other words, he does not know any better.

> "All right, I'm going to baptize you now," and without more warning, he tightened his hold and swung him upside down and plunged his head into the water. He held him under while he said the words of Baptism and then he jerked him up again and looked sternly at the gasping child. Bevel's eyes were dark and dilated. "You count now," the preacher said. "You didn't even count before." The little boy was too shocked to cry.[196]

When he is told that he counts, this comes as new information to him. Suddenly, Bevel has a positive point of view against which he can now compare the dreadful reality back home. He matters. He also realizes that he did not count before, which causes existential pain as the truth dawns on him, rendering him "too shocked to cry."[197]

When Bevel "looks over his shoulder at the pieces of the white sun scattered in the river"[198] it is apparent that grace is announcing its presence.[199] The baptism made the little boy an adept for grace. This moment of grace comes a bit later in the story, when Bevel dives into the water. He is impatient at first, longing to reach salvation but "the river wouldn't have him."[200] Only when he gives "a low cry of pain and indignation,"[201] does "a long gentle hand"[202] pull him "swiftly under and down."[203] This happens when Mr. Paradise attacks the

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[193] Ibid.
[194] O'Connor, "River," 173.
[195] Ibid.
[196] O'Connor, "River," 168.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Graybill, "Ghosts," 28.
[200] O'Connor, "River," 173-174.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid.

little boy. In other words, sexuality threatens the innocent child. Sexual intercourse defines the means whereby the original sin is transferred. Because O'Connor cannot very well attribute sexuality to a child aged "four or five"[204] himself, she plagues his environment with it instead. His inner sinful nature is reflected in the surrounding environment in a perverse way. Because even a child is a sinner,[205] a carrier of the original sin, grace is offered to little Harry when he plunges himself into the water in order to escape.

3.1.7. "A Circle in the Fire"

"A Circle in the Fire" is a story focused around one of O'Connor's typical characters, a single woman, usually also a mother, who aptly cares for and manages a property of her own. Other such characters include Mrs. May in "Greenleaf," Mrs. Hopewell in "Good Country People," and Mrs. Carter in "The Life You Save May Be Your Own." Mrs. Cope possesses personality traits like self-reliance, entitlement, and surface-level gratitude. These are features rather common to this type of character, for example, Mrs. May and Ruby Turpin in "Revelation," to name a few. Mrs. Cope's approach to her success and achievements in life is actually very similar to Ruby Turpin's, in that she claims to be thankful to God, and, in a way, she is, but not for the right reason, nor in the correct way.

> [...] and she began to tell the child how much they had to be thankful for, for she said they might have had to live in a development themselves or they might have been Negroes or they might have been in iron lungs or they might have been Europeans ridden in boxcard like cattle, and she began a litany of her blessings, in a stricken voice, that the child, straining her attention for a sudden shriek in the dark, didn't listen to.[206]

Mrs. May's view, like Mrs. Turpin's, is skewed. Instead of expressing love, and thus enacting grace, she compares her situation with the less fortunate, placing herself above them. Her gratitude is negative. She reveals to the reader that she is more concerned for herself and the

[204] O'Connor, "River," 158.
[205] Aasgaard, "Ambrose and Augustine," 1270.
[206] Flannery O'Connor, "A Circle in the Fire," *The Complete Stories of Flannery O'Connor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971), 190.

possible misfortunes that might befall her. She is "always afraid someone would get hurt on her place"[207] and would "sue her"[208] and cause her to lose "everything she had."[209] She shows no empathy, compassion, or pity to the potential victim, more afraid of the material consequences that such a tragedy would cause for her. Mrs. May's sin can, therefore, be characterized as her selfishness which, in a general sense, points also to pride.

Whitt describes Mrs. Cope as a Southern lady, although her character is less vain and more able than the Grandmother in "A Good Man Is Hard To Find." Mrs Cope's abidance by the code is centered around her hospitality and kindness.[210] Her good manners are nothing but a mask, which is obvious from her interactions with her daughter, Sally Virginia Cope. Mrs. Cope is dismissive and mocks her whenever the child openly shows her disagreement with the boys' presence on their property. Mrs. Cope would like it best if Sally could finally "grow up,"[211] meaning she'd start behaving like a lady as well. Sally says, "I ain't you,"[212] in response. She is no lady, which allows her to express herself freely and not expect special treatment.

Because Mrs. Cope places such high value on her politeness, she deliberately ignores the criminal behavior of the child delinquents. Her pride ensures that she remains willfully blind. She is certain that Powell "wouldn't do a thing like"[213] locking his brother inside a box and setting it on fire, and trusts that the boys will "be gone in the morning."[214] This illogical thinking is in accordance with the Southern code of manners; its abidance is one of the ways in which the lady's sin becomes apparent.

[207] O'Connor, "Circle," 180.
[208] Ibid.
[209] Ibid.
[210] Ibid.
[211] O'Connor, "Circle," 190.
[212] Ibid.
[213] O'Connor, "Circle," 184.
[214] O'Connor, "Circle," 185.

Mrs. Cope boasts to Mrs. Pritchard that she is able to handle everything, proclaiming that she never lets anything "get ahead" [215] of her, she is not "always looking for trouble"[216] and she takes hardship "as it comes."[217] Evidently, she is very pleased with her current situation and takes full credit for everything that she has ever accomplished. A good Christian should never ascribe their accomplishments to their own merit. One's success is always made possible only by God, therefore any recognition for those achievements must always be attributed to God.[218] This is another evidence of Mrs. Cope's pride.

Mrs. Cope's sin is represented in her material property, her adequate Southern manners, and her approach to life. All these different streams come together in the story in the form of Mrs. Cope's land. It is a place where she gets to put to work the Southern lady's act as she serves "three Coca-colas"[219] and "a plate of crackers"[220] to Powell and the other boys. The place also represents her approach to life when she takes Powell and company as they come, affording them her leniency when they disobey her, for she does not exert herself to find hardships. Finally, her land is the very symbol of her material pride; she worries for the woods, afraid that she might be sued out of everything if someone hurt themselves on her property.

Mrs. Cope's sin blinds her to higher, more spiritual layers of reality. In contrast, her daughter is not lost in her endless delusion of the goodness of obvious criminals. Sally can see their true intentions because she is not blinded by any code, material anxiousness, or delusional self-confidence. She responds to their behavior with a raw desire to violently punish them. This pattern of enlightenment and violence usually points to grace. In Sally, as well as in Powell, the workings of grace are noticeably well described when we focus on the symbolic clues.

> The sun made two white spots on Powell's glasses and blotted out his eyes."I know what let's do," he said. He took something small from his pocket and showed it to them. [...] She watched

[215] O'Connor, "Circle," 178.
[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Chapter 2.2.
[219] O'Connor, "Circle," 181.
[220] O'Connor, "Circle," 182.

> with a dazed stare as they stopped and collected all the matches they had between them and began to set the bush on fire. They began to whoop and holler and beat their hands over their mouths and in a few seconds there was a narrow line of fire widening between her and them. While she watched it, it reached up from the brush, snatching and biting at the lowest branches of the trees. The wind carried rags of it higher and the boys disappeared shrieking behind it. She turned and tried to run across the field but her legs were too heavy and she stood there, weighted down with some new unplaced misery that she had never felt before.[221]

Sally went to chase the boys earlier, now she observes them bathing in "the cow trough."[222] As mentioned in "The River," the sun symbolizes the son of God and announces God's presence.[223] O'Connor often utilizes this symbol, connecting the intensity of the sun's rays and the gradation of its color to the intensity of God's presence. In fact, any intense white light seems to point to grace. The most notable example can be found in "The Artificial Nigger,"[224] when the moon takes on this role; it restores to "its full splendor"[225] and floods "the clearing with light"[226] as Mr. Head feels "the action of mercy touch him."[227] In the excerpt above, "two white spots" appear on Powell's glasses, shielding his eyes from view, as if a divine power took over his body. This suggests that Powell's action is led by grace, marking him as the symbol thereof.

When Sally reaches her mother, she recognizes the "new misery she felt, but on her mother, it looked old and it looked as if it might have belonged to anybody, a Negro or a European or to Powell himself" [228] on her face. The misery points to the pain of grace. Powell is mentioned as well, for it is him who set the woods on fire and caused the suffering. Mrs. Cope stands struck by Powell's mercy, hurt by the loss of what has given her life meaning but simultaneously blinded her to God. The destruction of Mrs. Cope's property marks her moment

[221] O'Connor, "Circle," 193.
[222] O'Connor, "Circle," 191.
[223] Graybill, "Ghosts," 28.
[224] Chapter 3.1.8.
[225] Flannery O'Connor, "The Artificial Nigger," *The Complete Stories of Flannery O'Connor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971), 269.
[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid.
[228] O'Connor, "Circle," 193.

of grace, and suggests the potential elimination of her sin, thus positioning her to make a choice, either to reject or accept it.

3.1.8. "The Artificial Nigger"

According to Dowell, "The Artificial Nigger," a personal favorite of O'Connor, dramatizes the moment of grace best. In the story, Mr. Head takes his grandson, Nelson, to the city to introduce him to the devil and show him that the Negro is "an inferior being."[229] However, "it is while the two confront the 'artificial nigger,' which they mistakenly believe to be a monument to the black race, that the severed relationship between Mr. Head and Nelson is healed,"[230] as both are "brought together by common defeat."[231] He writes that man's salvation depends upon his "recognition of the existence of evil" [232] as well as man's own "tendency toward evil"[233] and his "ability to triumph over evil through grace."[234] This triumph only comes when man realizes his "lost condition"[235] and his absolute "dependance on Christ."[236]

"The Artificial Nigger" maps Mr. Head's journey as a lost soul, from encountering evil, realizing his "lost condition" all the way to receiving grace from God. Once again, his sinful nature is hidden from him, blinded by pride. But, once he receives grace, this veil of sin vanishes and opens up the opportunity for salvation.

Mr. Head feels mandated to shatter Nelson's illusions and teach him a lesson, for he finds his boasting of being city-born irritable and ignorant. A similar pattern can be observed in "Everything That Rises Must Converge."[237]

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[229] Bob Dowell, "The Moment of Grace in the Fiction of Flannery O'Connor," *College English* 27, no. 3 (1965): 238. https://doi.org/10.2307/373114.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Ibid.
[232] Ibid.
[233] Ibid.
[234] Ibid.
[235] Ibid.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Chapter 3.1.10.

> He had been thinking about this trip for several months but it was for the most part in moral terms that he conceived it. It was to be a lesson that the boy would never forget. He was to find out from it that he had no cause for pride merely because he had been born in a city. He was to find that the city is not a great place. Mr. Head meant him to see everything there is to see in a city so that he would be content to stay at home for the rest of his life. He fell asleep thinking how the boy would at last find out that he was not as smart as he thought he was.[238]

Mr. Head is convinced he understands the city and its evils. Despite only having visited it two times before, he challenges his grandson's doubts saying "have you ever [...] seen me lost?"[239] Mr. Head proves that he is oblivious to his predetermined condition as a part of the human species and thus grace escapes him as well.

His ignorance is showcased on multiple occasions, which simultaneously challenge his pride, positioning him closer and closer to the realization of the human condition. He acts nonchalant when a rejection threatens the position he possesses in Nelson's eyes—his grandson looks up to him. For example, while waiting for the train, "Mr. Head was still not certain it would stop," [240] fearing that it might "make an even bigger idiot of him if it went slowly by"[241] he was "prepared to ignore the train if it passed them."[242] He needs Nelson to believe that Mr. Head is "indispensable"[243] to him, so he puts on an act, refusing to admit that it is the human condition to be "lost."[244]

Mr. Head is crucially tested three times, each time sacrificing something different. His first sacrifice is the lunch sack, which he leaves on the seat of the train. Nelson proclaims that he "would have keptaholt (sic) of it."[245] Albeit a minute was lost, losing the lunch sack ensures that the two end up hungry and exhausted later, making the journey that much harder. It definitely accelerates the divine process of achieving revelation.

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[238] Flannery O'Connor, "The Artificial Nigger," *The Complete Stories of Flannery O'Connor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971), 269.
[239] O'Connor, "Artificial," 250.
[240] O'Connor, "Artificial," 253.
[241] Ibid.
[242] Ibid.
[243] O'Connor, "Artificial," 257.
[244] O'Connor, "Artificial," 250.
[245] O'Connor, "Artificial," 261.

Secondly, he loses direction. Blinded by his pride, he wants Nelson to believe that the city is familiar ground to him and that he can aptly orient himself. He makes sure not to seem confused, leading the way, although he has no clue as to what sights there are to show Nelson to teach him the desired lesson. Mr. Head is "determined not to go into any city store"[246] and just keeps endlessly "circling the dome."[247] Nelson notices that he is "seeing the same stores twice."[248] In order to keep up with his charade, Mr. Head is forced to abandon the safe route and change direction, getting himself and his grandson lost in the evil city.

Finally, the greatest sacrifice that Mr. Head makes is related to his grandson. He sacrifices the pride that Nelson feels observing his uncle as he makes clever remarks and exhibits his charm. When the child is accused by an elderly woman who claims that he has broken "her ankle" [249] and his "daddy'll pay for it,"[250] he runs to his grandfather seeking refuge. Instead of protecting him, Mr. Head wants to shake off Nelson who has "caught him around the hips" [251] and now "clung panting against him."[252] "Fear and caution"[253] engulf Mr. Head as he tries to "detach Nelson's fingers from the flesh [...] of his legs."[254] Symbolically, the old man tears off his own flesh. Now he is the true embodiment of the human condition as O'Connor describes it—a man who is incomplete and lost.[255]

O'Connor explains that sometimes her characters make "some action, some gesture" [256] that is "unlike any other in the story."[257] One action "indicates where the real heart of the story

[246] O'Connor, "Artificial," 250.
[247] O'Connor, "Artificial," 260.
[248] Ibid.
[249] O'Connor, "Artificial," 264.
[250] Ibid.
[251] O'Connor, "Artificial," 265.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Ibid.
[255] Flannery O'Connor, "The Catholic Novelist in the Protestant South," *Mystery & Manners* (London: Faber and Faber, 2014), 197.
[256] Flannery O'Connor, "On Her Own Work," *Mystery & Manners* (London: Faber and Faber, 2014), 111.
[257] Ibid.

lies," and another is both "in character and beyond character."[258] Mr. Head cries and waves his arms like "someone shipwrecked on a desert island" and calls out, "I'm lost! [...] 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!"[259] This acts as a desperate prayer to God. This is precisely the kind of gesture "in character and beyond" that O'Connor describes. "Trembling violently,"[260] Mr. Head admits that he is lost, which marks his realization of the general human condition; grace can now enter him.

> 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. [...] the moon, restored to its full splendor, sprang from a cloud and flooded the clearing with light. [...] the sky [...] was hung with gigantic white clouds illuminated like lanterns.[261]

The artificial Negro, instead of having a "happy look," [262] his beaten state gives him "a wild look of misery."[263] Staring at this figure, the grandfather and grandson can feel their differences "dissolving." Being "brought […] together" indicates that Mr. Head, having torn off his own flesh—Nelson—is complete again. Furthermore, because he has realized his status as a lost human, he is no longer blind to grace. His moment of grace follows the familiar pattern of enlightenment and suffering, the former symbolized by the white light of the moon. The moonlight signals God's presence as it restores to "its full splendor" and floods "the clearing with light;"[264] Mr. Head feels "the action of mercy touch him.[265] The latter is emblematized in his exhausting journey as well as in the statue of the Negro itself. "The Artificial Nigger" truly offers one of the most detailed descriptions of the moment of grace, interlaced with useful textual clues.

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[258] Ibid.
[259] O'Connor, "Artificial," 267.
[260] O'Connor, "Artificial," 267.
[261] O'Connor, "Artificial," 270.
[262] O'Connor, "Artificial," 268.
[263] Ibid.
[264] O'Connor, "Artificial," 269.
[265] Ibid.

3.1.9. "Greenleaf"

Mrs. May is a mother of two—Wesley, a chronic intellectual, and a "nigger-insurance"[266] salesman and Scofield—who, like Mrs. Cope or Mrs. Hopewell, manages a farm on her own, without a man's help. Her sons continuously mock her and behave ungratefully, refusing to help their mother with her work "to save (her) soul from hell."[267] Mrs. May loves her sons despite their hostility and turns her frustration toward a lower-class family of the Greenleafs, instead. Mrs. May criticizes the 'white-trash' family, who serve as a foil. In evoking contempt in her, they highlight her condescending and unforgiving nature, enabling her to expose to the reader her sin: pride.

Mr. Greenleaf is an "aristocrat" [268] who has enough time on his hands. When Mrs. May orders him to "do a thing,"[269] he does it after being told "three or four times,"[270] but when actual harm threatens Mrs. May's property, he always tells her too late, be it a "sick cow"[271] or something similar. In fact, "if her barn had caught on fire, he would have called his wife to see the flames before he began to put them out."[272] Mrs. Greenleaf also works as a "Christian foil to the respectable but unbelieving Mrs. May."[273] She is shocked by the woman's lack of shame when she witnesses her intense, "primitive prayer-healing ceremony."[274] Mrs. May believes that "the word Jesus, should be kept inside the church building like other words inside the bedroom."[275] Mrs. May considers herself a "good Christian woman with a large respect for

[266] Flannery O'Connor, "Greenleaf," *The Complete Stories of Flannery O'Connor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971), 315.
[267] O'Connor, "Greenleaf," 321.
[268] O'Connor, "Greenleaf," 313.
[269] Ibid.
[270] Ibid.
[271] Ibid.
[272] Ibid.
[273] A. R. Coulthard, "Flannery O'Connor's Deadly Conversions," *The Flannery O'Connor Bulletin* 13 (1984): 91. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26669841.
[274] Ibid.
[275] O'Connor, "Greenleaf," 316.

religion"[276] although she does not "believe any of it was true."[277] She considers faith something shameful and, similarly to Mrs. Cope previously, expects recognition for her accomplishments. Mrs. May can still achieve her moment of grace, despite her conviction. As Rufus in "The Lame Shall Enter First" says, "even if I didn't believe it, it would still be true."[278] God is still real and able to exercise His grace despite Mrs. May's doubts.

Mrs. May feels responsible for the Greenleafs' current position in life. She ascribes their achievement to her help, and also the government's. When Mr. Greenleaf shows Mrs. May their "milking parlor arrangement" [279] and asks, "when you goner (sic) get you one?"[280] Mrs. May answers that she has to do everything herself, she is not "assisted hand and food by the government."[281] Putting her pride in the spotlight, Mrs. May does not think the Greenleafs deserve what they have acquired. Although they "thank Gawd for ever-thang,"[282] (sic) Mrs. May thinks they have "never done anything for (themselves)."[283] She reminds Mr. Greenleaf of all that she had done for him and his sons:

> "I thought they did (have more gratitude)" she said. "I think they did. But they've forgotten all the nice little thing I did for them now. If I recall, they wore my boys' clothes and played with my boys' old toys and hunted with my boys' old guns. They swam in my pond and shot my birds and fished in my stream and I never forgot their birthday and Christmas seemed to roll around very often if I remember it right. And do they think of any of those things now?" she asked. "NOOOOO," she said.[284]

She demands gratitude from the Greenleaf family. A good Christian should, however, never expect a reward for their good deeds and expressions of love, much less ascribe the merits of their hard work to themselves. Mrs. May is guilty of both.

> She remained perfectly still, not in fright, but in a freezing unbelief. She stared at the violent black streak bounding toward her as if she had no sense of distance, as if she could not decide at once what his intention was, and the bull had buried his head in her lap, like a wild tormented

[276] Ibid.
[277] Ibid.
[278] Flannery O'Connor, "The Lame Shall Enter First," *The Complete Stories of Flannery O'Connor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971), 477.
[279] O'Connor, "Greenleaf," 324.
[280] Ibid.
[281] Ibid.
[282] Ibid.
[283] Ibid.
[284] O'Connor, "Greenleaf," 328.

> lover, before her expression changed. One of his horns sank until it pierced her heart and the other curved around her side and held her in an unbreakable grip. She continued to stare straight ahead but the entire scene in front of her had changed—the tree line was a dark wound in a world that was nothing but sky—and she had the look whose sight has been suddenly restored but who finds the light unbearable.[285]

Mrs. May's moment of grace is, again, accompanied by pain but there is a vital difference, which sets it apart from all the others. She undoubtedly experiences extreme physical pain but the pain does not seem to reach her. There is a noticeable lack of descriptive language which would signify that Mrs. May is actually suffering. Her pain does not reflect emotionally nor physically. She stares ahead "as the entire scenery change(s)"[286] when the "violent streak"[287] ends her life. The violence of the angry bull contrasts with Mrs. May's nonchalance in the face of deadly danger. Only the utter exhaustion that she mentions before the bull appears, having worked "continuously for fifteen years,"[288] seems to permeate until her very last moment.

3.1.10. "Everything That Rises Must Converge"

Many of O'Connor's characters include adult children who disrespect their parents.[289] They tend to be condescending, talk back, and mock their mothers. Julian in "Everything That Rises Must Converge" offers a deeper, much more detailed look into such characters' thoughts, feelings, and motivations. His behavior falls nothing short of simply evil; there is an "evil urge"[290] in him that wants to "break"[291] his mother's "spirit."[292] He laboriously seeks out opportunities to anger his mother, exploiting her old-fashioned manners, her racism, and her dedication to her son. He sits next to strange women, looking peacefully at his mother's "angry

[285] O'Connor, "Greenleaf," 333.
[286] Ibid.
[287] Ibid.
[288] O'Connor, "Greenleaf," 332.
[289] Hulga/Joy in "Good Country People," Scofield and Wesley in "Greenleaf."
[290] Flannery O'Connor, "Everything That Rises Must Converge," *The Complete Stories of Flannery O'Connor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971), 409.
[291] Ibid.
[292] Ibid.

red"[293] face with the "eyes of a stranger;"[294] satisfied with himself he feels "his tension suddenly lift."[295] In trying to make his mother dislike him, he morally places himself above her in that moment.

Despite his self-proclaimed freedom from prejudice, he sits next to a black man, unashamedly using him to rebel against his mother, in a childish assertion of dominance. He asks the man for a lighter even though he has no cigarettes because "he had quit smoking some months before" [296] since "he could not afford it."[297] Julian's mother watches him with a "battered look,"[298] which makes Julian want "desperately to keep (the advantage) and carry it through."[299] He wants to "teach her a lesson that would last her a while."[300] He pictures marrying a "beautiful suspiciously Negroid woman," [301] imagining she is "intelligent, dignified, even good, and she's suffered and she hasn't thought it *fun*,"[302] as opposed to Julian's mother, for whom "the bottom rail is always on the top."[303] In other words, Julian sees skin color first and foremost and views black people as instruments of revenge against his mother. But he remains oblivious to this fact.

The pinnacle of Julian's childish bus vendetta arrives in the form of a "large, gaily dressed, sullen-looking colored woman"[304] and her four-year-old son. The "giant of a woman"[305] has on a "hideous,"[306] purple and green hat, identical to the one his mother is

[293] Ibid.
[294] Ibid.
[295] Ibid.
[296] O'Connor, "Everything," 413.
[297] Ibid.
[298] Ibid.
[299] Ibid.
[300] Ibid.
[301] O'Connor, "Everything," 414.
[302] Ibid.
[303] O'Connor, "Everything," 407.
[304] O'Connor, "Everything," 415.
[305] Ibid.
[306] Ibid.

wearing. The woman ends up seated next to Julian, much to his disappointment, as he was hoping she would sit next to his mother, instead of the woman's little boy.

> His eyes widened. The vision of the two hats, identical, broke upon him with the radiance of a brilliant sunrise. His face was suddenly lit with joy. He could not believe that Fate had thrust upon his mother such a lesson. He gave a loud chuckle so that she would look at him and see what he saw. She turned her eyes on him slowly. The blue in them seemed to have turned a bruised purple. For a moment he had an uncomfortable sense of her innocence, but it lasted only a second before principle rescued him. Justice entitled him to laugh. His grin hardened until it said to her as plainly as if he were saying aloud: Your punishment exactly fits your pettiness. This should teach you a permanent lesson.[307]

Because the black woman is wearing the same hat as his mother, the former represents, to Julian, a dark double of his mother. Convinced that his mother would find such an image unbearable, Julian sees in it the ultimate retaliation against her racism. He is hoping that upon seeing her mirror self, the sense of superiority would crumble as she would have to view both on the same level, not as something "inferior."[308] Julian's chief mission in life seems to be making his mother feel subordinate.

Julian feels extremely inadequate; he is unemployed, poor, and chronically dependent on his mother. She tries to encourage him, reminding him that "Rome wasn't built in a day"[309] and that he has only been "out of school a year."[310] While Julian's mother is the embodiment of the Southern lady: fashionable, aimlessly chatty, and infinitely dedicated to her son, by contrast, Julian is morose, gloomy, and although he hasn't yet "entered the real world,"[311] is already "disenchanted with it as a man of fifty."[312] Furthermore, Julian has no sense of his identity in the world as opposed to his mother, whose source comes from the family lineage. Julian's "great-great-grandfather had a plantation and two hundred slaves,"[313] his "great-grandfather was a former governor,"[314] his "grandfather was a prosperous land-owner" and his

[307] O'Connor, "Everything," 416.
[308] O'Connor, "Everything," 417.
[309] O'Connor, "Everything," 406.
[310] Ibid.
[311] O'Connor, "Everything," 412.
[312] Ibid.
[313] O'Connor, "Everything," 407.
[314] Ibid.

"grandmother was a Godhigh."[315] Because Julian rejects the racial implications that come with such ancestry, despite clearly being plagued with its remains, he finds himself lost in the modern world.

The complete dependency on his mother is the greatest source of Julian's feelings of inadequacy. Without any objections, she cares for her son and supports him endlessly, which fills him with rage. He would have coped with his situation much better if his mother had been a "selfish [...] old hag who drank and screamed at him;"[316] because that would make him feel less powerless as he would possess higher moral ground. Julian behaves in such a manner because he does not feel worthy of her love and care and he is too proud to admit that to himself, instead finding solace in his intellectualism. His mother in his view becomes a little girl who has no idea how "the real world"[317] works now that "there are no more slaves."[318] Similarly to Hulga/Joy, Julian is blinded to grace by intellectual pride. He feeds it and escapes redemption by trying to dominate his mother, "a widow" [319] who has "struggled fiercely to feed and clothe and put him through school and who was supporting him still, 'until he got on his feet.'"[320]

> "I hate to see you behave like this," he said. "Just like a child, I should be able to expect more of you." He decided to stop where he was and make her stop and wait for a bus. "I'm not going any farther," he said, stopping. "We're going on the bus."
> She continued to go on as if she had not heard him. He took a few steps and caught her arm and stopped her. He looked into her face and caught his breath. He was looking into a face he had never seen before. "Tell Grandpa to come get me," she said.
> He stared, stricken.[321]

Julian is touched by grace upon realizing that his mother has reverted "physically to her childhood."[322] He has been able to bloat his sense of superiority and genius only because he subconsciously knew that his mother would always be there for him, clothing and feeding him

[315] Ibid.
[316] Ibid.
[317] O'Connor, "Everything," 411-412.
[318] O'Connor, "Everything," 408.
[319] O'Connor, "Everything," 406.
[320] Ibid.
[321] O'Connor, "Everything," 420.
[322] Bryan N. Wyatt, "The Domestic Dynamics of Flannery O'Connor: Everything That Rises Must Converge," *Twentieth Century Literature* 38, no. 1 (1992): 66–88. https://doi.org/10.2307/441543.

until she could. This safety net vanishes when grace delivers its blow, leaving Julian, in an instance, completely responsible for himself for the first time in his life. The pain is evident as he cries like a child, "Mamma, Mamma."[323] Once again, the protagonist's moment of grace is accompanied by a shocking, unexpected strike of mercy, represented here by Julian's loss of his mother.

3.1.11. "The Lame Shall Enter First"

In "The Lame Shall Enter First," a similar theme of hatred amongst family members emerges, this time directed from a parent onto his child. After the death of the mother, father Sheppard and his son Norton are left alone, each having to somehow cope with the reality and mystery of death in their own way. Sheppard, out of disappointment, substitutes his son for a seemingly more enlightened Rufus, a young handicapped Christian delinquent who believes himself to be in the power of Satan. Central to this story is the tension between science and religion, represented by Rufus' faith and Sheppard's rejection of it. The former, reportedly in the power of Satan, and the latter, a sort of an atheist Jesus figure, aim to dominate each other in a game of salvation and damnation, influencing Norton and unknowingly leading him to suicide.

In Sheppard, O'Connor uses the familiar motifs of intellectual pride and spiritual blindness. His name underlines the ingenuity of his character. Rufus is disgusted by Sheppard's attempts to be like Jesus Christ, but just as Sheppard is no shepherd, he is no Jesus either. The incorrect spelling signifies the falsehood of his convictions. By Rufus' words, Sheppard just "ain't right."[324]

Working as the City Recreational Director, he counsels boys no other people care about, receiving nothing but "satisfaction."[325] His inauthenticity is apparent when he smiles, stating

[323] O'Connor, "Everything," 420.
[324] Flannery O'Connor, "The Lame Shall Enter First," *The Complete Stories of Flannery O'Connor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971), 454.
[325] O'Connor, "Lame," 447.

that "half his effectiveness came from nothing more than smiling" [326] for the troubled boys "had so few friends."[327] He takes a special liking to Rufus because of his high IQ of 140, valuing his scientifically verified intelligence. At first, he wants to save him only from his criminal past, "senseless destruction, windows smashed, city trash boxes set afire, tires slashed,"[328] but having learned that Rufus is a Christian who believes that Satan has him "in his power,"[329] he becomes even more invested. Believing him to be far too intelligent for that rubbish."[330] Curiously, he never takes much time to get to know Rufus; he immediately knows that with all the misbehavior he is compensating for his "monstrous club foot."[331] Sheppard intends to transform, not help the boy:

> He came to Johnson's I.Q. score. It was 140. He raised his eyes eagerly. [...] He wanted to stretch his horizons. He wanted him to *see* the universe, to see that the darkest parts of it could be penetrated. He would have given anything to be able to put a telescope in Johnson's hands. [...] First he would have him fitted for a new orthopedic shoe. His back was thrown out of line every time he took a step. Then he would encourage him in some particular intellectual interest. He thought of the telescope.[332]

Sheppard wants to "explain"[333] Rufus' Devil to him, despite the boy's asking "for no explanation,"[334] and already well aware of the reason behind his behavior: he is simply good at it.[335] Sheppard is oblivious to Rufus' blunt hostility and disdain, refusing to see the child for who he is. He believes he can cure Rufus of his faith.

Sheppard's savior complex perhaps resides in the question of death and the afterlife, which both religion and science conceive of in completely different ways. Sheppard's involvement in the matter is further boosted by the fact that his wife, who was religious, has passed. Conflicting feelings might have been evoked because of the lack of certainty. After all,

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[326] O'Connor, "Lame," 450.
[327] Ibid.
[328] O'Connor, "Lame," 449.
[329] O'Connor, "Lame," 450.
[330] O'Connor, "Lame," 451.
[331] O'Connor, "Lame," 450.
[332] O'Connor, "Lame," 449-452.
[333] O'Connor, "Lame," 451.
[334] O'Connor, "Lame," 450.
[335] O'Connor, "Lame," 480.

death and what comes after is the greatest mystery that not even science has a definite answer for. Sheppard likes to believe that his deceased wife "just isn't."[336] Turning Rufus from religion to science would confirm his belief in the superiority of science, providing him with a definite answer—that his wife truly does not exist. However, this conclusion means Sheppard has to sacrifice hope of ever reuniting with her.

This uncertainty, the mystery of death, is personified by Norton. Sheppard feels "irritated"[337] because of Norton's lack of "intellectual curiosity."[338] A child's mind cannot comprehend the abstract notion of simply *not being*, hence, science is not the answer for little Norton. This angers his father, who desperately seeks reassurance in it. Sheppard admits that telling Norton that his mother went to heaven and some day he could get to see her again would have been easier, "but he could not allow himself to bring him up on a lie."[339] To Norton, religion offers a tangible explanation not only for Norton's mother's current whereabouts but also how to see her again; he "can't go in no space ship,"[340] he must die. Norton mirrors Sheppard's inner conflict between believing something he cannot understand and something he can, which demands a sacrifice. On the surface, the uncertainty is symbolized in Norton's eyes, namely, his seeming inability to ever fully engage them, as well as his lazy eye.

Sheppard's moment of grace is described with immediacy that renders the victim speechless. It forces him to overcome the uncertainty of death. His pride that has hitherto functioned as a veil between himself and Norton is lifted and the effect is quite unpleasant.

> Sheppard's face was tight with pain. [...] "I did more for him than I did for my own child." He heard his voice as if it were the voice of his accuser. He repeated the sentence silently. Slowly his face drained of color. It became almost gray beneath the white halo of his hair. The sentence echoed in his mind, each syllable like a dull blow. His mouth twisted and he closed his eyes against the revelation. Norton's face rose before him, empty, forlorn, his left eye listing almost imperceptibly toward the outer rim as if it could not bear a full view of the grief. His heart constricted with a repulsion for himself so clear and intense that he gasped for breath.[341]

[336] O'Connor, "Lame," 461.
[337] O'Connor, "Lame," 460.
[338] Ibid.
[339] O'Connor, "Lame," 461.
[340] O'Connor, "Lame," 462.
[341] O'Connor, "Lame," 481.

His face becomes "tight with pain" at the "revelation." Grace comes as a "blow," which causes his heart to constrict "with repulsion." The "white halo" that his hair forms is another indication which points to grace. Evidently, pain is a necessary complement of grace, which allows the sinner to recognize their sin and gives them an opportunity to repent.

3.1.12. "Revelation"

Ruby Turpin, a woman living a life of binaries and unable to imagine the gray areas of reality and a life different from her current one, is attacked by grace in perhaps the most literal sense yet. A young student, tellingly named Mary Grace, physically assaults her, throwing a book at her face, and calls her a pig, condemning her back to hell. "Revelation" is fabulously rich in symbolism, as most of O'Connor's fiction after all, which further points to the specific moment of grace Mrs. Turpin is an object of.

Mrs. Turpin is closely reminiscent of Mrs. May in "Greenleaf" and Mrs. Cope in "A Circle in the Fire," in that she has a tendency for surface gratitude, thanking God that He had made her who she is rather than a "nigger" or worse, "white trash."[342]

> 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—but not above, just away from—were the white trash; then above them were the home 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. But here the complexity of it would begin to bear in on her, for some of the people with a lot of money were common and ought to be below she and Claud and some of the people who had good blood had lost their money and had to rent and then there were colored people who owned their homes and land as well. There was a colored dentist in town who had two red Lincolns and a swimming pool and a farm with registered white-face cattle on it. Usually by the time she had fallen asleep all the classes of people were moiling and roiling around in her head, and she would dream they were all crammed in together in a box car, being ridden off to be put in a gas oven.[343]

The world is ordained into a seemingly strict hierarchy in her mind. Ironically, she has great difficulties mapping the borders. Scott draws a very useful model of Mrs. Turpin's conception

[342] Flannery O'Connor, "Revelation," *The Complete Stories of Flannery O'Connor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971), 491.
[343] O'Connor, "Revelation," 491-492.

of identity and what her current approach predicts for her future, more pertinently, for her afterlife. He discusses the philosophy of existentialism, namely the two philosophers Camus and Sartre, and describes that existentialism sees human life as devoid of purpose; it is essentially meaningless, which creates anxiety in the individual. To counter this anxiety, one can form their own meaning but it will always be artificial by definition. Scott further employs Lacanian theory of the 'Other,' elaborating that Mrs. Turpin's identity is constructed in opposition with other people on the basis of material, thus essentially non-existent, units of measure. In other words, Mrs. Turpin's means of self-authentification is her material comfort.[344]

By self-assuredly domineering others, Mrs. Turpin asserts and preserves her "manufactured identity,"[345] similarly to Julian in "Everything That Rises Must Converge." Hubbard writes that "without something essential governing how she ought to conceive of herself, any notion of the same will inevitably rely on the relative standard of where she is situated among all the particular people in her view, and especially in regard to how she differs from them."[346] Mrs. Turpin does not like to think about the others, because she is then faced with the gray areas of social class, e.g., black land-owners and white land-owners with "good blood"[347] who have lost their money and were living like 'white trash' despite not being so. The reality threatens the safe haven of her self-authentication project, hence, she remains willfully oblivious of it, lest existential anxiety befall her.

Mrs. Turpin's existentialism blinds her to grace, which is evident in her constant judgement of people's appearance, clothes, and manners. Similarly to Hulga/Joy's nihilism, Mrs. Turpin's philosophy represents her sin—pride. She does not recognize herself as the

[344] Scott Hubbard, "The Refiner's Fire and the Imago Dei: The Nature of the Self in Flannery O'Connor's 'Revelation,'" *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies* 14, no. 1 (2012): 38-55. https://doi.org/10.5325/intelitestud.14.1.0038.
[345] Hubbard, "Imago Dei," 47.
[346] Ibid.
[347] [347] O'Connor, "Revelation," 491-492.

'Other' of God. Instead, she positions herself in the role of the Subject and launches her self-authenticating project. Because she does not conceive herself as God's vessel of grace, she remains blind to it. Mary Grace represents the personification of grace, which is supported by numerous textual clues.

> "If it's one thing I am," Mrs. Turpin said with feeling, "it's grateful. When I think who all I could have been besides myself and what all I got, a little of everything, and a good disposition besides, I just feel like shouting, 'Thank you, Jesus, for making everything the way it is!' It could have been different!" [...] At the thought of this, she was flooded with gratitude and a terrible pang of joy ran through her. "Oh thank you, Jesus, Jesus, thank you!" she cried aloud. The book struck her directly over her left eye. It struck almost at 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. [...] The girl's eyes [...] seemed a much lighter blue than before, as if a door that had been tightly closed behind them was now open to admit light and air. [...] "What you got to say to me?" she asked hoarsely and held her breath, waiting, as if for a revelation. [...] "Go back to hell where you came from, you old warthog," she whispered. [...] Her eyes burned for a moment as if she saw with pleasure that her message had struck the target.[348]

As discussed previously, light indicates grace and Mary Grace's eyes are described in the excerpt as "lighter [...] than before." Mrs. Turpin waits for a "revelation," sensing divine presence, and is later "struck" by God's mercy, in the form of the terrible words, which leave her "entirely hollow except for her heart."[349] Afterwards, she is left to her own devices, reevaluating her existentialism and her identity, both based on racist and classist foundations. The choice of words like "struck" and "target" affirm that Mrs. Turpin's moment of grace takes the form of a violent assault, which forces her to reexamine her life's philosophy and similarly to Hulga/Joy, she is forced to sacrifice it.

3.2. Part Two: Outcome and Significance of the Moment of Grace

Now we turn to the actual outcome of the characters' moments of grace and what it implies for their respective futures. Three categories can be formed based on the characters' actions or thought process following their moment of grace. The results are deduced mainly from textual clues and symbolism. What differentiates the stories' moments of grace is the way in which

[348] O'Connor, "Revelation," 499-500.
[349] O'Connor, "Revelation," 500.

the theme of pain is dealt with: whether the characters do experience it and whether they ultimately do realize the connection between it and grace. In case they do, some kind of a psychological change should occur that would lead the characters to exercise habitual grace. Consequently, this would mean their redemption and ultimate salvation should they continue in its enactment.

3.2.1. Grace not Recognized

This category includes stories that feature characters who did not experience any pain, and, therefore, could never arrive at the necessary conclusion. This does not mean that a moment of grace did not occur, only that the pain which it caused did not reach the characters. As a result, no connection between grace, pain, and love could have been established.

"Greenleaf" and "The Life You Save May Be Your Own" portray wildly different moments of grace. One is a violent impalement and the other is a questionable insult. Both lack descriptive language when it comes to the suffering imposed on the characters.

Mrs. May in "Greenleaf" does not seem very bothered by the attack of grace, almost like it does not register in her brain, as if her pain/grace receptors are somehow missing. She describes the dark mark that is the bull and the change of scenery but she never confesses to feeling any emotional or physical discomfort—although both must have been immense. O'Connor does draw a comparison between the violent bull and a lover, linking love and pain, which does point to grace but the fact that Mrs. May does not feel it signifies that the moment of grace had been unsuccessful.

Mr. Shiftlet's encounter with grace, symbolized in the hitchhiker, also lacks the explicit descriptions of the other stories. His eyes are "watery"[350] and his voice is "strained,"[351] but whether he truly feels any pain is questionable as Mr. Shiftlet is not really the subject in these

[350] O'Connor, "Life," 156.
[351] Ibid.

sentences. It is already known that he is a phony character, whose words and gestures cannot be taken at face value. I would argue that he feels no pain, no remorse, despite the fact that some sort of emotional violence has been inflicted upon him.

3.2.2. Unclear Result

This category includes stories that do not enclose the characters' final decision, yet a stable pattern can be observed. Although the characters do experience pain, it seems that they never truly link their suffering to God's grace and, ultimately, to love. That a moment of grace did occur but the enactment of it is missing shows that only actual grace is present. *Habitual grace* is either not portrayed or rejected as its manifestation is lacking. In other words, a tragic event is the cause of their misery but, unlike the other two categories, no change in their psyche is registered despite the attack.

In "The Geranium," Old Dudley is attacked by grace when being treated as an equal by the black gentleman. Afterwards the old man returns to his daughter's apartment to find his favorite flower in pieces six floors below. At the neighbor's dare he contemplates retrieving it but he decides against that. The geranium is his reminder of home and although he would not admit it to himself, he loves his home, including Rabie and the rest. Following love by going to pick the flower up and have "niggers pattin' him on the back"[352] would mean that Old Dudley has accepted grace; yet, he turns away and decides to preserve his pride.

No change is apparent in Hulga/Joy in "Good Country People," either. Her intellectualism prevents her from recognizing the pain in her life as God's mercy that will eventually lead to her salvation if she, in response, enacts love. She feels superior to what she perceives as love in Manley Pointer. Rather, she wants to educate him and make him feel his

[352] O'Connor, "Geranium," 14.

own naivety, all despite being desperately unknowledgeable herself. The conclusion she makes is the link between love and intellect, not love and pain/grace. After her moment, she is abandoned and stranded but no psychological change which would indicate her realization of grace is present.

General Sash also never establishes the link between pain/grace and love. The memories of his past and his family hurt him, yet he never comes to understand the pain of *actual grace* as something to be transformed into *habitual grace*. The music that gradually creeps into his head means that grace has entered his body, yet he runs away from it. He tries to evade it so vehemently that it eventually kills him. Instead of accepting it, he makes a "desperate effort to see over it."[353] He describes the faces of his loved ones, mother and wife, as critical and anxious. That he holds on to the false idea of the past, which he has constructed himself, clear from the way "his hand clenched the sword until the blade touched the bone."[354] He does not arrive at the conclusion that salvation can only be reached through *habitual grace*, which would mean accepting his pain and transforming it into the enactment of love.

In "A Circle in the Fire," Mrs. Cope does not reject grace outright but there is no indication that she would accept it and act on it either. It is important to note that we cannot be absolutely certain that a change in her psyche has not occurred since her point of view is not included in the finale, which is all perceived through Mrs. Cope's daughter's perspective. Precisely because no vital realization can be explicitly observed, "A Circle in the Fire" cannot be included among the successful attacks of grace. Her moment of grace does leave her with misery reflected on her face, though. Mrs. Cope is stricken by *actual grace* in her moment but she never exercises *habitual grace* in response.

[353] O'Connor, "Enemy," 143.
[354] Ibid.

Julian in "Everything That Rises Must Converge" is "stunned"[355] and "stricken"[356] when he realizes that his mother is no longer able to support him. Perhaps his dependence on her also dawns on him, but I would argue against that. Although he panics and calls for his mother, there is no indication that he would make a conscious connection between the pain he feels, witnessing her falling to the ground, and love. As opposed to Sheppard, his panic does not result, for instance, in a desire to become the caretaker, which is going to be needed now that the mother is not able to fulfill this role anymore; more so it seems that he simply does not want to be left to his own devices, forced to finally care for himself. This is depicted in his own regression to childhood when he helplessly cries "Mamma!"[357]

"The River" does not show Bevel transforming the pain of grace into the outward expression of love, either. Although pain is very much present and also realized, it remains inside the little boy. He never concludes that his pain is, in fact, precious and he should use it by showing love selflessly without any want for reciprocation, recognition, nor reward. One of the ways grace could have been successful, albeit extremely unempathetic and demanding of a child, is if Bevel perhaps forgave his parents, and the pain he feels because of their treatment he converted into love for them. It is apparent that Bevel cannot love his parents, which is understandable. His description lacks affection, he empties ashtrays and rubs them "carefully into the rug"[358] and so on. Still, he fails to make the conscious connection between *actual grace* and *habitual grace*.

3.2.3. Grace Recognized and Enacted

This category contains stories that not only describe the characters' experiencing the pain of *actual grace*, but also their converting it into *habitual grace*. These are the only stories which

[355] O'Connor, "Everything," 420.
[356] Ibid.
[357] Ibid.
[358] O'Connor, "River," 172.

portray the characters linking their suffering to God's grace in general and let themselves be transformed by it. They recognize that their pain is the only key to their salvation and exhibit appropriate psychological changes.

"The Artificial Nigger" features one of the most explicitly described moments of grace. Not only does Mr. Head experience endure extreme psychological torture, he makes the vital connection when he realizes Man's general condition of being lost. Upon seeing the statue of the Artificial Nigger, Mr. Head recognizes emotional and physical suffering as the only way out of that condition. He realizes that salvation can only be reached through pain and he even feels ashamed that he has not lived through enough pain.

The Grandmother in "A Good Man Is Hard To Find" arrives at the same conclusion, only her execution of *actual grace* differs. When she realizes that Man is lost, including herself and the Misfit, she reaches her hand out to the Misfit and claims him as one of her children. This marks her acceptance of pain of grace to which one must respond with love.

Sheppard in "The Lame Shall Enter First" suffers with great shame when the fact dawns on him that he had been neglecting his own child in favor of selfish desires. He then feels "a rush of agonizing love for the child rush over him like a transfusion of life"[359] and the face of his boy becomes "the image of his salvation."[360] This is when Sheppard makes the connection between grace, pain, and love. Just like with the other two characters, his pain transforms into love that he wishes to materialize. Although his wish can never be fulfilled due to Norton's suicide, the change in Sheppard's psyche signifies that grace had been accepted.

Lastly, Ruby Turpin in "Revelation" also comes to the realization that black people and people like herself, who never significantly struggled, stand all on equal ground. Because of the emotional and physical pain caused by the attack of grace, she is forced to accept that "even

[359] O'Connor, "Lame," 481-82.
[360] Ibid.

their virtues"[361] are going to be "burned away."[362] Admittedly, the story of Ruby Turpin is problematic because there very clearly is a psychological change present, one which indicates the realization of man's general condition. However, there is a lack of clues that would point to Mrs. Turpin transforming her pain into love. Still, I would argue that she does reach that conclusion although it is not explicitly disclosed. She gazes at her husband's truck and fears that "any moment a bigger truck might smash into it"[363] and kill her husband and the workers, worrying for both. She hears "the voices of the souls climbing upward into the starry field and shouting hallelujah,"[364] no longer distinguishing between her own people, "companies of white trash," and "bands of black niggers." [365]

4. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to show that the concept of the moment of grace is present in all of the stories of the American Southern writer Flannery O'Connor. For that purpose, twelve stories have been examined. They were selected to showcase some degree of diversity among the characters—featuring intellectuals, males and females, mothers and fathers, children—and in their depictions of the environment—the city as well as the countryside, the North and the South. Based on the theoretical information and the close reading analysis of each story, the moments of grace can be finally divided into three categories. The main differentiator is the author's treatment of the motif of pain, and the degree to which the main character is able to feel it, both physically and emotionally. The thesis supposes that pain has a more direct relationship to grace that previous criticism would have us believe; one that is rooted in the author's own struggle with faith and doubt.

[361] O'Connor, "Revelation," 508.
[362] Ibid.
[363] Ibid.
[364] O'Connor, "Revelation," 509.
[365] O'Connor, "Revelation," 508.

The theoretical information that forms the background of my analysis is concerned mainly with the doctrine of St. Augustine, who is the father of the concept of grace. The definition of God's grace as we know it today states that grace is essentially an act of benevolence from God to man, who is in fact undeserving of such a gift. Thereby, God gives man the opportunity to redeem himself and reach salvation.

This corresponds with St. Augustine of Hippo's doctrine, in which he stresses the passive nature of man in the acts of grace. It is a gift given *gratis*, for free, and as such should also be expressed *gratis*. In other words, if a man is successful, lucky, wealthy and so on, which is usually the accepted manifestation of grace in man's life, he should never ascribe the merits of his accomplishments to himself because it was God who acted through him, not the individual. Augustine states that the only thing that is one's own is the very desire to be closer to God, to want to follow goodness and return thus to God.

An important distinction that the Catechism of the Catholic Church makes, which Augustine largely omits, is that between *actual* and *habitual* grace. Augustine focuses primarily on the inclination of man towards goodness and the desire to return to God, which corresponds with the definition of *habitual grace*. This type of grace does belong to man and it is within our innate nature. *Actual grace* is external and describes the acts of God over which we have no power; it refers to moments in which grace reveals itself.

While Augustine wrote mainly about habitual grace, O'Connor seems to have focused mostly on actual grace as her moments of grace correspond with the official definition, but her interpretation differs in a unique way. In her *Prayer Journal*, O'Connor expresses frustration and regret at the lack of signs of God's mercy in her life. She is envious of some preachers' effortless devotion to God and struggles to identify with Augustine's positive assertion of grace. She is fearful that her faith might only exist to help her avoid eternal punishment in hell,

but that is not what she desires; she does not want to "fear to be out,"[366] she wants to "love to be in."[367] She ultimately comes to the conclusion that experiencing the goodness of grace is impossible in a mortal's lifetime and desiring it is selfish. How could one learn the taste of heaven while they are still on earth? O'Connor thus stops looking for grace in the goodness of life and turns to pain instead. Her stories become quests on her personal search for grace as well as her characters.' A successful moment of grace depicts the main character recognizing God's mercy, accepting its pain, and coming to the realization that the pain of grace must be transformed into acts of goodness—*actual grace* thus extends into *habitual grace*; pain extends into love.

This thesis shows that all of the twelve stories that have been selected portray a moment of grace. As opposed to St. Augustine, who saw *actual grace* in the goodness and fortune of life, O'Connor depicts it as pain, suffering or violence. In some form, it is prevalent in all the stories, but each character experiences it in their personal and unique way. According to that, the stories can be sorted out into three categories. The character concerned either 1) did not recognize grace, 2) the result was unclear, or they 3) did recognize it and enacted it as well.

The first category features characters who experienced no faith whatsoever during their moment of grace and therefore could never reach salvation. In the second category, a stable pattern can be observed despite the characters' decision being rather unclear. Although they do experience pain, they never truly link their suffering to grace and, ultimately, to love. In other words, *habitual* and *actual grace* do not come together as one. Lastly, there are the stories in which grace is complete; the characters do make the necessary conclusion and exhibit appropriate psychological changes; salvation is actually feasible for them.

[366] O'Connor, "My Dear God." https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/09/16/my-dear-god
[367] Ibid.

Concerning O'Connor's purpose of her moments of grace, Shinn writes that the author "used violence to convey her vision because she knew that the violence of rejection in the modern world demands an equal violence of redemption—man needs to be 'struck' by mercy."[368] She views violence as something O'Connor utilizes in place of grace because the usual form would not be enough for the modern man who is 'blind' to subtle spiritual signs. Shinn argues that O'Connor's conception of violence as grace is an educational tool, arbitrary in itself and unnecessary for the Christian, who is used to searching for grace in his life. Robert Ellsberg also views O'Connor as the perfect spiritual guide who looks at the world through the Catholic scope of the Fall of the Man and his Redemption through pain.[369] There is no doubt that the use of suffering has such a function, but I would argue that there is more to it. Flora does note the sense of a personal deficiency that permeates the journal. However, he attributes it to a "battle between a religious calling and the calling to art,"[370] again positioning O'Connor into the role of the teacher. Yet, he does admit that the author was herself struggling with believing at all.

This thesis shows that violence is not a mere tool conceived for the modern reader to turn him on the path to God, but that it is the core of O'Connor own interpretation of God's grace—as her *Prayer Journal* proves. Huddle supports this argument, writing that she "had to write in order to practice her religion."[371]

Moreover, by creating a whole body of work focused on her concept of the moment of grace, O'Connor completes St. Augustine by focusing on *actual grace* as opposed to *habitual grace* which is St. Augustine's chief domain. There is a noticeable contrast between their

[368] Shinn, "Violence of Grace," 58.
[369] Robert Ellsberg, "Flannery O'Connor: Spiritual Master," *American Catholic Studies* 116, no. 1 (2005): 60. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44194864.
[370] Joseph M. Flora, "Desire, Faith, and Flannery O'Connor," *The Mississippi Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (2014): 332. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26467977.
[371] David Huddle, "The Singular Voice of Flannery O'Connor," *Flannery O'Connor Review* 13 (2015): 34. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26671295.

interpretations, though, in O'Connor's view, grace enters the individual in the form of pain, which is then transformed by the redeemed individual into love. St. Augustine, on the other hand, imagines grace as fortune and the good in the individual's life.

Miss O'Connor's interpretation is interesting in its subversion of the original Catholic doctrine, which has been established and explored by St. Augustine. It would also be interesting to investigate the works of authors like Robert Penn Warren, Ralph Ellison, Allen Tate or Katherine Anne Porter, who are O'Connor's contemporaries and who also wrote during the "Southern Renaissance,"[372] that followed the publication of Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* and Wolfe's *Look Homeward Angel*. For a more recent comparison, one could consider Lee Smith with her honest thematization of sex, female isolation and identity, Fred Chappell who, alternatively, focuses on male relationships, Robert Morgan and his depiction of corrupt clergy and churchgoers, skewed moral sense, guilt and redemption, or Reynolds Price, who presents mercy alone, omitting God's wrath. It would be interesting to see how *actual* and *habitual* grace manifests and to what degree it is accompanied by violence and suffering. Thus, it could be useful to explore what qualifies today for an "attack of mercy" as today's desensitization to violence might have greatly influenced modern man's ability to recognize grace. Future analysis could also take into consideration a wider scope of theological concepts, which greatly problematize the doctrine of grace, like determinism and the issue of free will, the question of newborns and the original sin. Moreover, feminist readings might reveal discrepancies between the female and male characters: in O'Connor's work, female characters seem to be struck by grace much more frequently and in a more brutal way.

[372] Suzanne U. Clark, "He Still Haunts: Contemporary Southern Writers and Biblical Faith," *Chalcedon: The Civil War Revived: Secularism vs. the South*, no. 429 (December 2000). https://chalcedon.edu/resources/articles/he-still-haunts-contemporary-southern-writers-and-biblical-faith.

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