CHAPTER II
REGION AND PEOPLE

For her characters in her stories, Miss O'Connor uses Southern common folk who can be identified as plain people. They are mostly Georgians and through them she has given body and substance to South and has shown South's changing social order. In contrast to the other local colourists, who while drawing a plain folk character show the element of pride, Miss O'Connor in her subtle manner rips apart the pretensions using the reversal technique, and takes an ironic view of the traditional pride.

The Protagonists of both her novels are unwilling to accept the mission of prophetism, and are thus driven into violent deeds of protests. It is only after committing crimes that both Hazel Motes and Tarwater are shocked in awareness and realization. Their consciousness of human sinfulness gives them ultimate purpose in life.

The majority of the characters in her stories are independent farm owners and their children who in spite of their lives being struggles, manage to maintain the standards of living which they consider decent. They are mostly middle-aged women who run such farms with the aid of the tenants. The women invariably voice the convictions of the society in which they live. All her
characters possess the human disposition to err. They are all angry people who feel burdened by their tenant farmers. Mrs May in "Greenleaf" is always angry with her tenant Mr Greenleaf, and Mrs McIntyre with her "white trash managers in "The Displaced Person". Thus, according to Alfred Kazin, Miss O'Connor's human beings are nothing but their moral natures which sit in them like sacks waiting to be emptied into the world of action.  

In order to present a clear picture of society, Miss O'Connor makes use of a number of minor characters in her stories. Her minor characters are portrayed in comic contrast to the main characters and are established as a foil for them. Enoch Emery in Miss Blood is used as contrast to Hazel Motes, and Mrs Freeman in "Good Country People" as a foil for the self-deluded Hudga Hopewell. Miss O'Connor also uses a number of Negro characters. However, her black characters are one dimensional and such characters are mostly used to ridicule the false values of Southern farm owners.

II

In her essay "The Fiction Writer and His Country" (N.E., pp. 25-35) contributed to a symposium on the contemporary American Novel, Miss O'Connor discusses her reasons for writing about people who are materially and
spiritually afflicted, and the country that the writer is concerned with. She underscores the relation between culture and belief in the twentieth century which compels this choice. About the country she says that "The country that the writer is concerned with in the most objective way is, of course, the region that most immediately surrounds him, or simply the country, with its body of manners, that he knows well enough to employ." (H.E., p. 26). She further says about the region that "when we talk about the writer's country we are liable to forget that no matter what particular country it is, it is inside as well as outside him. Art requires a delicate adjustment of the outer and inner worlds in such a way that, without changing their nature, they can be seen through each other. To know oneself is to know one's region." (H.E., pp. 34-35).

It is true that Miss O'Connor writes with a strong sense of place. Her country is Georgia where she was born in 1925. The settings of her stories and novels are either Georgia or Tennessee, often backwood or rural areas, but she has never tried to superimpose on their settings a mythical or ritualistic importance. She has perhaps no interest in creating any particular area as a symbolic Southern landscape, but it does seem typical of large sections of real life Georgia and Tennessee. Her home obviously supplied the primary
materials for her fiction.

Robert Fitzgerald says in his introduction to *Everything That Miss Must Converse*: "She [Miss O'Connor] was a girl who started with the gift of cartooning and satire" (*Everything*, p. vii). The elements of cartoonistic technique and caricature are no doubt evident in her characterization, but Miss O'Connor created bizarre characters and extreme situations in order to attain "deeper kinds of realism." (*M.M.*, p. 33). For her characters the most suitable place was her native region, the South. The legacy of the revivalist past has lingered more in the South than in any other region of her country. South's history included a major experience of losing the Civil War. Leon V. Driskell and Joan T. Brittain say that "Critics who see her characters yielding before the madness of fanaticism and assume that the author deplores this madness did not know Miss O'Connor and her region." They further say, "She recognized the "incredible innocence" which permitted H.L. Mencken scornfully to call the South the Bible Belt (*M.M.*, p. 59). She also recognized the truth of Walker Percy's claim that the existence of great many good Southern writers resulted from the fact that "we lost the war" (*M.M.*, p. 59) and that "behind our own history, deepening at every point has been another history" (*M.M.*, p. 59)^2. She saw the loss of war as South's
collective and personal experience of the biblical story of the Fall. This South is a region of peculiar people—men and women set apart by awareness of their own differences. Her fiction does not seek to accomplish only the aims of satire. She does not sneer at the religious intensity of her region where the people she knew fell generally in two groups—fanatics and the others. Rather Miss O'Connor is most deeply concerned with the mystery in all men.

Miss O'Connor was indeed a good story-teller who had the gift of being able to create life with words, and the life she was able to create was that of the rural protestant South. Except for the four years which she spent studying at the University of Iowa and writing in New York City and Connecticut, she lived her entire life of thirty-nine years in Georgia where she was born and finally buried. For her the South though hardly "Christ centered" was certainly "Christ-haunted". (M.M., p. 44) and in this Christ-haunted region lived citizens with an overwhelming sense of place. Southerners go "into the modern world with an inburnt knowledge of human limitations and with a sense of mystery which could not have developed in our first state of innocence..." (M.M., p. 59). David Stokes says that "However odd this claim sounds to us, it is one of a writer whose first 'given' is location: O'Connor does not look into her heart to write."
It will be seen that Miss O'Connor lived intimately with her materials. She used situations, characters, language immediately at hand and with such a loving regard for the details that they seem magically to have revealed the distant realities to her. She considered her talent to be a gift of God, but she did not rest from the intellectual labour in the name of talent. She worked with the intellectual faculty as intensely as with the imaginative. In spite of her invalid condition, she did not pity herself, and she was not inclined to pity others. She was concerned with understanding the truth about people. Walter Sullivan comments about her work that: "Flannary O'Connor's limitations were numerous and her range was narrow; she repeated herself frequently and she ignored an impressively large spectrum of human experience. But what she did well, she did with exquisite competence: her ear for dialogue, her eye for human gestures were as good as any body's ever were; and her vision was as clear and direct and as annoyingly precious as that of an Old Testament Prophet or one of the more irascible Christian Saints." In her Essay "The Catholic Novelist in the Protestant South" she herself says, "The fiction writer finds in time, if not at once, that he cannot proceed at all if he cuts himself off from the sights and sounds that have developed a life of their own in his senses. The novelist is concerned with the mystery of
personality, and you cannot say much that is significant about this mystery unless the characters you create exist with the marks of a believable society about them. The larger social content is simply left out of much current fiction, but it cannot be left out by the Southern writer. The image of the South, in all its complexity, is so powerful in us that it is a force which has to be encountered and engaged." (ibid., p. 198).

It will be noticed that except for one or two exceptions Miss O'Connor's stories deal with the matter of the South. Being confined to Milledgeville farm due to her illness, she drew strength from that rural area. In this connection Thomas Curley rightly says that "... Miss O'Connor's characters could come from no place but the American South. Evident, I think, in Miss O'Connor's work, as opposed to her statements about it, is the belief that the where and the how and the when of one's upbringing are essential and inseparable parts of one's human." It is true that by abstraction a novelist can arrive at a universal man by divesting an individual of his colour, his heredity, his nationality — all those so called accidental qualities, but that is not the universality the novelist aims at. And it is not the universality Miss O'Connor achieves.

In this connection Thomas Curley gives the example of Miss O'Connor's The Violent Bear It Away and says
"Birth, birth place, upbringing, origins and destinies. Things and persons. One of the chief virtues of Miss O'Conner's work is that she has imagined and shaped in what she calls her "One Cylinder prose", the human countenance of the holy and has given "the air of the times" a local habitation and a name." In her essay "The Regional Writer" Miss O'Conner comments "Unless the novelist has gone utterly out of his mind, his aim is still communication, and communication suggests talking inside a community. One of the reasons Southern fiction thrives is that our best writers are able to do this." (Em., p. 53)

She immersed herself deeply in her region and this gives her fiction a social and historical dimension. She could reproduce to the last nuances the idiom of her people, and this gift allowed her to place her characters by their speech in the midst of Southern history. In one of her essays she says "An idiom characterizes a society, and when you ignore the idiom, you are very likely ignoring the whole social fabric that could make a meaningful character." (Em., p. 104).

Out of this South and its people she found the material which gave her work the living elements of successful fiction, and she worked hard to evolve some meaning. C. Hugh Holman says that "Indeed, in looking at her native Georgia, like many modern Southerners, Miss O'Connor's vision was touched with a rue, but wore her
"rue with a difference" — a difference that helps to define her essential quality and to give us a deeper insight into her "Country" both of soil and spirit. In fact, it will be seen from the stories that her country is not the South of great oaks and stable social order. The South of her stories is of cotton country, made-up of small farms, small towns and small cities — a country at the mercy of capricious weather and fluctuating cotton market. She captured people, places and events in the rural South and through her art used them to suggest the life of all mankind. She writes about the backwoods fundamentalists because they are part of the local scene in Georgia and Tennessee and knows that their dramatic religious activities are good material for fiction. She herself says, "The writer uses his eyes on what he happens to be facing." (p. 162).

Miss O'Connor's South is full of poverty-striken and harsh people with a deep sense of integrity who have a tendency to make their own laws and worship God with individual and singular fervour. About Miss O'Connor's region, C. Hugh Holman says that "It is a land wrecked by diseases peculiar to poverty, by a vicious share-cropper system, by little education and a superstitious, intense, plastic but non-theological religious passion. Here is not the South of Virginia Tidewater or the Carolina low-country, regions that are nominally Episcopal in religion, aristocratic in dress if not in fact, and tied to a past
culture that has reverenced learning, practical law, and dreamed of a republic government of merit founded upon the doctrines of the eighteenth century enlightenment."\(^3\) But her view of South is both protective and critical. She obviously is proud of her homeland and not only aware of its special qualities but anxious to make clear her debt to a people and a tradition. She says in one of her essays that "The two circumstances that have given character to my own writing have been those of being Southern and being Catholic" (\(\text{N.M., p. 196}\)). In the same essay she further says that "The things we see, hear, smell, and touch affect us long before we believe anything at all, and the South impresses its image on us from the moment we are able to distinguish one sound from another." (\(\text{N.M., p. 197}\)).

It was from the South that she drew ideas, plots, people and notions that set her mind working. The way Miss O'Conner deals with the traditional social structure in the South in her fiction shows that it was major concern to her and was the source of much of her power and art. The way she deals with her characters on the secular level as they live their daily lives in a region with a distinctive class structure illustrates much that is powerful in her art.

Robert Drake says, ".... the South gave Miss O'Conner religion. Her native Roman Catholicism is not of course the religion of the Bible Belt, but she observed those dear calvinistic whispers, those intimations of sin and suffering from the very air and the atmosphere itself."\(^9\)
The people of her South are impetuous people with a deep sense of integrity, and a tendency to make their own laws and to worship God with individual and singular fervour. The frugality of these people, the Calvinistic religion and their intense individualism formed distinct culture. Miss O'Connor had full sympathy with these Southern backwoods people. Her people think and talk in the idiom and dreads of the back country; they speak from folk knowledge about everything from remedies for ailments to Old Testament prophecies. Louise Gossett remarks about Miss O'Connor's characters that "The kind of people whom Caldwell leaves floundering as grotesque in a world they never made becomes for Miss O'Connor instruments of the Divine Will." Ignorant, immature or childishy simple characters are gripped by and in turn grapple with problems of immense theological complexity. By using untutored characters Miss O'Connor points out that these problems are both vastly complicated and paradoxically simple. These people can state in the folk idiom all that is problematic about human life. She knew people with the finality with which she claimed to know the distance from hell and heaven. For her, people were complete in their radical weakness, their human incompleteness.

Thus her characters have been termed as grotesque because they are spiritually primitive and afflicted both in mind and body. Their lives are like nightmares that
are both brutal and farcical, and this is because they are God-intoxicated; one might say doomed to God. What accounted for Miss O'Connor was not so much man as his soul, and perhaps not so much as soul as the uncanny forces that prey on it. Andre Maikasten says, "Here is a world haunted by the sacred — a sacred with two faces now distinct and opposed, not enigmatically confused: the divine and the demonic. Hence we find in most of her characters the double postulation noted by Baudelaire: one toward God, the other toward Satan." Hazel Notes the protagonist of her first novel Miss Blood and Tarwater of The Violent Bear It Away are both obsessed with this dilemma.

III

Miss O'Connor's people are afflicted with a savage inability and unwillingness to accept the normal conditions of everyday life and are thus driven into violent deeds of protest. In blind and confused zeal the protagonists of both her novels commit crimes. Their consciousness of human sinfulness gives them purpose and integrity in a materialistic society, but it also leads them to do grievous harm. Hazel Notes is a young self-ordained evangelist of the "Church Without Christ", and he proclaims the gospel of "no truth behind all truths." As an adolescent, Hazel tries to accept and avoid his mother and her religion at the same time. At the age of twelve he first felt the
vocation to preach as a result of the impact upon him of his grandfather who was an evangelist. But while in the army during the second World War, he learns the lesson of nihilism. He finds himself converted to nothing. He comes to know that he has no soul and this turns out to be a perfect solution for him. He can now avoid both sin and religion. He analyses that sex and sin are nothing but words, that "Jesus is a trick on niggers." In the novel Hazel Notes is depicted as a brash, self-assertive young man clearly mindful of his destination and his destiny. In the train, in the first chapter, he is seen sitting "at a forward angle" a pose suggestive of his purposefulness of his plan to go to Taullinhem to prove his belief in nothing. The settings of Hazel's eyes "were so deep that they seemed, to her, almost like passages leading somewhere ...." (W.B., p. 10). Rather welcoming his travelling companion's chatter, Hazel shuts her up by rudely asserting "I reckon you think you been redeemed" (W.B., p. 14). But it is clear that Hazel has an attachment for his mother, and when he goes into the army, he takes his mother's black Bible and silver-rimmed spectacles with him. In this connection Stuart L. Burns says "But these objects ultimately function more in a religious than a Freudian context. The referential quality of the Bible is obvious, while the spectacles - a recurrent symbol in O'Connor's fiction - suggest Hazel's affinity with such later characters as the Misfit, the adolescent arsonist Powell, and the Displaced Person, all of whom function as
agents of the Divine Will."¹²

People as portrayed by Miss O'Connor in the City of Taulkingham are all materialistic and indifferent to religion. People literally go about their business without any involvement. Potato Pealers and fake preachers like Ace Hawks compete for the attention of prospective customers. Hazel Notes moves about in this city preaching Church without Christ and is obsessed with the need to deny the existence of Christ. In his denouncement of religious faith he commits series of sins. In fact, the later development of Hazel's character of denying Jesus and proclaiming the gospel of "no truth behind all truths" has been brought about by his harsh, morally righteous mother and his fanatically religious grandfather who puts Jesus into his head like a "Stinger". Consequently, Christ is Hazel's image of sinlessness which, in the context of the novel, is the avoidance of sexual passion. Hazel hopes to avoid sin as well as sex in order to escape from the judgment of Christ. But later, in order to escape from Jesus he even denies the existence of his soul and the Original Sin. At the age of ten Hazel had gone to the carnival and had sneaked in a girlie show where "Something white was lying, squirming a little, in a box lined with black cloth. For a second he thought it was a skinned animal and then he saw it was a woman." (V.B., p. 62). On his return his mother guessed his guilt and hit him across the legs saying "Jesus died to redeem you." (V.B., p.63).
Hazel felt guilty, and it is this guilt which later turns into a primal guilt when he fantasizes his own mother in the casket.

Thomas Le Clair calls this guilt oedipal guilt and says "Because Hazel associates his lost religious faith with memories of oedipal guilt and anxiety, his ultimate acceptance of religion is made difficult and meaningful." Miss O'Connor implies that if Hazel is to accept Christ, he must ward off the lust aroused in his youth. But just to prove that he does not believe in sin he has affairs with two women, first with a prostitute, Mrs. Leora Watts and then with Sabbath Lily Hanks. But in each case he tries to prove that he takes the 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." (W.B., p. 110). Nathan A. Scott Jr. says about Hazel's sensuality that "were it to be enjoyed and revelled in for its own sake, would mock the truth — the truth that there is no truth behind all truths, that there is nothing in reality that can be depended upon either to sanction or to comfort human spirit."14

Hazel is so firm and steadfast in his truth that he does not want it to be commercialized in any way. Hence fury overpowers his sane emotions when he sees Hoover Shoats commercializing his ideas and beliefs. That is why he murders Solace Layfield, the fake preacher and slings the
Judgement at him "You ar'nt true" (W.B., p. 203). Miss O'Connor has depicted Hazel's awe and terror as necessary part of Christianity. Hazel fears Jesus as the redeemer, and he sees Salvation as destruction of his self. Although he curses Jesus, yet for his acceptance and redemption mean renouncing the world. Although he repeatedly and emphatically denies Christ, but actually he is renouncing a repressed desire. In fact his hidden longing for Christ is revealed at every stage. The change in Hazel's character comes because of his acceptance of grace. Carter Martin says that "When Hazel accepts his opportunity, the reader must then consider his character from the first and realize that the strength of character which enabled him to blaspheme at the top of his voice is the quality which led to his ultimate conversion." 15

It was Miss O'Connor's habit to set up "doubles" at times in order to clarify her characterizations. In Wise Blood Enoch Emery has been designed as a parody of Hazel Notes and helps define by contrast Hazel's character. Enoch, like Hazel, is a Seeker. He comes to the city for fame and success and goes to one direction a fundamentally materialistic culture may take -- downward towards the life of the animal world. His dream is to be "The young man of future, like ones in the insurance ads. He wanted, some day, to see a line of people waiting to shake his hand." (W.B., p. 191). But he finds the people of Tankinhem
unfriendly and complains to Hazel about the coldness of
urban life. Where Hazel's concern in life is with things
higher than man, Enoch's concern is with the lowest side of
men's nature, i.e., with animals. He lives a secret life
among them. Miss O'Connor portrays him as a zoo keeper
and the one who feels great kinship with animals. He
eventually evolves into a gorilla. Preston Brough calls
it a "leap from humanity to animality."

IV

There was a remarkable influence of Teilhard
de Chardin's writings on Miss O'Connor. She came to
accept his idea of spiritual evolution (This has been
discussed fully in the chapter on Religion), and her work
runs parallel to the thought of Teilhard de Chardin.
However, other writers like Francois Mauriac, Nathaniel
Hawthorne and Nathanael West had also created deep
impression on her and influenced the portrayal of her
characters. Eugene E. Murphy in his lecture gives
examples of Mauriac characters "Duty doing grandmother"
"Sharply divided household and child as the main character
in La Saguin." Miss O'Connor's stories also abound
in these characters — mothers, divided house-hold, and
children as central characters. In The Violent Bear It
Away, Rayber, his idiot son Bishop, and Francis Marion
Tarwater correspond to Sheppard, his dull son Norton and Rufus Johnson in "The Lame Shall Enter First." These characters resemble Robert Bordes, his bright son Jean-Pierre and Guillaume de Carné’s of Le Sermon, of Mauriac’s novel. Francis Marion Tarwater on the other hand also resembles Hazel Motes of Wise Blood in showing his unwillingness to follow the path his fanatical great-uncle has set before him. As a protest against the religious zeal of his great-uncle he drowns his idiot cousin Bishop, but in so doing he fulfills the prophecy of the old man by baptizing the child. Melvin J. Friedman says in the introduction of The Added Dimension that “Tarwater is another authentically American boy, in the tradition of Huck Finn and young Ike McCaslin (with the added dimension of being religiously displaced), who goes through a typical American initiation before he can become a man. His education and character formation are intimately linked to Flannery O’Connor’s South which Arthur Mizener has characterized as "a breeding ground for prophets."

Resemblance of Tarwater’s character to that of Hazel Motes has been shown in the way that he too is rebellious, disrespectful, willfully perverse character who actively attempts to deny everything that his great-uncle has taught him. It is only later on that Tarwater’s attitude becomes positive and he turns decisively towards the mission which the old man had assigned him. Tarwater
had at first been a ward of his uncle Sayber, but had been
kidnapped by old Tarwater and taken to Powderhead. The
old man often tells the young child "I saved you to be
free, your ownself" (The Violent, p. 16). The old man
fills the child's mind with religious zeal and teaches him
the history of the prophets. Old Tarwater having been
"Schooled in the evils that befall prophets", having been
schooled in calamities is possessed by a "rage of vision",
and he teaches young Tarwater with his mind fresh and
innocent the same rage and glory. However, in spite of his
lack of knowledge and education, young Tarwater, although
impressed by his great-uncle's prophesies, is still full
of doubts. He is not opposed to becoming a prophet but
he wants the role to be awe-inspiring. He thinks of the
prophets of Old Testament — Moses who struck water from
a rock and Joshua who made the Sun stand still. He believes
that God has special plans for him. His young and
immature mind is attracted to the power of Old Testament
prophets. He is thus disappointed and doubtful that he
should be made to follow only Jesus. For him this role
is not so spectacular. Therefore, he, too, like Hazel Motes,
sets out to escape from Jesus by defiance and self-
assertion. He does not like to sacrifice his independence
for Jesus.

In the city in his uncle's house, Tarwater
on seeing Bishop is reminded of his task of baptizing him,
but his uncle Rayber tries to nullify his spiritual consciousness. Tarwater's adolescent mind once again struggles whether or not to take up the prophetic mission bequeathed him by the old man. Louis D. Rubin, Jr. feels that Young Tarwater actually needs Rayber's companionship and guidance and that he needs love and affection which he is unable to get. Louis Rubin says that "when Tarwater comes out of the revival meeting afterward, he is for the first time in the novel genuinely open to help, desirous of his uncle's companionship and guidance. But Rayber is at that moment completely unable and unwilling to respond to the youth's overture, so shaken up and resentful is he after the episode with the little girl at the window." He further says that "The remedy for the fanatical terror and wrath that had gripped the youth then, was not the denial of emotion in favour of cold behavioristic rationalism, but the equally emotional fanaticism of love. Without love the needs of soul are capable of being met only by wrath and violence." 

At the lake resort too, Tarwater instead of affection gets an admonishing from the resort keeper, and the moment of love and sympathy is gone. He thus takes the ultimate decision of drowning his cousin Bishop and denying the call for which so far he has been struggling. But the roots of the seed sown by his great-uncle in his young mind are too deep for him to deny the call. Thus he
drowns as well as baptizes Bishop. Like Hazel Notes of Wise Blood, young Tarwater must rebel against the act he is committed to fulfill. He wants to be free both of the rational logic of his uncle and from the pressures of his great-uncle. Hence even after drowning and baptizing Bishop, he is in a confused state of mind. He explains to himself that words of baptizing were only an accident. He thinks he has now grown up and has rejected the call of his great-uncle, so he starts out for powderhead thinking himself to be a man.

However, Tarwater is sadly mistaken. He does not know the city slickers. In fact he is only a fourteen-year-old boy who is unable to understand the world and trusts the stranger who shows sympathy towards him. The stranger is in fact the Devil, who drugs him and rapes him. The boy is now so repelled by this whole incident that the experience proves decisive in determining Tarwater's destiny. Even his eyes are now changed.

"They looked as if, touched with a coal like the lips of the prophet, they would never be used for ordinary sights again." (The Violent, p. 233).

Miss O'Connor has not been very kind to young Tarwater's uncle Rayber, the school teacher. He has been portrayed as a person who is afraid of natural emotional sentiments like love. He is shown as being indecisive in a number of situations, and he works his way through life
by sterile logic and reason. As a child Rayber had been kidnapped by his uncle Old Tarwater and baptized, but later he grows up to be an atheist and chooses the rational way of life. He has thus rejected his uncle Old Tarwater's violent religious belief and now believes only in atheism. But whenever Miss O'Connor is dealing with modern secularism she is scathing in her satire. Her satire of Rayber's character is ruthless and devastating. Nathan A. Scott, Jr. says, "On Rayber the novel is merciless in venting a spleen whose malice is reserved for those who inhabit a world that is utterly demoralized. With all the heartless inhumanity of his psychological gadgetry - his charts and graphs and I.Q. tests - his is a "Headpiece fitted with straw," "He is full of nothing." Rayber thinks of himself as an emancipated modern man, totally divested of religion, but for all his talk of freedom and constructive independence, he is anything but free. Rayber is in fact a victim of his own intellectual habits which cause him to substitute thought for life. However, Louis D. Rubin Jr. says that "there is also the Rayber who recognizes within himself the potentiality of emotional irrationality and tries to protect himself from it by being scientific and rational. For this "aspect of Rayber satire is obviously inappropriate, since it diminishes the stature of the satirical objects." Louis Rubin thus analyses Rayber's character that Rayber has been shown as an object of
contempt rather than pity. According to him Rayber's failure does not lie in his rationalism but in his indecisiveness and in his inability to counter the hold of old man's fanaticism upon young Tarwater with the love the boy craves. 23

Initially Rayber is shown as being pulled in opposite directions by egoism and self-sacrifice. He too is obsessed with the selfishness and independence. Repeatedly he stresses upon human dignity, his will and his power to choose emptiness over a rebirth. But the last scene of the novel proves that Rayber no longer has the ability to choose or to decide. "He continued to feel nothing" (The Violent, p. 203). Rayber like Old Tarwater sees himself as a suitable guide for his nephew young Tarwater, and thinks that he will be able to mould the boy. But on the other hand, Rayber, in his heart, has an emotional surge of love for his son which he has been trying to keep under control under the garb of scientific rationalism, and thus he lacks the strength of action. About Rayber's indecisiveness and conflict in his mind, Davind Eggenschwiler says, "unlike the Tarwaters, Rayber was unable to resolve such a conflict; and outside the temple he was caught in a paralyzing dilemma similar to that he experienced with his son. Unable to give himself to the crippled child-preacher of love and unable to confront her with a final renunciation, he crouched
on the ground and impotently turned off his hearing-
aid. As is often the case in Miss O'Connor's works, the man
who is estranged from his essential self and cannot
approach wholeness and equilibrium is unable to act; he
is truly self-defeating in his spiritual and psychological
anarchy."24 Thus more than Rayner's rationalism and
scientific logic, it is his lack of action and his
indecisiveness which brings ultimate tragedy upon him.

The other character who towers over both his
nephews in The Violent Bear It Away is Old Mason Tarwater.
He is a self-styled prophet with a religious zeal of
Georgia backwoods people. The old man had been imbied
with religion which had come to him through the Southerners
living in the Bible belt. Miss O'Connor says that "in the
South Bible is known by the ignorant as well, and it is
always that myths which the poor held in common that is
most valuable to the fiction writer." (M.N., p. 203). Old
Mason Tarwater is also one of them. The old man thinks
that the Lord himself has sent him a 'rage of vision'. Old
Mason Tarwater knows that he "had been called" by the
Lord "in his early youth and had set out for the city to
proclaim the destruction awaiting a world that had
abandoned its saviour" (The Violent, p. 5). He is a man
consecrated by his overpowering conviction that the true
country of the Soul is Sacred. He has once learnt the
lesson for his egotism and his pride, and now he considers
himself to be the proper instructor for young Tarwater in
the ways of the Lord. Old Tarwater understood that
Salvation was fulfilment through destruction of the sinful
self. About Old Tarwater David Eggenschwiler says, "Since Old Tarwater had such a valid conception of faith and salvation, he did not swing between two extremes of gnosticism and atheism. He did lapse from true prophecy through pride and insecurity and thus lost the Christian balance of selfhood and selflessness by assuming righteousness and the right of judgement. But he was also capable of being restored by the mercy of God and by the very insecurity that caused him to become self-righteous." 25 Old Mason Tarwater dies in the early chapters of the novel, but his giant shadow towers over both his nephews Rayber as well as young Tarwater.

V

Preston Browning, Jr. has divided the attitudes of the characters of Miss O'Connor's fiction into three categories. Intellectuals are 'positivists' and non-intellectuals are 'positive thinkers'. The third type of character is the 'criminal compulsive', the twisted, the neurotic, the guilt-ridden and the God-haunted protagonists. These violent and flawed beings play an indispensable role. It is they who serve as spiritual catalysts, administering the shock which awakens the positivists and positive thinkers from their dream of a world made secure by shallow goodness or superficial
rationality. Because Miss O'Connor abhors sentimentality, the omniscient point of view which she frequently adopts has an edge of sour amusement at the predicament of men. She always sees the preposterous and the perverse for what they are. They cannot be changed by mere reversal but must undergo transformation. John Idol remarks about Miss O'Connor's characters that "Here together (in Robert Giroux's edition of The Complete Stories) are almost all the inhabitants of Miss O'Connor's earthly city: the restless souls, the displaced persons, the domineering mothers and physically or emotionally maimed children, the freaks, the haunted prophets, the frustrated do-gooders, the prejudiced, the misfits, the impudent children, the comic idiots, the perpetrators and victims of violence, and the spiritually blind ...." Alfred Kazin says about her characters that "O'Connor, as I must call her, was in story after story all there, occupying the mind and the whole life of a character who was as solidly on the page as if impaled on it. Her people were wholly what they were, which wasn't much in "human" terms. But they were all intact of themselves, in their stupidity, their meanness, their puzzlement, their southern ruralness. The South was her great metaphor, not for place but for the Fall of man. Life for O'Connor was made up of absolutes; people were absolutes, sharp, knives without handles...."

A number of critics have analysed Miss O'Connor's
characters. Some have found fixed groupings, and some have discussed her male characters, whereas others have laid emphasis on her women characters. But it is a fact that Miss O'Connor has taken up basic Southern patterns of everyday life and woven her stories around them.

Dorothy Walters remarks that "The method of the cartoonist is closely allied to that employed by O'Connor in her writing. Cartoons make a serious statement through ostensibly comic means using exaggeration and emphasis to achieve their effects. O'Connor is a master of that instant characterization through the potent phrase: Ladies "dressed like parrots" or a train conductor with a face like "an ancient bloated bull dog." Even the major characters have cartoon qualities, for their essential traits are delineated in absolutely sharp outlines." Miss O'Connor removes all superfluities in order to focus on the stark profiles of the rigidly-drawn figures.

In Miss O'Connor's characters one distinctive element can be found. This is the repeated mother and child pattern. A number of her stories revolve around mother and daughter pattern. Mr Fitzgerald's introduction to Everything That Rises refers to what he calls "family resemblance" in her stories and novels. There are groups of practical mother and daughter on a farm as in "A Circle in the Fire", "Good Country People", "A Temple of the Holy Ghost" and "The Life you Save". The mother is a hard
working widow who supports and cares for her large physically marred girl by running a farm. The daughter is usually bookish and very disagreeable. At places this pairing is changed: the self-satisfied hardworking widow with incompetent and scornful children -- Mrs May and her two sons in "Greenleaf", Mrs Box and her two children (a son and a daughter) in "The Enduring Chill", Julian and his mother in "Everything That Rises."

Often fathers or grandfathers or uncles have charge of children whose other parents are not alive. In "The Artificial Nigger" the pair is Mr Head and his grandson, Nelson. In The Violent Bear It Away there are two pairs: young Tarwater and his uncle Rayber, and Rayber with his uncle old Tarwater. In "View of the Woods" there is Mr Mark Fortune and his grand-daughter Mary Fortune. Most frequently however the parent figure is a woman who has been left to raise unruly sons and daughters. Miss O'Connor's widowed mothers care for their children, but neither sons nor daughters mature successfully. Daughters are mostly characterized as socially crippled, physically unappealing, intelligent, well-educated and independent to ever assume normal roles as wives and mothers. In "A Circle In the Fire" Sally Cope is a "pale fat girl of twelve with a frowning squint and a large mouth full of silver bands" (p. 181). In "Good Country People" Joy-Hulga Hopewell is a thirty-two-year-old girl with a sour
disposition and a wooden leg. Thus in many of her stories Miss O'Connor has shown the vulnerability of her feminine characters. But according to Louise Westling the problem of women are not of central importance in Flannery O'Connor's view of her stories. However, Miss Westling remarks, "If we examine their characteristics I believe we will find that their distortions express a passionate but inadvertent protest against the lot of woman-kind. Flannery O'Connor makes these women live because she is one of them."  

About Miss O'Connor's women characters Louise Westling further says, "She [O'Connor] was not a feminist, and except in her fiction there is no indication that the position of women was of interest to her. Her concerns seem to have been focused on intellectual, spiritual, and artistic problems unrelated to sex. The ultimate purpose behind all the cruel tricks and violent twists in her stories is the humbling of pride, shocking her characters into a horrified sense of their helplessness before God." 

In "A Temple of the Holy Ghost" the daughter is a twelve-year-old well-read and intelligent girl who makes fun of her boy-crazy cousins and their dates, two local boys. She thinks them to be "stupid idiots". Her intelligence makes her proud and sour preventing her from enjoying a normal childhood. All mothers usually try to be understanding and patient, but sometimes they become
frustrated like Mrs Cope in "A Circle in the Fire" when she sees Sally in overalls and a felt hat. Mrs Cope watches her daughter with a tragic look, "why do you have to look like an idiot" she asked. "Suppose company were to come? When are you going to grow up? What's going to become of you? I look at you and I want to cry" (G.S., p. 190). Both the bright ambitious girls of "A Circle in the Fire" and "A Temple" imagine themselves as swashbuckling adventurers.

However, Miss O'Connor seems to suggest that superior intelligence can be a curse as in the case of Joy Hopewell in "Good Country People". But there is a variation in this pattern in "The Life You Save". The mother is a calculating hard-bitten country widow, and the daughter, though beautiful, is a moron. She is very docile and sweet and her beauty is a symbol for spiritual innocence.

Many critics have found the parallels between Miss O'Connor's own life and those of the daughters in her stories. Miss O'Connor had spent most of her adult life as a semi-invalid on a small Georgia farm, where she had been cared for by her widowed mother. Like Joy-Halga Miss O'Connor scorned conventional Southern standards of feminine charm and insisted on her own kind of individuality. Clare Katz says that "The contempt O'Connor levels against her female role itself involves culpability. Simple-faced
Mary-grace in "Revelation", the homely daughter of
"A circle in the Fire", dressed in overalls and gripping
her pistols, the fat girl whose braces "gleamed like tin"
in "A Temple" indicate a repugnance towards femaleness.32

The women farm owners seem to know their place in
society. These respectable women owners lament the
difficulty involved in hiring dependable help from among
the lower classes. They express the conventional
wisdom about the unwillingness of the hired workers to
work hard. But all Miss O'Connor's women characters are
targets of satire. They are certainly not rewarded for
holding to their virtues. They constantly measure others
according to their own standard of honesty and hardwork
and as such their downfall is managed by Miss O'Connor
with skill and comic irony. Mrs Cope, the farm owner of
"A Circle in the Fire", feels herself superior to others
because she is hardworking. She is depicted as a small and
trim woman with a large round face and black eyes which
seem to be enlarging all the time. She has struggled
hard to keep her woods free of nut grass and weeds. She
boasts that because she works hard, she doesn't let anything
get ahead of her. But she is not free from dread.
"When the season changed she seemed almost frightened
at her good fortune in escaping whatever it was that
pursued her." (C.S.; p. 190). In spite of her intense
conviction of her own benevolence and generosity, she is
vulnerable and thus she builds defences against that fact. In such stories Miss O'Connor frequently deals with social structure in the South, and Mrs Cope is not free from racial and social hierarchy. She considers the Negroes working on her farm "as destructive and impersonal as nut grass" (O'C., p. 177). But when she is confronted with the opportunity to act with charity towards Powell, her tenant's son, and his two friends, she fails to rise above her lack of generosity.

In the end after Powell sets fire to her farm, her face "looked as if it might have belonged to anybody, a Negro or a European or to Powell himself." (O'C., p. 193). As her name suggests, she possesses inordinate confidence in her ability to deal with contingencies, but when the actual time comes she is unable to cope with the situation. All her pride, her social superiority leaves her. David Eggenschwiler remarks about her "Mrs Cope creates her defences through her prosperous farm, and her sense of decency, her impersonal pity for the less fortunate and her frequent insistence that she has much to be thankful for. She manages to restrict her view of goodness and evil, salvation and damnation, God and devil to the level of her own farm, and she also tries to control destiny by two apparently similar but ultimately contradictory ways." However, in the end in associating Mrs Cope with other suffering people, Miss O'Connor is
declaring the general state from which Mrs Cope has fled and to which she is finally returning through suffering.

Mrs Turpin in "Revelation" also believes in social structure, and she has a penchant for categorizing people. She can categorize the people even by the shoes they are wearing. Mrs Turpin laments the fact that "Niggers don't want to pick any more .... they got to be right there with white folks" (6:2, p. 493). Mrs Turpin's classification with its inherent contradictions, ranges from Niggers and White trash to land-owners to form a chain of various categories of people. Although she possesses honest hard-working qualities, she is not free from the pride of her superiority, and hence she is hit by a book and called "old wart hog". Mrs Turpin considers herself to be a righteous person. No doubt she has a good disposition and can laugh at herself for being overweight. In the doctor's office "she stood looming at the head of the magazine table" (6:2, p. 488) but she is too much bothered by the "White trash", too threatened by their laziness and self-possession. In her harmless night-time game of "naming the classes of people", she often becomes confused and uncertain. The complexity of it would begin to bear in on her. According to G. Hugh Holman, Miss O'Connor considered this preoccupation with categorizing people as a useless and defeating exercise, hence she has satirized Mrs Turpin's character and given her the final shock. 34
Miss O'Connor had often observed the white hired-help and Negro workers on her mother's farm, and she was able to write about the problems on the farm in the South. In her fiction she makes the comments about poor white trash and Negro help from the mouths of these respectable farm owners whom she herself satirizes. Mrs. McIntyre in "The Displaced Person" like other farm owners represents the higher level in the social ladder. Barbara Wilkie Tedford gives an apt description and says about this kind of gentry, "They all consider themselves completely respectable and upright but viewed from higher perspective, presumably ours and O'Connor's and finally God's their virtues seem pitifully inadequate." 35

Mrs. McIntyre is chiefly concerned with her property and possessions, she is proud of her own race and class and thus becomes instrumental in Quince's accidental death. She always recites her troubles and complaints repeatedly about Negroes, white tenants and other hired hands. Otherwise Miss O'Connor has portrayed her as a good woman, hardworking, honest and a fair landowner. She is very self-righteous and has a proud sense of moral justice, but she gives only lip service to religion knowing that none of it is true. On the other hand it is not moral commitment that makes her keep Quince on the farm, rather it is her greed in his hardwork and ultimately the prosperity of her farm which became the basis. But
after all she is a White Southern lady and hence cannot
overcome her reaction of revulsion and horror against
the inter-racial marriage which Guizac is trying to
arrange between his cousin and the Negro farm-hand Sulk.
This finally brings about Guizac's as well as her own
downfall and reveals her spiritual poverty when Guizac
does not respect this race distinction prevailing in
Georgia. Robert Cole remarks that "In the story finally
it is Mrs McIntyre who becomes the displaced person. Yet
for all her voluble self-pity, nostalgia and hard business
sense, repeatedly given expression, she does not plunge
into her soul. Her noisy self-serving prattle gives way
in the end to silence."36 About these three characters
Mrs Cope, Mrs Turpin and Mrs McIntyre David Eggenschwiler
comments that "In spite of their officiousness, all three
women are in despair of womanliness, of weakness, of not
willing to be oneself. They try to evade their selves
by living in a spiritless world of objects; duties and
restricted conceptions of what they are."37 Miss O'Connor
saw all dimensions of reality including the invisible.
Her truthfulness perhaps allowed her to imagine and create
characters who have destroyed their own integrity to
pursue a false God. Her characters like Mrs Cope and
Mrs McIntyre prove this point.
Apart from the above mentioned characters, Miss O'Connor has portrayed a number of other fixed groupings especially a divided household with self-styled intellectual child and mother. Most noticeable characters are mother-daughter group like Hulga Hopewell and Mrs Hopewell; and mother-son group like Julian and his mother, Asbury Fox and his mother, Thomas and his mother. As already discussed Preston Browning has analyzed Miss O'Connor's characters in three types (Ref. at p. 26).

Giving example of "Good Country People" he finds all the three types in that story. Joy Hopewell is a self-styled atheist who is a positivist, cynical and has pretensions to her intellectualism. She has nothing but contempt for what she considers the utterly fatuous and banal world of her mother. Joy's mother on the other hand is a positive thinker dedicated to philistine values. She is smug and self-satisfied optimist who appears incapable of more profound sentiment than that "Good Country People are the salt of the earth" (G.S., p. 279). The Bible salesman is the third type of character. According to Mrs Hopewell he is a representative of "Good Country People". He is apparently the essence of innocence and matches Mrs Hopewell's cliches with banal pieties.

Joy and her mother depict a contrast in characters. Joy is a young rebel with a Ph.D. in philosophy who apart
from being intellectual is cynical also. She has no
tolerance for her mother's mediocre mind and her common
place platitudes. She is estranged from her mother due
to her deformity and her hypersensitive nature. In her
mother's eyes she has never had "any normal good times"
(C.S., p. 274). Mrs Hopewell excuses Joy's attitude of
sullenness and rudeness because of her leg destroyed in a
hunting accident when Joy was ten. She identifies
Christianity with hypocrisy and this has driven her to
change from Joy to Hulga. Thus she has tried to create a
separate identity for herself. She has adopted the
attitude that there is "nothing to see" (C.S., p. 288).
But Miss O'Conner has proved that she has not succeeded in
becoming indifferent to her deformity. In addition to her
wooden leg she has a weak heart, hence she is frustrated
and has adopted a cynical attitude towards religion, parents
and her home. To the young and innocent Bible Salesman
her response is revulsion and impatience. Hulga wants to
seduce him and lead him to the realm of awareness undreamt
of by his innocence. But in the end it is she who receives
a shock by his cynical attitude and ideas of nihilism.
About Hulga Hopewell, David Eggenschwiler says, "Hulga is
in many ways a case study in repression and neurotic
compensation although she is not just that, as man is
never just a psychological case to the Christian Humanist."

Similar estranged relationship is portrayed by
Miss O'Conner in the case of Asbury Porter Fox and his mother in "The Enduring Chill". David Aiken finds in the portrayal of Asbury exaggerated characteristics of Joyce's Stephan Dedalus (Portrait and Ulysses). No doubt, there are a number of similarities in the characteristics of both the protagonists. Like Stephan Dedalus Asbury defies his family, his home, and his religion in the name of art. But Mrs O'Conner has portrayed Asbury's temperament and attitude with exaggerated reflections of Stephan's characteristics. In this connection David Aiken remarks "Omitting the epiphany of vocation in order to emphasize the revelations of self-knowledge, O'Connor settles the question of her hero as an artist before the story even begins, thus creating not the portrait of the artist as a young man but a portrait of a young man using art for his own purposes. Whereas Joyce maintains a dual, if uneven, focus between Stephan's vocation and personality, O'Connor focuses almost entirely on the childish self-centerededness of her protagonist."40

Asbury Fox is a pretentious young man whose dramatic coming home to die turns out badly. This "intellectual," is surrounded by earthly life of dairy cows at his mother's farm, but his vain intellect cannot be compromised by such animality. On the other hand while in New York he is not prepared to believe in the Oriental philosophy of his friend and give up his own
individuality. So he comes back home where he catches fever from drinking unpasteurized milk at his mother's farm. Thinking that he is going to die, he thinks of himself to be a tragic hero from a great work of art. "Death was coming to him legitimately, as a justification, as a gift from life. That was his greatest triumph." (C.S., p. 370). He thinks of himself to be an artist rebellious against an insensitive world. For him this chance is the "Unique tragedy of his death." (C.S., p. 360). But David Eggenschwiler says, "His unique tragedy is a trite third rate melodramatic prose poem." In fact, Miss O'Connor exposes him to be an indulgent child without any discipline who thinks himself to be at odds with the insensitive and materialistic world. But in his shallow defiance he is at odds with himself and God.

In "The Comforts of Home" Thomas is depicted as a historian who is writing about the first settlers in his country. His attitude towards life is not the same as his mother's. Although he does not believe in the devil, yet he lacks his mother's charity and compassion. Miss O'Connor seems to indicate that for Thomas who is interested in his personal comforts, writing of history is a futile exercise. Thomas believes in moderation and feels that excess of virtue is not justified. On the other hand his mother is a character of natural goodness, but she lacks the judgement and realistic understanding of evil. About the tendency
of such modern people Miss O'Connor says "One of the
tendencies of our age is to use the suffering of children
to discredit the goodness of God ....... In this pity we
mark our gain in sensibility and our loss in vision ......
In the absence of this faith now, we govern by tenderness."
(E.H., p. 226-227). The mother, too, is one such character
who governs by tenderness and one of those do-gooders and
social workers whose charity does not spring from faith in
God's love. She equates her charity towards the
nymphenarian star Drake (Sarah Han) with false compassion.
Thus Thomas is infuriated by this universal compassion
and charity. He thinks he has inherited reason without
ruthlessness from his father, and love of Good without
sentimentality from his mother. But Thomas is mistaken.
Because he does not believe in the devil, he fails to
recognize the real devil who sits in his mind as his dead
father's voice and makes him the victim of inner evil.
Sister Kathleen Feeley says that "O'Connor uses the cari-
caturists' device here in the sketch of the old man -- the
squatting father. The characters of this story seem to be
consciously overdram."

About techniques employed by Miss O'Connor for
portraying and revealing her characters, David Eggenschwiler
rightly says "Being honestly realistic about man's
condition, Miss O'Connor did not try to represent this
fully complex yet fully integrated state. Instead, she
explored the ways in which men destroy it, and she implied some causes of this self-destructiveness. Because she combined the satirist's sharp eye for folly with the humanist's sense of complexity, she understood that men used varied and devious means to escape the responsibility of being human. In her characters these attempted escapes vary from religious smugness to militant atheism, from lechery to disgust with flesh, from worship of social progress to longing for the past. 

In "Everything That Rises" Julian in spite of his pretensions of believing in social progress and liberation, had dreamt of the old traditional mansion as his mother had portrayed it. Both Julian and his mother pride themselves on knowing who they are. Mother always remembers that she is a descendent of the Godhighs and lives with that superior feeling. Julian prides himself on being an intellectual living in a changing world. He thinks of himself as having been sensitive, as having noticed their reduced circumstances. Thus he lives in the luxury of martyrdom and pretends to want a better and culturally richer life — one worthy of his aesthetic refinement. Moreover, he considers himself enlightened on the race question, and his mother's attitude towards changing times appalls him.

Mother on the other hand, although poor, is a typical Southern lady of the old order, overweight and
somewhat vain like many other widows in Miss O'Connor's fiction. She too like Thomas's mother (The Enduring Chill) makes excuses for Julian for his lack of ambition with usual aphorisms "You've only been out of school a year. Rome wasn't built in a day." (C.S., p. 406). She wants Julian to live up to his aristocratic background. But Julian adopts a superior attitude towards his mother by saying "True culture is in the mind, the mind." (C.S., p. 409). However, when the mother's self-assurance is broken by an affluent Negro woman wearing the same hat and travelling in the same bus, she pathetically goes back to her childhood home and remembers her Negro nurse. Julian too realizes for the first time his profound dependence on her. The characters try to be heroic but the story is as Carter Martin says an "ironic parody of the tragic situation." 44

This story is basically about the Southerners whose roots were torn apart during the integration of races. Miss O'Connor saw all these changes and tried to use these events and characters in her stories. 44 A. Orwell remarks about the situation in the bus that "The setting is very similar to that of the essay "Notes on the decline of Outrage" by James Dicky. Dicky observes that for the Southerner, bus "have been transformed into small uncomfortable rolling arenas wherein the forces hidden for a hundred years in the structure of his society threaten to break loose and play themselves out each time a bus
pulled away from a corner. Dicky's essay provides a fascinating parallel with the O'Connor story. About the conflict of Julian and his mother Rene Jordan says, "A son and his mother are engaged in mortal conflict. She is genteel poor, Southern, very old order, like a demented caricature of a Tennessee Williams heroine; he, in an agony of love-hate, is trying to stifle Mammy by rubbing her delicate nose in the raw, messy world of rising classes and painful convergence he has forced himself to accept."

VII

Another notable fixed family group in Miss O'Connor's character is that of grandfather and child, e.g., Mr Head and his grandson Nelson and Mr Mark Fortune and grand-daughter Mary Pitts Fortune. Mr Head of "The Artificial Rigger" is left with the responsibility of raising his grandson Nelson. Both Nelson and his grandfather suffer from the sin of pride. Mr Head thinks himself to be a true guide for the child, and is, thus, a stubborn and a self-sufficient man. Nelson, on the other hand, is proud of having been born in a city, and hence tries to be independent and superior to his grandfather. Irritated by his grandson's superiority, the old man wants to teach him the lesson about the evils of the city life. Having been brought up in the mountainous Georgia country, Nelson
had never even seen a Negro, but he insists that he must have seen many because he was born in Atlanta. On the train Mr Head tries to act as a true guide and tries to lord it over Nelson even to the point of demonstrating an ice-water cooler as if he had invented it (G.G., p. 256). On the train Mr Head tries to belittle Nelson at every stage, and to prove his ignorance he shows him a Negro passenger and asks him as to what that was. But later Mr Head himself loses his self-confidence when he forgets the lunch box in the train. However, he is still so full of self-love that later he even disowns his grandson when Nelson runs into a woman and upsets her fruit basket. The family ties are almost violated by his self-love and pride.

Miss O'Connor has proved that action of mercy can grow out of agony and on shedding the pride and self-righteousness. Only when both Nelson and his grand-father are confronted by a plaster statue of a Negro boy - the artificial nigger, that they are able to exchange mutual words of self-revelation and forgiveness. Both grand-father and grand-son are able to adopt a richer understanding with each other. Mr Head had considered himself superior to other people and specially to Negroes, but the pathetic statue of a Negro boy brings the bond of common agony between both of them. Mr Head thus confesses his personal sin of disdain by rejecting the attitude of discrimination.
so far adopted by him. This self-righteous man confident of his will and character comes to realize that his superiority is a delusion, thus he recognizes himself for what he really is.

In "A View of the Woods" Miss O'Connor has portrayed man who according to Mr David Eggenschwiler is a "Concupiscient man". He has defined concupiscence as endless desire, and says that "It shows man's incompleteness and his desire to be fulfilled by something outside of himself." He further says that "The concupiscent man may be the compulsive miser, or glutton or lecher who acts as though a limitless quantity of his pleasures would finally quieten his appetite." Mr Fortune has been portrayed as such a man by Miss O'Connor. In his greed for materialism and modern industrialization, he ultimately kills his grand-daughter who opposes him and refuses to let him spoil the view of woods from the front of their house. This greed is condemned by Miss O'Connor as egoism and ignorance of one's true ends. Mark Fortune is a proud and selfish man who thinks himself superior to his son-in-law, Pitts. But he thinks wrongly and except for his grand-daughter Mary Fortune Pitts, who looks like him, he hates the rest of the family. The old man and his grand-daughter not only look alike but have the same temperament of stubbornness, however, they have different values of Reality. The old man values it for material
benefit and the girl for the aesthetic benefit. He thinks he can always satisfy Mary Fortune by buying some trifle.

However, Mary Fortune is different from her grandfather that she has a sense of loyalty towards her own family whom her grandfather despises. In order to keep the Pitts dependent on him, he refuses to sell them the property on which they are living. The child on the other hand has roots with her own family and is loyal to them. She is loyal and stubborn to such an extent that even when her father beats her, she denies that she has ever been beaten by him. As an alter ego of her grandfather she says again and again "Nobody's ever beat me in my life and if anybody did, I'll kill him" (C.S., p. 340). Mark Fortune seeks to preserve his dignity as a Fortune by dominating the Pittses. What he finds commendable in Mary Fortune is her resembles to him. Therefore, when he wants to sell the front of his house to be turned in to a general store and gas station, he is unable to comprehend Mary Fortune's tenacities and opposition. The conflict comes out in the open because she does not want her parents to be deprived of the property as well as the view of the woods. But the old man is now bent upon teaching her a lesson for her obstinacy, and in the tussle they both die. It is the pride and stubbornness that brings about the death for both of them. For Mary Fortune the view of the woods is important, it is a symbol of hope; for Mark Fortune
materialism is more important.

Miss O'Connor's character - The Misfit of "A Good Man is Hard to Find" - is a pathological killer. Robert McCam calls him "a soul blasted by the sin of despair." The Misfit's despair is due to his belief in nothingness. David Hyman calls him a character of "Manly despair." He defines such a character as a person who "is intensely aware of the spiritual and human possibilities for heroism and for suffering. He is introspective, concerned ......... But he wills to be a self in complete disrelation to God." The Misfit is such a character. He has been convicted of murdering his father which he does not remember. After that despair descends on him to be followed by one meaningless act after another. He is unable to understand the problem of evil. The Misfit does not acknowledge any need for Redemption because he feels that life has already punished him more than he deserves, whereas others who deserved far more have got off without any punishment. He knows that by raising the dead Jesus threw everything off balance; therefore one has the choice either to follow Him or reject Him and follow the evil. But on the other hand he considers even crime meaningless and without any pleasure. He equates crime with taking a tyre off one's car.

Sister M. Bernette Quinn, O.S.F. says that "The Misfit has something about him of John Gay or Bertolt Brecht
relating the adventures of the underworld. The incongruity results from the fact that despite his crimes and abnormalities he is trying to live the "examined life" as his father long ago discerned, whereas the "average" family satirized by Miss O'Connor couldn't care less about an examined life. Evidently, like Chaucer's Pardoner, he is a fallen idealist, since at one time he was a Gospel singer though now he is the most heartless of killers."52 The Misfit's philosophy is clear. Because he "wasn't there" he couldn't "know", hence even though believing, he rejects the Lord and relies on himself.

By contrast to The Misfit's tormented nature, the reality of grandmother's pretensions and false values becomes evident. The grandmother believes that she is a Southern lady and thus puts on the art of genteel manners. Her false manners and genteel behaviour is stripped away when she begs The Misfit for her life. But for all absurdity, the reader feels sympathy and affection for her. While discussing grandmother's character with one of the teachers who informed Miss O'Connor that the Southern students liked the grandmother without understanding why, Miss O'Connor informed the teacher that "they all had grandmothers or great-aunts just like her at home, and they knew from personal experience, that the old lady lacked comprehension, but that she had a good heart." (ibid., p. 110).
The grandmother has a liveliness, curiosity and responsiveness that the other characters in the story seem to lack. She has a knack of telling stories to the children. She curls her grand-daughter's hair, and takes delight in watching her dance; she plays with the baby, sets him on her knees and talks to him with funny expressions on her face. But the family as a whole as portrayed by Miss O'Connor is dull, insensitive, and comic. About Miss O'Connor's talent for comic characterization Martha Stephens says that "The story's careful realism is nowhere better seen than in the lunch scene at Red Sam's barbecue palace. Red Sam's memorable help-mate, for instance, is closely drawn on the cheerless, complaining, vacant-eyed, fish-wife of the country Georgia road shop. Much of the charm of this comic characterization one may certainly lay to O'Connor's gift for folk speech."53

VIII

In her stories, Miss O'Connor tries to present a clear picture of the society, and depicts an actual picture of man as he is today. She, therefore, fills her canvass with a number of minor characters in contrast to the protagonist. Mrs Pritchard, Mrs Shortley and Mr's Freeman, the hired helpers of Mrs Cope, Mrs McIntyre and Mrs Hopewell respectively are such characters who
are portrayed in comic contrast to the farm owners. These minor characters do not have any recognized religious drive to believe in Christ. They are only concerned with themselves and are full of self-love. Mrs Fritchard is established in contrast to Mrs Cope as gossipy, suspicious, vulgar and morbidly fascinated by the calamities that Mrs Cope dislikes hearing about. Mrs Fritchard relishes the details of physical illness. But Mrs Fritchard is wiser than her farm-owner that she understands the realities of life. She knows that a boy of thirteen is equal in strength to men twice his age and says that the boys would strike after dark. Her prediction no doubt comes true.

Similarly in "The Displaced Person", Mrs Shortly's attitude towards life is different. Religion to her is for the weak, not for the strong, among whom she places herself. She is at first portrayed as the "giant wife" standing on "two tremendous legs" "surveying everything" (C.S., p. 194). She never considers herself trashy. Rather, she feels herself superior to the Negroes, and takes it upon herself to inform them that they might have to leave because of Mr Quizac, the D.P. In fact, she is a false prophet and starts reading from Apocalypse and the Prophets only when the refugee family from Europe arrives at the farm. She thinks that the refugee family Quizac's religion is not advanced, and ascribes to the Catholic Priest, Father Flynn and Mr Quizac dark plot
against righteousness. She wants to be delivered from the "stinking power of Satan". (C.S., p. 209). To Mrs Shortley Mr Quizac seems to be a monkey with a name like a bug. When she sees the vision, she utters her prophecy which becomes partly true for her own self. All along she had thought that it would be the niggers who would have to leave but actually it is Mrs Shortley's time which is short. The shock that Shortleys would be served with the notice is too much for her to bear, and this shock brings about her death in the car.

In "Good Country People" Mrs Freeman, the hired woman is similar to Mrs Pritchard, and she is established as the foil for the self-deluded Hulga. She is an all or nothing person. For her there is either forward or reverse - nothing in between. She considers herself to be an all knowing person. Like Mrs Pritchard she too is shown as taking keen interest in "details of secret infection, hidden deformities, assault upon children. Of diseases, she preferred lingering or incurable." (C.S., p. 275). Mrs Freeman is "the nosiest woman ever to walk on earth." (C.S., p. 272). If Hulga is ever rude to her she takes on strange resentments for days together and relishes irritating Hulga in her mother's absence. With her beady steel-pointed eyes she tries to penetrate behind Hulga's face as if to reach some secret fact. It is through her conversation with Mrs Hopewell that
Hulga's character is revealed.

Various types of characters are expertly handled by Miss O'Connor. Carter Martin has analyzed her characters in a few categories. Fallen condition of men appears in those who are either ignorant of grace, or they are too complacent and self-righteous. They are neither violently sinful nor perverse nor secretive. They are merely indifferent to the mystery of God. In *The Violent*, Rayber's father is an example of one such type. His description clearly indicates his religious ignorance. He was an insurance salesman who "wore a straw hat on the side of his head and smoked a cigar, and when you told him that his soul was in danger, he offered to sell you a policy against any contingency." (*The Violent*, p. 59). When Rayber as a child was kidnapped and baptized by old Tarwater, the older Rayber's reply was the height of insensitivity: "Great ..... Great ..... glad you got him fixed up Mason ..... one bath more or less won't hurt the bugger." (*The Violent*, p. 127). Rayber's wife is another such character who is insensitive to religion. She foresees her husband and son because their child Bishop is an idiot.

There is another category of characters who are deliberately disbelievers and cynics. Mr. Paradise in "The River" is in fact a Satan-figure who always goes to the faith healer Rev. Bevel Summer's meeting just to show that
the cancer over his ear has not been healed. Mr Paradise is a man who lacks conviction and faith. His ridicule of the itinerant preacher only makes the small boy who longs for Baptism more determined to achieve it. Asa Hawks is another such character in Miss Blood who has been portrayed as a pretender and a fake preacher. He does not have enough faith to blind himself as he had promised, and for this cowardice he blames Jesus, and becomes bitter and cynical.

About Miss O'Connor's characters Miss Dorothy McFarland says that, "Incongruity embodies for her a fundamental human reality - man's experience of himself as a creature of both flesh and spirit, a being that is rooted in nature but that longs to transcend nature. Most of Miss O'Connor's characters find this position intolerable and attempt to escape it in a variety of ways. Mr Shiftlet identifies the body with the house and spirit with an automobile and opts to flee with the automobile implicitly refusing the sufferings of existence in an earth bound body."55 Tom T. Shiftlet (The Life you Save...) is a drifter who like many of Miss O'Connor's characters used to be a Gospel Singer. He can talk like an angel though he acts like a devil. He adopts a number of roles. He arrives as a tramp at Mrs Crater's farm, but puts on a role of a Philosopher. He becomes a teacher and teaches Lucynell to speak her first word. When he restores the car and puts it in working order he thinks himself to be
Jesus who had raised the dead. Like a true prophet he utters pious words, but twists the key ideas of Redemption. His main purpose is to gain materialism, thus he keeps on trying various roles and poses to hide his essential incompleteness. However, he is not willing to accept the role of the husband, and therefore abandons Lucynell the idiot girl at a hamburger stand. On the way he tries to be a guide to a young hitch-hiker who jolts him by telling him the truth about himself and his mother. At Mrs Crater's farm Mr Shiflet arrives at sun set and his deformed arms form the shadow of a crooked cross. The crooked cross and the twilight are symbols of the devil whose secular counter-part he actually is.

Similarly, a number of Miss O'Connor's characters are evil and agents of the devil. Miss O'Connor believed in the principle of evil and admitted that she incorporates the devil so that he will be readily recognizable (H.B., p. 117). In this connection Carter Martin quotes the example of three boys in "A Circle in the Fire". He says that although the three boys are described in the end of the story as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and although in this manner they function as agents of God, this does not mean that their action of destroying the woods is good. Rather their function is based on the orthodox Christian belief that the actions of Satan are permitted by God for furtherance of his glory. What Carter Martin
tries to suggest is that the three boys are in fact agents of the devil and they take up this satanic work of destroying Mrs Cope's farm only to make her face the reality. But the most satanic character figures in The Violent. He is the devil himself who throughout the novel offers evil counsel to young Terwater. At first he takes on the form of a friendly voice, but later on he emerges as a stranger in the car. He is a tempter, denying his own existence by saying: "It ain't Jesus or the devil. It's Jesus or you." (The Violent, p. 32)."Marly Pointer in "Good Country People" is also one such character who has been believing in nothing since he was born. Like the devil who collects souls, Marly Pointer collects various objects like glasses and wooden legs from his victims.

If Miss O'Connor has made use of evil characters for furtherance of God's glory, then she has also used her talent to make use of a number of minor characters to suggest harmony and peacefulness that her protagonists lack. In "The Displaced Person" amid all the anxieties and greed, Father Flynn, the eighty-year-old priest has been portrayed as a gentle and a comic character. He stands open-mouthed in wonder before the peacock with its feathers spread and anticipates the second coming of Jesus. With loving care he gathers the feathers of the peacocks and feeds crumbs to them. He is portrayed as an unworlly man who has no conception of practical problems that bother Mr's McIntyre,
He is more at ease speaking about Redemption than about Mr Guizac and other farm hands. He always tries to swing the conversation back into his own paths. In the end when Mrs McIntyre is forsaken and left alone by all his farm hands, Father Flynn visits her once a week and explains the doctrines of the Church.

In the same story Miss O'Connor has used the character of Guizac as a means of revealing a Southern property owner's willful determination to save money by employing the most reliable, dependable and hardworking help. Robert Cole says that by lumping together "Poor white trash and niggers" as "sorry people": "The author contrasts Mrs McIntyre's moralistic apologies for what amounts to a greedy desire to get more for as little possible with largely mute, long-suffering blacks and the perplexed, agitated whites who are deeply offended by the shift of political balance on the farm." Robert Cole analyses Guizac's role in the story and further says: "Guizac may be symbolised as yankee Industrialist full of energy and determination. He is as disruptive as any civil right activist ever could be." In fact he is the most convincing Christ figure in O'Connor's characters. But Mrs Shortley thinks of him in non-human terms, likening him to bears, bugs and monstrous "Gobble hooks". Mrs McIntyre first considers him to be her salvation, thus establishing his role as the Christ figure, but later she too thinks of him
in non-human elements due to his integrationist policies. This leads to his fall from Mrs McIntyre's grace.

Miss Sharon Burns gives a proper analysis of Miss O'Connor's characters and places them into two broad categories: "Those like Hazel Mattes in Miss Blood, Francis Marion Tarwater in The Violent, and the Misfit in "A Good Man is Hard to Find," each of whom has based his life on a denial much like Carlyle's everlasting No, and those characters who have already established or inherited a comfortable niche in the order of the universe, a way of life insistent on the American work ethic. It is through these last characters that Flannery O'Connor demonstrates the limitations, the blindness, the unfeeling woodlessness of a life based solely on secular principles. Not only does hard work not pay off, it often leads to annihilation." However, Miss Martha Stephens holds a different view about Miss O'Connor's idea of portraying her people. She says: "The images of those people rise up so graphically before us as we read -- their manners, their speech are so cunningly done -- that we freely respond to their reality within the story. Yet at the same time, one is dimly aware that the author is trying to make her stories say something, prove something about life, to which O'Connor wanted to push us to -- that truth about life that she wanted and force us to grant -- was that these people represent even at their comic worst,
the norm of modern society. And one's own experience will not support such a view.\textsuperscript{60} Granville Hicks who was one of the first critics to pay attention to Miss O'Connor's work and a great admirer of her work also seemed to be puzzled by Miss O'Connor's lack of feeling for her do-gooders, self-satisfied and smug characters. He says: "I was devastated by the fate of the reformer in "The Lame" but Miss O'Connor appears to believe that he got what he deserved.\textsuperscript{61} But Mr. Nick's viewpoint has been rightly refuted by a number of critics with the argument that Miss O'Connor had a peculiar vision of life and that she wanted to get this vision across to her readers.

IX

Apart from the characters already discussed, Miss O'Connor uses a number of black characters in her stories. However, her black characters are one-dimensional. She does not go deep into Negro characters as she cannot portray them from the inside. During her years of graduate studies she wrote "Wild Cat" which deals with an aged blind Negro. O'Connor never again wrote a story with Negroes as major characters. She herself said, "I don't understand them the way I do white people. In my stories they are seen from the outside."\textsuperscript{62} But Miss O'Connor manages to suggest psychological involvement and mutual dependency between blacks and whites. In an interview with
C. Ross Mulkins she said: "The uneducated Southern Negro is not the clown he’s made out to be. He’s a man of very elaborate manners and great formality, which he uses superbly for his own protection and to insure his own privacy ...... The South has to evolve a way of life in which the two races can live together with mutual forbearance. You don’t form a committee to do this or pass a resolution; both races have to work it out the hard way." (Fink, p. 234).

Although she portrays the Negro characters as ignorant, lazy and comic, shiftless farm-hands as in "A Circle in the Fire" or lying pilferers like Sulk in "The Displaced Person", she is not making fun of these characters. She uses the metaphor of the Negro as a divine humility. Claire Kahane says: "O'Connor appropriates the ready-made racial stereotype using Negro repeatedly as a metaphor of redemptive humility. By transforming this American attitude of victimizing the blacks into a symbol of the condition of Everyman, by universalizing their victim-hood O'Connor diffuses the potentially explosive social consequences of black rage and white guilt. Symbol of victimized nigger becomes any miserable person, and she creates a common equality albeit an equality of human helplessness."63 However, such a symbol has been used only in a few cases: Plaster Statue of a Negro boy in "Artificial Nigger" and character of Powell in "A Circle in the Fire". Mostly Miss O'Connor has used the Negroes to
ridicule the false values of Southern farm owners.

In "The Displaced Person" after Shortley's departure, Mrs McIntyre tells the old Negro hand "we can get along without them.... We have seen them come and seen them go." On that the old man Astor replies "And me & you .... is still here" (C.S., p. 214). Later she tells Mr Guizac "I will not have my niggers upset. I cannot run this place without my niggers. I can run it without you....." (C.S., p. 223). Mrs McIntyre is concerned with preserving her power and place, and for that she has to depend on her niggers, although she knows that Sulk has been stealing the turkeys. Actually Mrs McIntyre depends on the blacks to mirror her power. But in the end Mrs McIntyre is left dependent on the care of a black woman.

The flattery of Negro farm hands in "Revelation", although ridiculous, shows the worthlessness of Mrs Turpin and reverses the roles by turning her into their child and thus making her powerless. She too had been depending on them to prove her authority. The story "The Enduring Chill" does not revolve around the two Negro boys, but they are important in the story as a foil to Asbury and to ridicule this educated, liberal integrationist. Asbury wants to have a significant experience of communion with the Negro farm-hands but in fact he wants
to outrage her mother's sensibility. So he wants them to be brought to his bedside. However, Miss O'Connor portrays the niggers as dumb and ignorant, and to Asbury's statement that he is dying, they insist on repeating, "You certly does look well" (C.S., p. 379-380).

In "Judgement Day" Negro characters have greater roles. The friendship of Coleman and Mr Tanner has been dealt with delicately, but Mr Tanner is still the master and Coleman serves him. The Negro actor and his wife living next door to Tanner's daughter in New York are no doubt important to the plot. It is through the Black actor's violence towards Tanner, Miss O'Connor has been able to depict the changing norms in the society. Similarly in "Everything that Rises Must Converge", the Black mother and son serve the purpose of showing the picture of changing South. Julian's mother wants the Blacks to "rise, yes, but on their own side of fence." (C.S., p. 406). But her pride is shattered by the violence of the well-dressed Black woman passenger travelling in the same bus. About Miss O'Connor's depiction of Black characters Melvin G. Williams says: "There has to be a certain unintended irony in all this, Flannery O'Connor, evangelical catholic writer, attacker of spiritual blindness - could she have been blind to the separate - yet - unequal status she affords her Black characters? One would doubt that she is either
a proud bigot like Julian or a patronizing figure like his mother, yet still she has populated this story with Black characters who serve only functional roles, who illuminate her white characters while not revealing themselves. Or to change the metaphor, O'Connor uses Black catalysts only to precipitate a white reaction.\(^64\)

However, in this connection it may be stated that Miss O'Connor could not use Black characters as main protagonist in her stories because being a Southern White she was unable to probe the characters fully and would not have been able to make them live. On her mother's farm she came across a number of farm-hands, so it was easy for her to deal with such characters. She herself says "The writer can choose what he writes about but he cannot choose what he is able to make live..." (M.M., p. 27). She could only make characters like Astor and Sulk live in her stories.

\[X\]

Many critics have said that Miss O'Connor's characters do not have free will. They say that when the characters accept grace they sacrifice their freedom and individual identities. Thomas M. Lorch finds in Miss O'Connor's stories situations when her characters are faced either with the choice of God or a deforming,
self-destructive godlessness. He argues that Miss O'Connor imposes upon her characters the prior assumption that man is innately religious. It is this assumption which causes her to offer her characters only two choices: submission to an all demanding God or immersion in soul-rotting evil. Lorch further argues that her characters have to destroy their own personality to achieve God. 65 Louis D. Rubin Jr. has discussed Tarwater's character and finds a void deeper than the one that can be filled by religious faith. He says that Tarwater actually needs love and affection, companionship and guidance which he is unable to get, hence he struggles between the two choices. But he also says that "If the struggle within young Tarwater is between whether or not to take up the prophetic mission bequeathed him by the old man, and if in attempting to negate the mission he only succeeds in trapping himself into acquiescence then it seems to me quite arguable that it is not his own free will that makes him do so." 66 But Mr. Rubin himself does not actually agree with this viewpoint and gives an altogether different meaning to the struggle; on the other hand he affirms that if the above hypothesis is correct then Tarwater is unable to say no; whereas Miss O'Connor speaks of "man so free that with his last breath he can say no." (M.E., p. 132). About Tarwater's character Gilbert Muller says that "Trying to exert his free will and to avoid his apostolic destiny, he adopts a philosophy of violent
and impulsive action designed to assert independence from his silent adversary .... He is free to work out his destiny, a point which Miss O'Connor stressed in one of her essays."67 Preston M. Browning has also discussed this point in his book Elly-Mae O'Connor and finds complexity in the free will of Miss O'Connor's characters. He says that "The ultimate implication of Miss O'Connor's treatment of freedom appears to be that man, relentlessly pursued by the Hound of Heaven, has no meaningful choice since what purports to be free choice is really a decision for a God who commands violent self-abnegation and madness or for the nothingness of evil and self-destruction."68 However, Mr Browning rightly admits that what Miss O'Connor suggests is that in an age which has tended to discount altogether the need for redemption as conceived by a Christian understanding of existence, a novelist whose vision is Christian, "may well be forced to take over more violent means to get his vision across to his hostile audience" (H.E., 33–34). But David Eggenschwiler has given an apt definition of man's freewill. He has quoted various examples of Kierkegaard's philosophy that man's true freedom is in his acceptance of God and of his own essence. He says: "Miss O'Connor forms her characters convincingly out of an awareness of man's dialectical nature and out of belief that the truly free act does not violate man's essential self nor is it irrelevant
to the existential self of the person. 69 In this connection it may be argued that to a certain extent all her characters are free. The Missfit is free to choose his own path, and Rayber has gained his freedom after Bishop's death. But he is all alone in an utter void. He wanted to achieve freedom from the old man, from his love for Bishop, from Tarwater also, but for his rational and secular freedom he pays a high price. Hence it is clear that Miss O'Connor took a very skeptical view of what is achievable in the way of freedom, on the basis of a secularist ordering of human life.
Notes and References

1. Kazin, Bright Book of Life: American Novelists from Hemingway toMailer, p. 34.
6. Ibid.
8. Ibid.; p. 75.


20. Ibid., p. 64.


23. Ibid.


29. Walters, Flannery O'Connor, p. 15.


31. Ibid., p. 517.


34. C. Hugh Holman, "Her Rue with a Difference," The Added Dimension, p. 79.

49. Ibid., p. 72.
57. Cole, Flannery O'Connor's South, p. 27.
58. Ibid., p. 28.