CHAPTER IV

SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL ABERRATIONS

It is society that attempts the formation of the norms of behaviour for its members. Most of the norms are followed in social behaviour on account of a consensus. Any deviation or abnormal behaviour can be considered as the violation of society's norms. But some social norms are not just standards of behaviour, but legal requirements or obligations. Hence, such deviations may be construed illegal behaviour, such as rape, murder, prostitution and so on.

People whose personality characteristics and behaviour patterns that lead them to constant interpersonal conflicts with society, may be branded antisocial or asocial. They may not necessarily be neurotic or psychotic. These people tend to lack the necessary ethical development and are also unable to follow the sort of behaviour expected of individuals in a society. They show the inability to profit from experience because they lack any sense of responsibility to themselves or to others. Such people often lack any significant loyalty to other persons and to their communities. The alienated and the violent, the delinquent and the criminal, the impostor and the sexual pervert belong to this category. They do not succeed in forming meaningful relationships in their communities.

In the behaviour patterns of this category, their instinct dominates reason, and personal gratification, the social tendency. There are various causes for such maladaptive behaviour. They may be biological, psychological or socio-cultural factors that are involved in the development of such abnormal behaviour patterns in modern societies.
The impersonality and the anonymity of modern urban society make many people handicapped to experience a sense of relatedness to others. As a result, individuals are preoccupied with their own limited selves. The mere complexity and the pace of modern living tend to overload people mentally. The stress of living under such highly complicated and demanding environments can play great havoc on men's biological, psychological, cultural and religious existence, and make them frustrated. Such conditions require a lot of adjustments. The hopelessness and helplessness of the situation lead to regression. The relationships that the people in this sort of predicament establish are of the negative and destructive type.

1. Alienation

Alienation literally and basically means separation. It can also mean non-involvement, voluntary and involuntary. Sometimes it means isolation, physical and psychological. In some cases it implies homelessness or rootlessness. Alienation can stand for withdrawal both conscious and unconscious. It can indicate a lack of the sense of belonging. In literature, religion and philosophy, the word has come to mean man's loss of spiritual, moral and psychological selfhood. *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought* defines alienation as "a sense of estrangement from society, a feeling of powerlessness to affect social change or depersonalization of the individual in a large and bureaucratic society." ¹

The term "was first used by the German theologian Ludwig Feurbach, who argued in *The Essence of Christianity* (1844) that by attributing the perfect qualities of love and forgiveness to a divine figure, Christianity had denied them

to human beings, thus alienating man from his moral self." According to Karl Marx, the exploitative class structure is the root cause of man's alienation and misery. For Freud, alienation has its root in man's psyche and not in society. The opposing forces of the psyche, "Eros" the instinct of love and "Thanatos" the instinct of death, pull man in two different directions. Thanatos and man's inborn aggressive nature make him withdraw from society and its institutions.

In his relationship with others, man is inhibited by artificial social pressures. The human touch is missing in most human relationship. And hence, social relationships become very mechanical. "Human relationships have assumed a spirit of manipulation and instrumentality." Man "sells himself and feels himself to be commodity."

Life in modern society confronts us with many conflicts and challenges. But the alienated individual is intimidated by even the smallest challenges. He seeks safety from the stormy unpleasant weather outside by withdrawing into his shell where he does not allow any penetration from outside. As a result, the alienated individual is cold, aloof, lonely and indifferent. He avoids all human ties. When he may have to meet people and interact with them, he relates to them in a very superficial manner. The health of a society is measured by the types of human contacts it has. On the other hand, there are people who feel isolated to the core of their being. But they are afraid to be independent. They would like to assert their individuality and spontaneity. But their unconscious drive for status,

4 Ibid., p. 103.
and social approval, and their need for security, prompt them to be conformists. Such people are alienated from themselves.

The image of isolation and disorientation of man is portrayed in the works of a large number of writers in the twentieth century. By the 1950’s alienation had already become the key-word in Social Psychology. A large number of novels and short stories and other forms of literature highlight the theme of alienation of the individual self within the American social ethos:

By far the largest part of the contemporary literature comes under the rubric of alienation — alienation certainly from the dominant culture, alienation sometimes from self and nature. The fictional hero is an outsider because the very condition of life, of his own consciousness, require estrangement. The form of estrangement, however, evolves curiously in the post-war years.5

Thus we come across a gallery of alienated individuals, outcasts, nonconformists who find it nearly impossible to adhere to ways of traditional social set-up.

A large number of causes are responsible for modern man’s alienation. The immense progress and achievements in the realms of science and technology have led to increasing urbanization on account of industrialization; and the consequent loss of identity makes people aliens to their next door neighbours in big cities. Individuals in big crowded cities get enclosed and entombed within their apartments. Another important reason is the two global wars and the consequent break-up of a large number of families and their displacements. A

reason no less important reason is man ignoring religious values, and his increasing materialism. On account of the moral decadence and belief in the omnipotence of science, man has become very sceptical. As a result, man experiences the anguish of loneliness, difficulty to relate to others, and finds himself adrift in a strange and bizarre universe. Behind all these may be found working a conspicuous lack of will to start and sustain relationships.

Man's need to belong and to relate to his fellow beings in society is similar to his biological needs. Erich Fromm says:

There is another part just as compelling, one which is not rooted in bodily process but in the very essence of the human mode and practice of life: the need to be related to the world outside oneself, the need to avoid aloneness. To feel completely alone and isolated leads to mental disintegration just as physical starvation leads to death.6

Thus we notice that isolation is unnatural, since man has no complete existence outside society. But it so happens that in real life and in literature, we find alienated individuals. In the words of Paul Tillich, "Man's predicament is estrangement, but his estrangement is sin."7 This is so because man can find fulfilment and meaning of his existence only in the company of his fellow beings.

The mystique of alienation may now be explored. Alienation is basically a denial of selfhood to others, and the inability to recognize the other individuals as persons of infinite value as envisaged in spirituality. The sense of being a

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stranger in a hostile world arises when one gets himself cut off from others, and finds himself at odds with the conventional society. When an individual isolates himself, he experiences a sense of futility and worthlessness. The process gets started when one gets rejected at the hands of another for the simple reason that the latter finds the former valueless and therefore useless for his personal fulfilment. This devaluation of personhood sets off the process of alienation in the spiritual sense.

As O'Connor visualizes alienation, it has got a spiritual dimension. Though not a formal theologian or philosopher, O'Connor shares many of the preoccupations of the modern Christian and humanistic existentialists. In her non-fiction writings, particularly in her letters to her friends, she gives expression to her views on man, God and the universe and on man's place in the scheme of God for salvation. Man is adrift and trapped in a valueless universe and finds life absurd and meaningless because of his lack of spiritual values. The necessity of struggling to live in harmony with God and man is an important aspect of human freedom as presented in the O'Connor canon. Her fiction reinforces the idea that the awareness of the absurdity of existence need not obviate commitment, if the life of the individual is centred on God and his fellowmen.

Flannery O'Connor's fiction is filled with people who are alienated from themselves, from God and society. Her main endeavour is to show the extent of man's alienation from God and the spiritual realities of life. She is painfully aware of the horror and comedy associated with the alienation. She says:

The modern hero is an outsider. His experience is rootless. He can go anywhere. He belongs nowhere. Being alien to nothing (sic), he ends up being alienated from any community based on
common tastes and interests. The borders of his country are the 
sides of the skull."

Many of O'Connor's characters suffer from an acute sense of isolation, loneliness 
and alienation. "... her characters comprise a gallery of misfits isolated in a 
present and sentenced to a life-time of exile from human community." 
Alienation, which is insulation in relationship is explored and revealed at many 
levels in O'Connor's fiction. "Flannery explored various kinds of alienation from 
reality in her fiction but her ultimate concern was man's alienation from the 
supernatural world." 

Walker Percy, a Catholic writer like O'Connor from the South, shares 
some of her concerns. Doctor Thomas More in Percy's Love in the Ruins 
presents the picture of a man who is alienated from God and his fellow men, like 
most of O'Connor's characters, when he declares, "I believe in God and the 
whole business but I love women best, music and science next, whiskey next, 
God fourth, and my fellowmen hardly at all."

In O'Connor alienation is self imposed, as in the case of Hazel Motes, the 
protagonist of Wise Blood, or in the case of Mr. Guizac, the European refugee 
who comes to work on Georgia farm, or in the loneliness little Harry Ashfield 
experiences in "The River," due to the gross selfishness and negligence of his

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9 Edward Kessler, Flannery O'Connor and the Language of Apocalypse (New 

10 Kathleen Feeley, Flannery O'Connor: The Voice of the Peacock (New Brunswick: 

11 Walker Percy, Love in the Ruins: The Adventure of a Bad Catholic at a Time 
drunken parents. The same is the case of the isolation which Norton who has lost his mother experiences in “The Lame Shall Enter First,” and who now lives with his father, who is busy filling his emptiness with “good works,” trying to reform a delinquent juvenile with a very high I.Q. at the great cost of leaving his son to loneliness and hopelessness, and finally to suicide.

For the purpose of this study however, it is sufficient to analyse in some detail *Wise Blood*, where the hero Hazel Motes and his double Enoch Emery, are typical examples of alienated modern men, who seek their identity in a spiritual vacuum. *Wise Blood* is a very complex novel. It examines man’s relationship with God, with his fellow men and his search for identity among other things. O’Connor’s vision of modern man is that of the displaced personality because he has rejected God’s plan for his salvation, and, as a result, he finds himself alien to his own self, God and the rest of humanity.

When the novel opens, we see Hazel Motes on a train, bound homeward, to his home town Eastrod, after a term of four years of service in the U.S. army during the Second World War. “The train is an emblem of rootlessness, mechanical urban society, and Hazel’s initial appearance on it symbolizes his entrapment in this society. . . .” Hazel Motes returns with a serious injury, a shrapnel in his chest. He is doomed to lead a lonely life on a Government pension for the rest of his life. We notice him fully withdrawn and reluctant to reveal his identity to anyone.

The cultural and religious background of the hero is shown in flashbacks. His mother is described as very prudish, always dressed in black, wearing dresses

longer than required. He remembers vividly the beating he had received long ago at his mother’s hand for watching a naked woman at a carnival sideshow:

She hit him across the legs with the stick, but he was like part of the tree. ‘Jesus died to redeem you,’ she said. ‘I never ast him,’ he muttered. She didn’t hit him again but she stood looking at him, shut mouthed, and he forgot the guilt of the tent for the nameless unplaced guilt that was in him.  

Later he imagines his mother naked in the coffin in that woman’s place. He punishes himself by filling his shoes with pebbles and walking through the woods. We find him a loner even as a child. He does not communicate much verbally or otherwise to his parents. Hazel is forced to suppress his emotions and physical urges, especially the desires to see and hear. As a result, he is much given to day dreams, fantasies and nightmares. As Kevin Fauteux points out, “Drowning in the ocean of the unconscious is due to feelings overwhelmed by the regressive return of tumultuous repressed drives and hidden fears.”

His grandfather once preached to the crowds from the hood of his car, as though he were just in time to save their souls from hell. Once when pointing out that Christ died for all, he singled out young Hazel as a solid example:

Did they know that even for that boy there, for that mean sinful unthinking boy, standing there with his dirty hands clenching and unclenching at his sides, Jesus would die a ten million

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deaths before he would let him lose his soul? He would chase him over the waters of sin! . . . Jesus would have him in the end.\textsuperscript{15}

The boy does not want to hear any of it because he has already made up his mind to avoid Jesus, to be totally alienated from him. He is convinced that the sure way to avoid Jesus is to avoid sin.

On his return home, Hazel realises "... there was nothing but a skeleton of a house. . . . There was nothing left in the house but the chifforobe in the kitchen."\textsuperscript{16} Hazel has carried the black Bible and a pair of silver-rimmed spectacles that had once belonged to his mother as religious and family heritage. The nothingness and the emptiness that he notices in the house is symbolic of the existential dilemma in the novel. Hazel is homeless, friendless and lonely. He goes to live in Taulkinham, which proves to be a place inhabited by unfriendly people who do not appear to establish any warm-hearted relationship with one another. Guilt-haunted and tortured in spirit, Hazel Motes is a lone voyager on the vast sea of life. Cut off from the main stream of life, he is a loner in Taulkinham.

Hazel Motes gets the address of a prostitute from the wall of a men's toilet:

Mrs. Leora Watts!
60 Buckely Road
The friendliest bed in town!
Brother.\textsuperscript{17}


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 13.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 16.
It is ironic that the friendliest bed in the entire Taulkinham is that of a prostitute. Hazel writes down the address and decides to go to Mrs. Leora Watts. He goes there not because he is interested in women, but because he wants to prove there is no sin. He wants to defy Jesus. He wants to prove that nothing exists. He wants to start his mission as a preacher with an unholy ritual. He preaches the church without Christ, "... where the blind don't see and the lame don't walk and what's dead stays that way... it's the church that the blood of Jesus don't foul with redemption." 18 It is the negation of all that Christianity teaches. It is his own version of Existentialism:

I preach there are all kinds of truth, your truth and somebody else's, but behind all of them, there's only one truth and that is that there's no truth... No truth behind all truths is what I and this church preach! Where you come from is gone, where you thought you were going to never was there, and where you are is no good unless you get away from it. Where is there a place for you to be? No place. 19

He also preaches "... there was no Fall because there was nothing to fall from and no Redemption because there was no Fall and no Judgment because there wasn't the first two. Nothing matter but that Jesus was a liar." 20 It is a rich nothingness that he preaches. Through his vehement denials and negation he affirms his faith in Jesus indirectly. This may sound strange; even as he continuously denies his faith in a personal God, he moves towards the same. What redeems him is his authentic doubt about the benevolent nature of Godhead.

18 Ibid., p. 59.
19 Ibid., p. 93.
20 Ibid., p. 59.
Two days after his arrival at Taulkinham, Hazel Motes meets Enoch Emery a young guard at the city zoo. Enoch, as a child, was abandoned by both his parents and spent his childhood in juvenile homes and under the care of "welfare" women. He is hungry for human contacts. He tries in vain to become Hazel's friend, but Hazel rejects him. Desperate for human company, Enoch remarks, "People ain't friendly here. You ain't from here but you ain't friendly neither." He begs Hazel to accompany him to a brothel, but Hazel refuses to have anything to do with Enoch. When Hazel preaches the need for a new Jesus for his church, Enoch steals a shrivelled up mummy from the museum and presents it to Hazel. Hazel crushes it mercilessly. Enoch is lonely in a crowded city. "His life is a cycle of escape and incarceration, broken only by giving his latest captor a heart attack. He is a forsaken runway bondman fated in search of mockery, which is the only recognition a brutal society can give him."

Enoch notices the care and attention the animals in the zoo receive. He envies the good fortune of the caged animals:

The cages were electrically heated in the winter and air-conditioned in the summer and there were six men hired to wait on the animals and feed them T-bone steaks. The animals didn’t do anything but lie around. Enoch watched them every day, full of awe and hate.

\[\text{21 Ibid., p. 32.}\]
\[\text{22 Richard Giannone, "Paul, Francis and Hazel Motes: Conversion at Taulkinham." Thought 59, 235 (December 1984), p. 490.}\]
Besides his failed attempts to make friends with Hazel, the other human relationship he has is spying on women in the swimming pool and insulting waitresses.

When he reads in the paper that Gonga, the gorilla movie star is making a personal appearance at the local theatre, Enoch has an urge to insult a successful ape. But, Enoch is insulted by the man in the ape-suit. Later he beats up the "gorilla" and steals his costume. He dons the suit and buries his own clothes. "No gorilla in existence, whether in the jungles of Africa or California, or in New York City in the finest apartment in the world, was happier at that moment than this one, whose god had finally rewarded it." Enoch Emery is indeed "the young man of the future" and claims to be prompted by his "daddy's wise blood." As a human being he is unable to establish any stable and meaningful relationship. He reverts himself to be an ape by donning the ape-suit, and makes a last desperate attempt to establish friendship with his fellow men. But even this proves to be a failure. When he offers his hand in friendship to a couple looking out over the city, they bolt in terror. Enoch stands there staring at the skyline and we hear no more of him. "... his transformation from man to gorilla, is a satiric inversion of the evolutionary process." It is a regressive evolution that he undergoes: from humanity to animality.

Enoch has utterly failed in building up human relationships. He is anxious to get social recognition. When the Taulkinham society fails him, he puts on the ape-suit to escape from alienation. When he seeks solidarity with a gorilla instead of human beings, his alienation becomes total. Enoch’s escaping into the

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24 Ibid., p. 112.
woods with the ape-suit on alienates himself further by cutting himself off of all human ties. His regression into animality is an unsuccessful bid to escape from alienation. O'Connor's creativity in the presentation of the theme in this ingenious manner confirms the fact that her psychological insights are of unusual depth. We find some similarity in the lives of Enoch Emery and Jim in Conrad's *Lord Jim*. Jim had to run away to realise himself and his wishes, and to escape the scandalous comments of the civilized world into the savage world of Patusan.

The old motor car, Essex that Hazel Motes buys is intended to be his house, pulpit and the means of escape to some other city. The motor car is symbolic of the materialism and mechanical attitude of the people of Taulkinham. "For the most part, materialism defines the existence of Hazel and the other characters. Their lives are circumscribed by the material world, understood in two ways — as a world in which the spiritual has no place, as a world in which everything is for sale." But the car holds neither water nor gas. When Hazel attempts to run away from Taulkinham and from himself in his dilapidated car, he is stopped by the patrolman who pushes his car off the embankment, thereby destroying what he thought to be his justification and means of escape. On his return to his room he blinds himself with quicklime. Hazel atones for looking at a naked woman when he was a boy. He carries out literally the precept of Jesus, "Pluck out your eyes rather than be sinful with them." He has the example of the early Christian Father Origen, who "castrated himself in order to avoid sexual feelings." In his blindness, he is completely cut off from the world around him.

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in the physical sense also. He submits himself to severe penance by keeping broken pieces of glass and stones in his shoes and binds three strands of barbed wire around his chest, and remains silent all day. Now that Hazel Motes is blind, he sees the enormity of his sins and regresses to his childhood, when he had done penance for watching a naked woman at a carnival sideshow. "... he frequently operates at a child's level of intelligence..." 28 even when he is no more a child.

Mrs. Flood, Hazel's landlady steals his money. She wants to marry him and then commit him to a lunatic asylum, so that she could appropriate his pension. Later, she falls in love with him and takes care of him. The love, friendship, care and concern of the woman frightens the alienated Hazel away. He seems to cherish his isolation. The police found him half dead in a ditch. One of them hits with his billy and kills him. He is brought home to his landlady and she keeps staring at his empty sockets until he becomes "the pin point of light."

Being completely cut off from any kind of social influence, the self seeking Hazel becomes self-denying through acts of mortification like the saints of old. It is perceived that the unresponsiveness of the Taulkinham society emerges from the growing lack of communicativeness, and lack of commitment of the individuals becomes more and more antagonistic to the health of the social system.

The novel examines man's relationship with his fellow men and the search for identity. The novel shows that man is an alien wherever he goes, always experiencing a gnawing sense of aloofness. Hazel Motes and Enoch Emery

search for meaning in a spiritual void, but find none. Their estrangement is symbolic of the existential nothingness in the life of modern man. These alienated individuals lack the necessary inner resources to fill up their emptiness and to fight the existential angst. In Hazel's case, he achieves stillness of soul after going through great spiritual struggles, and rigorous self-abnegation. He eats his meals in silence without tasting them. The alienation in Hazel's case serves a spiritual purpose. His denial of the world and all worldly pleasures leads him to spiritual realisation.

Flannery O'Connor lived and wrote at a time when the American society was in the throes of great social changes following the Second World War. The focus then was slowly changing from economic and political issues to the basic question of the very nature of the American society, in which extreme individualism led among other things to a total isolation of people from one another. Alienation, of course, is not a uniquely American problem. In every age and culture there are people who experience traumas of rifts, loneliness and isolation, which lead to problematic relationships between individuals and society. At the time in which O'Connor wrote her stories it was more palpable, and writers with moral concern were overwhelmed by the phenomenon of alienation and therefore constrained to write on the subject rather compulsively.

Manifestations of alienation vary widely from cynicism and apathy to cruelty and brutish violence. As the result of this, individuals enter pathogenic and destructive type of interpersonal relationships. In their alienated, self centred regressive state, they fail to seek the broad society. In such a frame of mind they
are nihilistic and destructive. In their isolation they may even resort to suicide, which may be the culmination of regression in its worst form.

2. Violence

Violence may be defined as a sudden and intense force exerted against oneself or others. Suddenness or abruptness is a salient feature that is associated with violence. It usually causes a complete break down or at least a radical change of the daily routine of events. "Surprise is an indispensable element of the fact of violence in modern life. A carefully plotted pattern of expected events has always been needed to sustain a customary existence. A sudden break in the routine challenges the fullest energy of man's power of adjustment."29 Life cannot be the same after the eruption of violence. Violence usually breaks up human relationships, and causes physical and psychological hardship and in extreme cases death itself. In rare cases it has the power to effect a change for the better for the victims due to the effect of shock treatment.

Aggressive, violent behaviour may often be the result of frustration. The problem of violence is as old as the human race. "Violence is the very opposite of reason, it is the compelling action resorted to when reason through language will not serve."30 But today more than ever man is non-rational in resorting to violence and lives under the fear of unemployment, war, displacement and nuclear annihilation.


A large number of writers portray crime and violence in their fiction. Modern readers derive a lot of pleasure by reading such sanguinary tales. The practitioners of sensationalism exploit modern man's love of violence and bloodshed and create macabre stories with sensationalism and sentimentalism. Violence in their fiction is often the means to create sensation.

Flannery O'Connor, like many of her southern contemporaries, Robert Penn Warren, Eudora Welty, William Styron, Truman Capote, Carson McCullers and Shirely Ann Grau, makes use of violence in her fiction. But violence in O'Connor's fiction serves a higher purpose. It brings the hero to his moment of revelation (epiphany), acceptance or rejection of grace. For instance, in "Good Country People," Hulga's intellectual superiority is stripped off and she is shell shocked in the face of humiliation by a more perverse nihilist than herself who disappears with her wooden leg and spectacles. She finds herself vulnerable for the first time when her illusions are violently shattered.

For O'Connor violence is a manifestation of evil within human beings. The root of violence, according to her, is the depravity of man in his fallen state. Her stories, replete with violence and destruction of all kinds, show the horror of human condition devoid of God. Her fiction reveals man's propensity for physical and psychological violence. Some characters appear to find extreme pleasure in arson, rape, murder and all kinds of imaginable violence. The urge for violence appears to be a compulsion within them. Rufus Johnson in "The Lame Shall Enter First" declares that he commits crime because Satan has him under his control and not because of his clubfoot. O'Connor justifies her use of violence and the use of grotesquerie in her fiction:
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. When you can assume that your audience holds the same belief as you do, you can relax a little and use more normal means of talking to it; when you have to assume that it does not, then you have to make your vision apparent by shock — to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost blind you draw large and startling figures.31

O'Connor observes a great gap between herself and her audience as far as their belief systems are concerned. In order to get her vision across to “a hostile audience” for whom God is dead, O'Connor adopts the violent, grotesque method, with odd deformed and freakish personae.

In fact, in O'Connor's fiction, violence is a corollary of the grotesque. For her man without God, in this rationalistic, materialistic world is the extreme form of the grotesque.

Many of O'Connor characters have absolute faith in the omnipotence of science and technology, and in modern social sciences. Sabbath Lily Hawks in *Wise Blood* feels “adjusted okay to the modern world.”32 Sabbath Lily’s smugness, which is characteristic of the ethos of her times, is vehemently

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32 Ibid., p. 67.
attacked by the author using violent means. In order to shake people out of their self-complacency she adopts the method of administering shock through grotesque violence.

Mrs. May in "Greenleaf" wallows in her self-sufficiency, industry and class pride. She looks down on her tenant, Mr. Greenleaf and his family who have come up in life both materially and socially through hard work. She is also very self-confident. In response to her son's mocking comments she says, "They needn't think I'm going to die any time soon. . . . I will die when I get good and ready." We note the irony in her words. She does not get the time to get ready. One of the bulls belonging to the Greenleaf has got into her herd, which she thinks would upset her breeding schedule. In a violent rage she orders the bull to be shot. When her order is ignored, she accompanies Mr. Greenleaf to shoot the bull. She parks the car in the middle of the pasture and impatiently waits for Mr. Greenleaf to shoot the bull and honks her horn. The noise infuriates the bull and charges her:

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

The imagery in the death scene of Mrs. May has sexual and mystic overtones. The scrub bull represents nature's force. Mrs. May recognizes that power only at

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33 Ibid., p. 511.
34 Ibid., p. 523.
the moment of her death, with a violent encounter with the bull. The piercing of Mrs. May is in response to a prayer. But it is ironic that the person who prays, "Jesus stab me in the heart," is not Mrs. May but Mrs. Greenleaf who is a spiritual healer. Mrs. May has been "a good Christian woman with a large respect for religion, though she did not, of course, believe any of it was true."36

Death comes violently, suddenly and quite unexpectedly for the self-pitying, opinionated and snobbish Mrs. May. When the bull gores her to death, ". . . she had the look of person whose sight has been suddenly restored but who finds the light unbearable."37 The light of the epiphany appears to be unbearable for the self-satisfied Mrs. May. At the end of the story, she seems to whisper ". . . some last discovery into the animal's ear."38 Her discovery could be the essential physical and divine nature in man. "The bull is the messenger sent to invade the fortress that Mrs. May has built around her narcissistic rule. No person or power has yet overcome her defence. But the bull has only to be itself for Mrs. May's paranoia to complete the task of destruction."39 The violence she suffers destroy her pride and complacency.

Human beings are often afraid to reveal their true selves to others and even to themselves. "A veneer of pretense covers most human relationships and masks people from their true selves. To peel back this veneer and reveal the twisted and demonic nature below is the special function of violence in Miss O'Connor's

35 Ibid., p. 506
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., p. 523.
38 Ibid., p. 524.
Mrs. Cope in "A Circle of Fire" is chastised for her pride and unwillingness to share her possessions with others. The three delinquent boys from the city, who have come to her farm, ride her horse without her permission, let loose the prize bull, stone her mailbox and finally set fire to her woods. They destroy what they cannot have. The fire here has a symbolic significance. It is a purifying fire, for it destroys Mrs. Cope's pride and makes her confront her hollow charity and pious mouthing of gratitude to God. The boys are no doubt devilish hooligans in their acts of vandalism and arson. But they can be considered as agents of God, to effect the change in Mrs. Cope's life.

Excessive love of possessions, hypocrisy and self-satisfaction are barriers to establishing successful rapport with others. Violence, though negative in its implications, has the power of revealing "What we are essentially," without our fads and facades. It has also the power to shock the readers into acknowledging other people's right to our concern and charity.

O'Connor's second novel, The Violent Bear It Away, has as its protagonist young Francis Marion Tarwater, who is reluctant to accept his vocation as a prophet. The boy rejects his first mission to give a decent Christian burial to his granduncle by setting fire to the house containing the old man's corpse. His second mission is to baptize his dim-witted cousin, Bishop. Tarwater baptizes and drowns him simultaneously. He is later befriended by a homosexual, who drugs him and sexually assaults him. When the boy awakens, he sets fire to the woods where his modesty is violated, thereby purifying the place. He is also

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made to suffer from scruples and doubts. He has to undergo violence of various
types, emotional and physical, until he submits himself to God’s will.

The novel is full of violence of various types. Even the epigraph of the
novel re-echoes with violence: “From the days of John the Baptist until
now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away”.
(Matthew 11:12). The title of the novel is taken from this Biblical
quotation. It shows O’Connor’s pre-occupation with the role that violence
plays in the life of her characters.

There are two kinds of violence in O’Connor’s fiction, viz., physical and
psychological, inflicted by one character upon another and also self-inflicted.
She claims that the violence in her fiction has a definite theological purpose. She
has a set formula to present it. She administers shock through violent methods to
her incorrigible characters. Then the characters undergo a decisive change,
receives a revelation, grace or even final reunion with God. Excessive violence
in O’Connor’s fiction repulses the reader at least occasionally. We wonder if her
“hostile audience” would undergo any change of heart, especially when the
violence appears deliberate and unnecessary. The target of the most terrible form
of violence are the elderly farm widows. Perhaps by unleashing punishment on
them, she seems to get the vicarious pleasure of having punished the category of
people for whom she has a strong aversion. Violence is at times exaggerated to
fit in her pet formula.

3. Sexual Perversions

Adult relationships take a variety of forms, ranging from impersonal to
intimate. Human sexuality is an important cultural aspect of intimate adult
relationships. Persons who do not seek normal, healthy, heterosexual relationship
on a permanent basis in a marriage partner are often considered odd or abnormal in most societies. The traditionally accepted primary aim of sex is procreation. Sexual behaviour is totally important because of the reproductive aspects of the sexual functions. But in modern societies, there are a large number of people who are not content to feel trapped with a relationship which may not satisfy their individual sexual need.

All human beings have a driving urge towards things that are sexually stimulating. Those who are normal know how to control such urges. If a person is not able to check such urges, it may degrade his personality, and he may become a sexual pervert.

Sexual perversion is a deviation or unnatural way that a person may adopt for his sexual enjoyment. When an individual seeks fulfilment of his sex drives through other than a member of the opposite sex of his own species, we call it perversion. Sexual perversion is considered immoral and is generally condemned by society. At the same time we notice sharply contrasting attitudes towards prostitution, homosexuality and polygamy. The attitudes towards sex and sexual deviations vary over time and from culture to culture.

Sexual perversion or "paraphilia," the term that the American Psychiatric Association uses to refer to the abnormality, is a common disorder in any society. They may arise due to a variety of reasons. Sometimes, they may be due to the non-fulfilment of the sexual drive. It may also be due to the immaturity in understanding the real biological phenomena in oneself and in the opposite sex, or it may even be due to the particular body structure. In certain cases, a person becomes a sexual pervert due to hormonal imbalances. In such cases, the abnormal sexual behaviour may be quite unconscious. Paraphilia is a kind of
mental aberration. This is a very vast topic in Abnormal Psychology. For the purpose of this study, only a few kinds of sexual deviations are dealt with very briefly.

With the liberation of sex in the twenties, the American writers no longer felt inhibited in portraying sexual abnormalities in their work. Under the influence of science and psychoanalysis people developed an attitude of tolerance towards all forms of sexual behaviour and they accepted sexual abnormality "without branding it with the stigma of moral corruption."\textsuperscript{41} After the First World War, there has been "greater inclination on the part of American writers to explore the full potentialities of the sexual theme including the phenomena of sexual aberration."\textsuperscript{42} The American society badly ridden with sexual aberrations during the twenties has been faithfully captured by Scott Fitzgerald and Nathanael West. Through their candid portrayal of sexual abnormalities and promiscuity, they seem to show, in a commercial, materialistic society, how sex is reduced to mere lust. For example, in Fitzgerald's \textit{Tender is the Night}, one discovers overt homosexual as well as effeminate men with homosexual tendencies. While Luis Campion, Royal Dumphry and Francisco are portrayed as homosexuals, Dick and Mckisco are shown to be effeminate characters with inclination towards homosexuality. In Nathanael West's \textit{Miss. Lonelyhearts}, Fay Doyle after having sex with Miss Lonelyhearts tells him bluntly about the problems she has with her cripple husband: "My husband isn't much. He's a cripple like I wrote you, and much older than me. . . . He's all dried up. He hasn't been a husband to me for

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p. 4.
years. You know, Lucy, my kid, isn’t his.”  

Adulterous relationship, loss of chastity, and trading of sex come under severe criticisms from both the above novelists. O’Connor, who has been greatly influenced by these writers (more strongly and palpably by West), tries to point out how perversion of sex has resulted in sadistic and masochistic tendencies, widely prevalent in society.

O’Connor is unsparing in her exposition of the social evils in her society. But the aberrations that she exposes are not unique to her region. She offers us a gallery of sexual perverts who are given to sexual aberrations like, fetishism, prostitution, voyeurism, nymphomania, homosexuality, etc., to fulfil their sexual needs.

1. Fetishism

Coleman describes fetishism as “maladaptive sexual deviation in which an individual achieves sexual gratification by means of some inanimate object or part of the body.” For the fetishist, articles of clothing, or parts of the body serve as a substitute for actual sexual relationships. He derives pleasure by touching items like undergarments, handkerchiefs or bodily parts like hands, feet, legs and breasts. Dr Ramanath Sharma quotes the instance of a baker’s assistant who is arrested for stealing a handkerchief from a lady. Later on he confesses to having stolen eighty to ninety such handkerchiefs. Experts offer different explanations for this abnormal behaviour. “Freud believed that fetishism stems from castration

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anxiety and that the fetishistic object represents his mother's lost penis."46 Perhaps, it may be more logical to accept the view that the individual adopts a pattern when he comes to doubt his masculinity and potency, and the consequent fear of rejection and humiliation by the people of the opposite sex. Through his fetishism, he compensates for his feelings of inadequacy to a certain extent, through his mastery over inanimate objects which represent his desired sexual object.

Manley Pointer's theft of Hulga's leg and spectacles in "Good country People" offers an extreme example of fetishism in O'Connor. He tells her that it is her artificial leg that makes her unique. He is interested not in her as an object of sexual gratification, but in her wooden leg which is his fetish. He disappears from the hayloft, where they had a date, with her artificial limb and eye glasses. These he will add to the inglorious mementoes he has collected this way from other girls. When leaving her, he boasts, "I've gotten a lot of interesting things. One time I got a woman's glass eye this way. And you needn't to think you'll catch me because Pointer ain't really my name. I use a different name at every house I call and don't stay nowhere long."47 Thus, we note that Manley Pointer is a chronic fetishist. The articles most commonly stolen by people suffering from this paraphilia are women's undergarments. But Pointer appears to have a particular attraction for artificial body parts. He acquires his fetish through cheating and foul play, rather than through burglary, or assault. Hence, he has less chance of being apprehended.


2. Nymphomania

Nymphomania refers to very high degree of sexual desire in a woman. Often it is regarded as a mental disorder. Such women are ever in search of the new male comrades to cohabit with them. Psychoanalysts consider this aberration the result of a woman's hatred for men folk in the unconscious. The hatred is caused by her being rejected by men in the past. In order to hide this hatred, she seeks sexual satisfaction with several men to repress and control her inordinate hatred and the conflict arising from it.

Star Drake in "The Comforts of Home" is a case-study of nymphomania. Thomas's mother brings her home to rehabilitate her. But Thomas wants her to be sent away. The mother pleads for the "Nimpermaniac," as she calls the girl. She believes the girl to be a congenital nymphomaniac. But Thomas calls her a "slut." He says, "She's a moral moron. . . . Born without the normal faculty - like somebody else would be born without a kidney or leg." 48

As for the girl she is not at all afraid of her unusual sexuality and poses a great threat to Thomas, who appears not at all interested in sex. O'Connor presents Star with a lot of sexual appeal, with "... a pointed chin, wide apple cheeks and feline empty eyes." 49 Later on we read, "The girl gave the immediate impression of being physically crooked. Her hair was cut like a dog's or an elf's and she was dressed in the latest fashion. She was training on him a long familiar sparkling stare that turned after a second into an intimate grin." 50 For all his apathy for the slut, Thomas watches the girl's legs, at the beginning of the story.

48 Ibid., p. 575.
49 Ibid., p. 573.
50 Ibid., p. 578.
“...the little slut’s long slightly bowed legs slid out, the dress pulled above the knees.” Thomas tries to protect himself from the “moral moron” by confining himself to his room. But “...the girl’s laugh shot up from the kitchen, through the back hall, up the stairwell and into his room, making for him like a bolt of electricity.” At thirty five, he is dependent on his mother for the comforts of home she provides, and is unable to leave home to get rid of this pest. Star Drake makes her lewd presence felt in the house. “As soon as the girl was up in the morning, her voice throbbed out in a blues song that would rise and waver, then plunge low with insinuations of passion about to be satisfied and Thomas... would... begin frantically stuffing his ears with Kleenex.” One night Star appears in his room naked and he runs after her with a straight chair to hit her. In order to get her arrested, he plants his gun, which is a phallic symbol, in her purse “with its soft skin-like touch.” He is caught red handed by the girl and his mother witnesses the scene. In his struggle with Star he accidentally shoots his mother, who throws herself between the two. The sheriff who arrives on the scene concludes that Thomas and Star are lovers and they have murdered the mother who was in their way.

Sabbath Lily Hawks, the daughter of the “blind” preacher in Wise Blood also appears to be a nymphomaniac. Hazel Motes thinks the girl to be innocent and wants to seduce her to prove his disbelief in sin. But later, when he discovers that Asa Hawks is a fraud, he give up the idea. He tries to protect himself from Sabbath, but she is intent on seducing him. The girl keeps following him and spoils his rides. Sometimes, she follows him into his room.

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51 Ibid., p. 573
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid., p. 585.
One night, she appears in his room in a woman’s night-gown which is too long for her. She has a candle burning in a jelly glass. He wakes up to find her in his room. He picks up a straight chair and raises it as if to strike her with it. She rushes out of his room and later tells her father that “nothing works.” A few days later she is abandoned by her father and she comes back to Hazel Motes. In fact, she is established in his bed when he gets back to his room. He does not drive her away. She then confesses:

“. . . from the minute I set eyes on you I said to myself that’s what I got to have, just give me some of him! I said look at those pee-can eyes and go crazy, girl! That innocent look don’t hide a thing, he’s just pure filthy right down to the guts like me.”

Then she makes him sleep with her. Sabbath Lily is “. . . fiercely womanly. She will go to almost any lengths to get her man and to even greater lengths to fulfil another womanly function, maternity. Haze yields to her blandishments . . .” probably to prove his faith in the church without Christ.

3. Visiting Prostitutes

Prostitution has flourished from time immemorial and is often described as “the world’s oldest profession.” It is defined as provision for sexual intercourse in return for money. It is a very morbid form of sexual deviation in which both men and women participate through their willingness.

Men frequent brothels for a variety of reasons. Some men visit prostitutes for lack of opportunities for heterosexual experiences and want to know what

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54 Ibid., p. 95.

such an experience has to offer. Another reason may be the desire to avoid paternity and such responsibilities associated with and arising from normal sexual relationships. Other reasons for the practice of prostitution are the inability to find a suitable partner, and having some physical defect. "The rigour of the patriarchal system has generally been associated with prostitution, an institution which brought peculiar degradation to an economically defenseless class of women . . ."56 Sensual pleasure is perhaps the motive for many women for becoming prostitutes. Offering oneself as a sexual object is an aberration. For the purpose of this study, the impact of prostitution on women is not taken into consideration. The focus is limited to the visit of Hazel Motes of Wise Blood, to a prostitute, and its effect on him.

When Hazel Motes is in the army, he is invited by his companions to go with them to a brothel. But in spite of his decision not to have his soul damned, he accompanies them. Before starting his mission as a preacher of the Church Without Christ, he goes to a brothel as a sort of ritual. "He felt that he would have a woman, not for the sake of the pleasure in her, but to prove that he didn't believe in sin since he practiced what was called it . . ."57 Hazel Motes is uneasy, but Leora Watts, the prostitute, asks him to make himself feel at home. He tells her vehemently that he is not a preacher. "Mrs. Watts eyed him steadily with only a slight smirk. Then she put her . . . hand under his face and tickled it in a motherly way. 'That's okay, son,' she said. 'Momma don't mind if you ain't a preacher.'"58 His experience with her leaves him totally embarrassed.

58 Ibid., p. 18.
... he had not been very successful with Mrs. Watts. When he finished, he was like something washed ashore on her, and she had made obscene comments about him, which he remembered off and on during the day. He was uneasy in the thought of going to her again.59

In spite of his failure with the prostitute, he asserts, "I don't need Jesus... what do I need with Jesus? I got Leora Watts."60 When Hazel sleeps she cuts the top of his hat in an obscene shape. "This gesture is obviously an attack on his masculinity... the hat for O'Connor is a symbol of the young backwoods male's sense of selfhood and masculine energy."61 When he feels he has had enough of her he stops going to her.

One evening a sixteen year old boy approaches Hazel Motes. He is confident that the boy would become his disciple. But all that the boy needs of Hazel is a companion to go to a whorehouse, "because he had never been to one before. He knew where the place was but he didn't want to go without a person of experience, and when he heard Haze, he hung around until he stopped preaching and then asked him to go."62 Hazel asks the boy to be a member of his church. But the boy admits that he cannot be, for he is a "Lapsed Catholic." Their act according to the boy is mortal sin. The boy enjoys his visit to the prostitute, but Hazel does not. Hazel feels very sorry for having wasted half his evening. However, he assures the boy that there is no sin or judgement. The boy

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59 Ibid., p. 33.
60 Ibid., p. 31.
62 Ibid., p. 83.
is convinced that they have committed a very grievous sin. "... but the boy only shook his head and asked him if he would like to go again the next night." But Haze derives no enjoyment from his encounters with prostitutes.

A psychoanalytic interpretation of Hazel's visits to the prostitutes shows his unconscious attempt to get over his Oedipal fixation. In his mind, he has always associated sex with his mother, the prohibitive, strict mother who had punished him for seeing a naked woman at a carnival sideshow. Coincidentally, the women with whom he has anything to do with are also mothers or mother-figures. Mrs. Leora Watts calls him "son" and herself "momma;" she teases, pets, tickles and pampers him. The woman in the park who tries to lure him is a mother of two children. Sabbath Lily, though a girl of fifteen, dresses herself in women's clothes which are too big for her. She rocks "the new jesus," a shrivelled up mummy and asks it to call her "momma." Mrs. Flood, his landlady, mothers and nurtures the self-blinded Hazel.

He does not get any satisfaction in his lonely life through his sexual acts with the prostitutes. His encounters with the prostitutes leave him physically exhausted, emotionally upset and spiritually disturbed.

In the novel O'Connor uses Hazel's indulgence in forbidden sexual pleasures in preparation of his repentance, rigorous penance, and the final acceptance of God's grace. In this novel sexual symbols assume almost equal importance as the religious ones.

4. Voyeurism

Voyeurism or scotophilia refers to an aberration in which a person derives sexual gratification by watching the sexual act or just by looking at breasts,
naked legs or obscene pictures. Acts of voyeurism are substitutes for actual participation in sexual activities. A voyeur derives erotic pleasure by watching a woman bathing, or watching through key-holes or windows to see a woman dressing up or undressing, or watching love-making. "Pornography of different kinds such as films, books, pictures etc., are based upon the compulsion to look." Habitual compulsive indulgence in voyeurism might ultimately develop into cases of obsessive compulsive neurosis.

In *Wise Blood*, O' Connor gives us a solid example of a voyeur in Enoch Emery. It is a sort of ritual with him to watch the woman bathing in the pool in the park where he is employed as an attendant in the zoo:

Every day when he got off duty, he went into the park, and every day he went in, he did the same things. He went first to the swimming pool. He was afraid of water but he liked to sit up on the bank above it if there were any women in the pool and watch them.65

There is a woman with two little boys who comes there frequently. He hides himself in the abelia bushes to peep. "His face was always very red in the bushes. Any one who parted the abelia springs at just that place, would think he was a devil and would fall down the slope and into the pool." Though he visits a whorehouse whenever he likes, he is quite shocked by the permissiveness in the open. It is out of "a sense of propriety" that he watches the women hiding in the

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66 Ibid., pp. 45-46.
bushes. He also notices that "very often the women would pull the suits straps
down off their shoulders and lie stretched out." 

Enoch Emery is every inch fleshy, and, as Hazel’s double, he represents
man’s carnal desires and animalistic nature. In spite of all his conscious sinning
Hazel is a Christian fundamentalist. Enoch Emery has a nasty comment for
waitresses behind counters. He has also a fascination for movie posters. He
notices the poster of a woman being stuffed into an incinerator by a monster.
Having a phobia for enclosed places, he thinks he will not go for any such
picture shows. But the sadist and voyeur in him is such an uncontrollable force
that he finds himself in the balcony of the theatre.

Enoch Emery’s childhood was a very unhappy one. A welfare woman
"traded" him from his father and later he was sent to the Rodemill Bible
Academy. He escapes from there by giving the matron “a heart attact” by
appearing naked before her. A child who grows up without the love of his
parents and suppressed, may in adult life become a voyeur. A child satisfies its
curiosity with his natural curiosity by peeping at others anatomy. If an adult
behaves in this manner it is a case of regression. Out of shame or horror, the
individual may not get involved in normal sex relationships, but watch others
from a distance engaged in sexual activities, and obtain erotic pleasure. His
voyeuristic activities give him satisfaction by vicarious participation.

From the analysis of different forms of sexual deviations as depicted in
O’Connor’s fiction, it can be concluded that all forms of sexual perversions can
be regarded as libido regression. In this type of regression adults try to get
satisfaction of their sexual tendencies through outlets which young children use in

\[ \text{Ibid., p. 45.} \]
expressing their affection for their dolls or toys. Similarly, people with sexual aberrations, take pleasure in perverted sexual activities instead of actually participating in normal sexual activities. O’Connor uses the waste land theme by pointing out that in the spiritually sterile contemporary society, sex is sterile and unsatisfactory. In her fiction sex is robbed of its healthy emotional content.

When we look at the enormity of the destructive relationships people establish on account of alienation, violence and sexual aberrations, in the traditional male-dominated societies as depicted in O’Connor’s fiction, we are alarmed at the unpopularity of the existing social systems. Those with progressive views may consider these developments as welcome signs of progress rather than regression. They consider it as a more rational and egalitarian way of behaviour and adult relationships. But it may be admitted, whatever the merits of these developments, that poor patterns of communication are a frequent element in unsatisfying relationship as well as in some sexual disorders.

The environment in which one finds oneself can be supportive or destructive. But the modern urbanization has led to the decline in all levels of relatively stable network of relationships. In our modern fast moving urban society, it is difficult to establish and maintain intimate interpersonal relationships. As a consequence, there is an increasing need for reliance on one’s own personal resources for the satisfaction of personal fulfilment and emotional needs. But immature, maladaptive person are likely to find themselves imprisoned in their own selves because they are incapable of establishing and maintaining any kind of intimate relationships. The net outcome of all this is regression.
In the case of alienated and violent individuals, there is little sense of community or social identification. As a result of disorganisation and value conflicts in the minds of such people, often they establish damaging and regressive types of relationships, and will have little concern for the world outside. They are trapped in their own infantile fantasies. They are socially and psychologically unfit and incapable of establishing any lasting loyalties or friendships. They seek their own gratification and fulfilment even by resorting to aberrative and socially unacceptable methods. They may place the blame on their community, on the rapidly changing society, or on themselves. Ultimately they find themselves alienated, repulsed, in varying degrees from themselves, from others and from the society as a whole, on account of their unacceptable and repulsive socio-psychological aberrations.