The basic paradox of Christian orthodoxy underlies the fiction of Flannery O'Connor and J.F. Powers. The role of violence in redemption, inherent in the most crucial event of Christianity moves forward in time from the first Good Friday, into contemporary reality in their stories. The transforming power of grace, in apparently negative aspects of life, finds expression in these two writers, in modes of fiction that arrest attention. They express the paradoxical pattern of grace, working in the lives of men, in terms of Pauline doctrine. The foolish are chosen to confound the wise, the weak and despised to confound the mighty.

The present study contributes to the wealth of existing O'Connor criticism as an analysis of her fiction from a basically religious perspective. It also draws well-deserved critical attention to one of the most meticulous modern craftsmen of the short story. Powers has been badly neglected in literary and academic circles. His collections, containing award-winning stories, have long fallen out of print. A pioneer study of Powers' short fiction supports and contributes perspective to analysis of the work of Flannery O'Connor.