PREFACE

Considered an important voice in American literature, Flannery O’Connor wrote two novels, thirty-two short stories, as well as a number of reviews and commentaries. Along with authors like Carson McCullers and Eudora Welty, Flannery O’Connor belonged to the Southern Gothic tradition that focused on the decaying South and its damned people. She was a writer in the vein of William Faulkner, often relying heavily on regional settings and grotesques as characters. T.S. Eliot said of her work, “She has certainly an uncanny talent of a high order but my nerves are just not strong enough to take much of a disturbance.”

O’Connor put much conscious thought into her dual role of Catholic and fiction writer, and reading her written reflections on the matter reveals that she had developed a whole literary philosophy devoted to reconciling the two, nay joining them into a single unified force to “prove the truth of the Faith.” She believed that “All good stories are about conversion, about a character’s changing. The action of grace changes a character. ... All my stories are about the action of grace on a character.”

During her thirty-nine years, a life cut short by serious illness, O’Connor achieved a reputation as one of the most original and complex of the younger school of fiction writers. The thesis is an attempt to explore the genius of Flannery O’Connor vis-à-vis the thematic concerns of her novels. It discusses O’Connor’s three collections of short stories and two novels. All page references are to the following edition:

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