Flannery O'Connor discovered her natural idiom in stories which contain the element of the grotesque but whose deepest resonance comes from subtle social, racial, and theological overtones that are inseparable from the concrete matrix of the story. She forces reality out to the limits of mystery. For her fiction reinforces our sense of the supernatural by being grounded in concrete observable reality. The truthfulness and wholeness of the natural events presented in a work of fiction give it an "added dimension," according to O'Connor. It is this emphasis on precise transcription of the concrete that carries something of the theological density of O'Connor's fiction. It is the combination of the concrete and the invisible which gives her fiction the quality of the grotesque in character and situation. It is almost as though Flannery O'Connor was born to appreciate the grotesque, for suffering and the inexplicable are at the centre of her universe. Preoccupied with the crisis of belief in the modern age, she saw this crisis manifested in the absurd fever of denial, loneliness, isolation, and alienation which drive her characters relentlessly towards their fate. Though it
is somewhat an exaggeration to regard her fiction as theology in disguise or as an illustration of grace, the fusion of the grotesque vision and the theological vision suggests O'Connor's most remarkable literary gift. But this is a gift revealed by means of her ability to present reality convincingly. While the absurd agonies of O'Connor's fiction present a penetrating critique of the purposelessness of existence without grace, she is at once struck by man's rogulist capacity for sin. What is significant in the art of Flannery O'Connor is her tolerance as artist towards all humanity and her awareness of the sense of despair and human mortality as a means of heightening one's moral sense and of presenting an existentialist apprehension of alienation and psychic fragmentation. O'Connor's short stories describe a struggle for significance and permanance in a world of alienation, fragmentation, and transcience. It is this which is sought to be studied in this dissertation in terms of an analysis of character and situation and of the challenge Flannery O'Connor offers in her short fiction, in depicting with a comprehensive vision, race and class distinctions in a pattern of difference and sameness. Not so much the destructive character as those
"grotesques" who manage a gesture of love in spite of their other failings attract our attention in a study of O'Connor. Ruby Turpin's gesture of love towards Claude, Head's towards Nelson, Mrs. Fox's towards her son Asbury, the grandmother's towards The Misfit, and Guizac's towards his cousin are crucial events which focus on human nature struggling under pressure. O'Connor's rare gift of expressing the comic impulse in portraits of serious intent, her interest in social, psychological, philosophical, and theological issues of modern times, her mix of the comic and the tragic elements of human life, her insight into "the mystery of personality" all contribute to the making of a unique narrative art.

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