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Flannery O'Connor's Murderous Imagination:
Southern Ladyhood in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find"

"A Good Man Is Hard to Find" ranks high on the short list for most violent finales in American literature. Held at gunpoint, an elderly grandmother clutches her handkerchief and blurts out one last cry of despair: "I know you wouldn't shoot a lady!" (*The Complete Stories* 131–32). Leave it to Flannery O'Connor to amuse readers by pumping a granny full of lead, then handing over her pet cat to the man behind the trigger. It is Southern gothic at its best, and O'Connor pulls the whole thing off with deadpan humor.

Apparently certain feminist critics take O'Connor completely seriously. Sarah Gordon, for one, winces from the violence targeted at the grandmother and her female characters more generally.[1] To her credit she spots the stock image for womanhood "embedded in the grandmother's consciousness, preoccupied as she is with ladylike appearance and with Tara-like plantations." While Gordon admits that "O'Connor was rebelling against that silly image," what she fails to grasp is the grotesque violence has more to do with hostility to clichés than cruelty to women (Gordon 13). By the 1950s the Southern belle had circulated widely as an iconic figure in both literary and popular culture. The grandmother's unseemly exit, more than anything else, bids good riddance to a worn-out type for fictional heroines.

O'Connor works inside conventional Southern narratives and then breaks their rules from within. First, foremost, and above all else, we must read "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" as a parody (not really, but bear with me). To do so, let us step away from O'Connor for a moment and look at M. M. Bakhtin's reading of the sonnets from *Don Quixote*:

> Take, for example, the parodic sonnets with which *Don Quixote* begins. Although they are impeccably structured sonnets, we could never possibly assign them to the sonnet genre. [...] In a parodied sonnet, the sonnet form is not a genre at all; that is, it is not the form of a whole but rather *the object of representation*: the sonnet here is the *hero of the parody*. In a parody on the sonnet, we must first of all recognize a sonnet, recognize its form, its specific style, its manner of seeing, its manner of selecting from and evaluating the world—the world view of the sonnet, as it were. A parody may represent and ridicule these distinctive features of the sonnet well or badly, profoundly or superficially. But in any case, what results is not a sonnet, but rather the *image of the sonnet*. (Bakhtin 51)

O'Connor aims for a similar effect with the grandmother's detour through backwoods Georgia. Her character design retrofits Southern ladyhood as "an object of representation," a loaded image that ridicules what would have been the South's sacred view of women. Southern belles were the darlings of the antebellum world; they were polite, charming, and most important, white. In theory white women embodied all the virtues of a patriarchal culture built on honor and chivalry.[2] After the Civil War, however, popular novels and films that romanticized the Old South adopted the Southern belle as a tragic symbol for a fallen world.

"A Good Man Is Hard to Find" mocks these humorless works by reimagining the Southern lady as a comic heroine in a parody. A long tale of courtship the grandmother spins to entertain her grandchildren, John Wesley and June Star, summarizes a handful of themes that crop up elsewhere in the story.

> The grandmother said she would tell them a story if they would keep quiet. When she told a story, she rolled her eyes and waved her head and was very dramatic. She said once when she was a maiden lady she had been courted by a Mr. Edgar Atkins Teagarden from Jasper, Georgia. She said he was a very good-looking man and a gentleman and that he brought her a watermelon every Saturday afternoon with his initials cut in it, E. A. T. Well, one Saturday, she said, Mr. Teagarden brought the watermelon and there was nobody at home and he left it on the front porch and returned in his buggy to Jasper, but she never got the watermelon, she said, because a nigger boy ate it when he saw the initials, E. A. T.! This

> story tickled John Wesley's funny bone and he giggled and giggled but June Star didn't think it was any good. She said she wouldn't marry a man that just brought her a watermelon on Saturday. The grandmother said she would have done well to marry Mr. Teagarden because he was a gentleman and had bought Coca-Cola stock when it first came out and that he had died only a few years ago, a very wealthy man. (120)

To begin with, her wistful anecdote is a sendup of Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie*. Amanda Wingfield regales her children, Tom and Laura, with a timeworn tale of rival "gentlemen callers" jockeying for her hand in marriage: "One Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain—your mother received—*seventeen!*—gentlemen callers! Why, sometimes there weren't enough chairs to accommodate them all. We had to send the nigger over to bring in the folding chairs from the parish house" (Williams 403). Like the grandmother, Amanda fails to notice her comfort depends on black labor. Another resemblance involves their respective suitors. As Amanda remembers it, "That Fitzhugh boy went North and made a fortune—came to be known as the Wolf of Wall Street! He had the Midas touch, whatever he touched he turned to gold!" (Williams 404). In both cases, the narrative pivots from Old South honor and chivalry to New South buying and selling. Mr. Teagarden, moreover, earns his fortune by investing in Atlanta's homegrown corporate giant, Coca-Cola. Most significant of all, though, Amanda and the grandmother picture their missed opportunities to land husbands as the stuff of tragic romance.[3] From an ironic distance, O'Connor, as we shall see, spotlights such feats of historical distortion, sizing up the Technicolor take most deeply embedded in American popular culture.

The story opens as the grandmother badgers her son, Bailey, for dragging the family on a vacation to Florida, where a serial killer is "aloose from the Federal Pen" (117). Before they set off on their terminal journey, we are told,

> The old lady settled herself comfortably, removing her white cotton gloves and putting them up with her purse on the shelf in front of the back window. The children's mother still had on slacks and still had her head tied up in a green kerchief, but the grandmother had on a navy blue straw sailor hat with a bunch of white violets

> on the brim and a navy blue dress with a small white dot in the print. Her collars and cuffs were white organdy trimmed with lace and at her neckline she had pinned a purple spray of cloth violets containing a sachet. In case of an accident, anyone seeing her dead on the highway would know at once that she was a lady. (118)

A generation gap sets the grandmother apart from the other family members. Her formal dress code for traveling appears excessive to the point of being ludicrous, especially next to her daughter-in-law's modest "slacks" and "green kerchief." Although the family shuts down her first attempt at rerouting the trip, she nevertheless derails their vacation by leading them on a wild-goose chase for "an old plantation that she had visited in this neighborhood once when she was a young lady" (123). At one point, her grandson asks, "Where is the plantation?" and she answers, "Gone with the Wind . . . Ha. Ha." (120). Her casual reference to *Gone with the Wind* accomplishes three things. First of all, it debunks the plantation myth. Hollywood films like *Gone with the Wind* imagined the antebellum plantation as an idyllic estate where happy-go-lucky slaves lived in harmony with their benign masters and mistresses. Such sentimental portraits of the Old South largely ignored the problems of slavery and racism. A closer look at the grandmother's formal attire delivers O'Connor's subtle riff on the plantation myth. Her garments are coordinated by color: the violets on her hat, the print on her dress, her collars, cuffs, and cotton gloves are all white. Taken as a whole, the pattern underscores the grandmother's whitewashed nostalgia for the Old South. As Patricia Yeager explains in her book *Dirt and Desire*, white Southern women's writing "creates bizarre and frequent emblems for white southerners' racial blindness in images of fractured or scattered whiteness, in scenes filled with partial bodies, cotton lint, flour dust, displaced snow, or facial masking" (*Dirt and Desire* xii).

The grandmother's reaction to another point of interest from the roadside clues the reader in on her racial blindness:

> "Oh look at the cute little pickaninny!" she said and pointed to a Negro child standing in the door of a shack. "Wouldn't that make a picture, now?" she asked and they all turned and looked at the little Negro out of the back window. He waved.
>
> "He didn't have any britches on," June Star said.

> "He probably didn't have any," the grandmother explained. "Little niggers in the country don't have things like we do. If I could paint, I'd paint that picture," she said.
>
> The children exchanged comic books. (119)

The grandmother—not unlike Scarlett O'Hara from *Gone with the Wind*—takes for granted that she participates in a culture of violence and neglect. The diminutive "pickaninny" was often used to describe a black child too young to be a productive picker in the cotton fields. Yeager claims the "child is bottomless in a system where his parents' labor is designed to feed and clothe a dominant white culture" ("The Aesthetics of Torture" 202). More to the point, the grandmother gazes at the boy through the rear window with her white gloves resting on the shelf above the backseat. The contrast between her cotton gloves and the britchesless child is jarring and betrays her privileged position as a white woman. Yeager reminds us that "In reworking the image of the southern lady—in creating her grotesque or giant antitype—white women writers do more than protest the burdens of ladyhood. Their grotesque heroines help bring the hard facts of southern racism and sexism into focus" (*Dirt and Desire* 128–29). White women in the South, as long as they viewed their role as sacred, were complicit in the deeply ingrained system of inequality along lines of race and class. For O'Connor to rebel against the South's (mis)definition of women was also to rebel against the superiority and privilege of the white upper class.

What is striking about the grandmother's response is not just her description of the child as the subject for a painting, but also the way the windshield squares her view from the backseat. She instructs the other members of the family to look backwards. Faulkner aficionados cannot help but wonder whether O'Connor had read Jean-Paul Sartre's essay on *The Sound and the Fury*. "Faulkner's vision of the world," Sartre writes, "can be compared to that of a man sitting in an open car and looking backwards. At every moment, formless shadows, flickerings, faint tremblings and patches of light rise up on either side of him, and only afterwards, when he has a little perspective, do they become trees and men and cars" (Sartre 267). The grandmother bears the same burden of Southern history as Faulkner's characters, but her glance backwards is severely compromised by her having seen

Gone with the Wind. Yeager, in her reading of Eudora Welty's *Delta Wedding*, observes,

> Often we learn little or nothing about the black characters who float through white southern stories—except for their atmospheric density. [...] African Americans can always be separated out in Welty's story, not only because of the constancy and degree of their labor but because of their habit of fading away; they inhabit novelistic worlds that can change them, in the twinkling of an eye, from a character into an atmosphere. (Yeager 68)

Blissfully ignorant of her bigotry, the grandmother converts the black child into an atmosphere. A glass panel frames the passing scenery, separating her from what she sees as a racial caricature set against an idyllic landscape. In addition to dismantling the plantation myth, the allusion to *Gone with the Wind* reconstructs the Old South legend as a mediated representation. Perhaps the grandmother thinks not in terms of a canvas and palette but rather a projector and the silver screen when she asks, "Wouldn't that make a picture, now?"

Before name-checking *Gone with the Wind*, O'Connor sets up the conflict as a generational clash between the origins of the Old South and midcentury pop mythology. The family trip begins in Atlanta, the city most identified with the New South creed of commerce and the host for the movie premiere of *Gone with the Wind*. Worldviews collide when the grandmother, after harassing her son for speeding, calls attention to "interesting details of the scenery: Stone Mountain; the blue granite that in some places came up to both sides of the highway; the brilliant red clay banks slightly streaked with purple; and the various crops that made rows of green lace-work on the ground" (119). A granite outcropping outside Atlanta, Stone Mountain commemorates the Confederacy with an etching of Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis, and Stonewall Jackson. The younger generation could not care less: "The children were reading comic magazines and their mother had gone back to sleep" (119).

To steer clear of the Misfit, the grandmother proposes an alternative route to "visit some of her connections in east Tennessee and she was seizing every chance to change Bailey's mind" (117). Florida, because of its remote location and relatively small population, saw limited action during the Civil War. Tennessee, on the other hand,

endured more battles than any other Confederate state except Virginia. A proud Southerner, the grandmother is appalled by John Wesley and June Star's indifference toward their roots:

> "Let's go through Georgia fast so we won't have to look at it much," John Wesley said.
>
> "If I were a little boy," said the grandmother, "I wouldn't talk about my native state that way. Tennessee has the mountains and Georgia has the hills."
>
> "Tennessee is just a hillbilly dumping ground," John Wesley said, "and Georgia is a lousy state too."
>
> "You said it," June Star said.
>
> "In my time," said the grandmother, folding her thin veined fingers, "children were more respectful of their native states and their parents and everything else. People did right then." (119)

The grandmother insists the modern world lacks moral virtues. Her generation "did right" by respecting ancestors and origins. Her grandchildren's cutting remarks, meanwhile, imply her values are obsolete.

The Compsons and the Snopeses in William Faulkner, the DuBois and the Kowalskis in Tennessee Williams—the Old South versus the New South is almost a set piece for Southern Renaissance writers. More often than not, literature by white male authors featured the Southern belle as a tragic heroine caught at the center of an irreconcilable conflict between past and present. This is not to say Faulkner and Williams romanticized antebellum life. Both writers exposed the hypocrisies of the Old South, and yet there was a tendency among Southern modernists to imbue family sagas with tragic depth.

O'Connor's point of departure starts with deconstructing cinematic representations of the Old South in consumer culture. Her unsparing swipe at *Gone with the Wind* effects a complete reversal in her story's scaffolding. The Confederate heroes, as idolized by the grandmother, prove just as synthetic, homogenized, and commercialized as the superheroes admired by John Wesley and June Star.[4] Scott Romine argues *Gone with the Wind* "reproduces Tara as a site of *productive nostalgia*":

> Tara stands positioned, as a kind of ur-simulacrum, at the threshold of the South's entrance into the culture industry and its

> subsidiaries—the heritage industry, the nostalgia industry, the tourist industry, and so forth—by distinctively mixing memory and desire. More specifically, *Gone with the Wind* enacts—and in enacting, constitutes—the commodification of southern culture, reproducing the South not as *home* (inhabited place), but as *homesickness*, as an object of nostalgia in both the spatial and temporal sense. (Romine 28)

Even if the grandmother had stumbled on the plantation rather than crossing paths with the Misfit, her view of antebellum history would not have been stripped of all nostalgia. According to Jean Baudrillard, there are no originals, only copies, or what he calls simulacra.[5] Once the grandmother has seen *Gone with the Wind*, it becomes impossible for her to see a plantation without the filter of the movie. Tara literally colors her vision.[6] Or as Romine bluntly puts it, "At Tara, there are no natives or insiders, only tourists" (Romine 30).

Last but not least, it is with the allusion to *Gone with the Wind* that Southern ladyhood ceases to be an essential gender role and begins to resemble instead a dramatic role from David O. Selznick's 1939 blockbuster. O'Connor's characterization showcases a highly stylized performance of gender. At the beginning of the story, readers assume her traditional upbringing schooled the grandmother in ladylike behavior. But despite her nostalgia for the Southern past, she turns out to be a canned imitation of Scarlett O'Hara and Melanie Wilkes. She is, in other words, a copy.[7] Judith Butler draws on the concept of parody to explain the performative nature of gender.

> The notion of gender parody defended here does not assume that there is an original which such parodic identities imitate. Indeed, the parody is *of* the very notion of an original; [...] so gender parody reveals that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without an origin. To be more precise, it is a production which, in effect—that is, in its effect—postures as imitation. This perpetual displacement constitutes a fluidity of identities that suggests an openness to resignification and recontextualization; parodic proliferation deprives hegemonic culture and its critics of the claim to naturalized or essentialist gender identities. Although the gender meanings taken up in these parodic styles are clearly part of hegemonic, misogynist culture, they are nevertheless denatural-

> ized and mobilized through their parodic recontextualization. As imitations which effectively displace the meaning of the original, they imitate the myth of originality itself. (Butler 176)

Gender parody, in this case, demystifies the South's sacred view of women, after which the grandmother fashions herself. Her affectations are an act. By no means are the origins of her ladylike behavior originary. Instead she imitates big-screen Southern belles who themselves are performers; that is, Scarlett O'Hara and Melanie Wilkes are "imitation[s] without an origin." (Vivien Leigh and Olivia de Havilland, after all, are British!) "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" repackages the Southern belle as a role available to every consumer for the price of a movie ticket. Thus, O'Connor's hyperbolic image of Southern ladyhood empties the feminine ideal of any original meaning and, in doing so, imitates "the myth of originality itself."

The climactic face-off with the Misfit further expands on the imitation motif. Stranded on the roadside, the grandmother flags down a passing motorist for assistance. Once she recognizes the Misfit from the newspaper, Bailey mutters "something to his mother that shocked even the children."

> "Lady," [the Misfit] said, "don't you get upset. Sometimes a man says things he don't mean. I don't reckon he meant to talk to you thataway."
>
> "You wouldn't shoot a lady, would you?" the grandmother said and removed a clean handkerchief from her cuff and began to slap at her eyes with it.
>
> The Misfit pointed the toe of his shoe into the ground and made a little hole and then covered it up again. "I would hate to have to," he said.
>
> "Listen," the grandmother almost screamed, "I know you're a good man. You don't look a bit like you have common blood. I know you must come from nice people!"
>
> "Yes mam," he said, "finest people in the world." (127)

The grandmother hams up her role as a damsel in distress, with the purpose of fooling her would-be murderer into sympathy. Ironically enough, the Misfit, not Bailey, acts the part of the gentleman. He honorably defends her from another man's insults and politely addresses her

as "mam." To top it all off, he stands bare-chested while exchanging courtesies until his henchmen, Hiram and Bobby Lee, do away with Bailey and emerge from the woods "dragging a yellow shirt with bright blue parrots in it" (130). Having the Misfit slip on her son's shirt is another exquisitely ironic touch. The shirt's pattern is symbolically important: parrots, known for imitating what they hear, represent the grandmother and the Misfit's shared tendency to imitate. His show of gallantry is a menacing travesty of courtly behavior, for there is no doubt he is a psychopath on a killing spree. With so much role-playing in this scene, Old South codes of conduct are put on display as a masquerade that barely conceals the horrific violence beneath the surface. All of which is to say, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" lets readers have it both ways: even as we see through the sham of the Old South, we see it miraculously reinvented as a construction—and not a reflection—of traditional Southern values.

O'Connor has little interest in what passes for realism in fiction, and surely it is no accident that the grandmother is the only victim whose murder does not happen off the page. Standard readings ground the dénouement in O'Connor's Catholic faith.[8] The grandmother's spiritual epiphany occurs when she stares down the man who slaughtered her family and gasps, "Why you're one of my babies. You're one of my own children!" (132). She discovers that the possibility for redemption exists in all people. Even a diabolic monster like the Misfit has the potential to be "a good man." But as O'Connor wryly objects in "The Catholic Novelist in the Protestant South," "Catholic discussions of novels by Catholics are frequently ridiculous because every given circumstance of the writer is ignored except his Faith" (*Mystery and Manners* 195).

The last scene is open to another interpretation if we consider O'Connor a literary descendant of the Southern Renaissance and her protagonist an irreverent spoof of characters like Caddy Compson, Amanda Wingfield, and Blanche DuBois. Murdering the grandmother (poor gal, I know) radically revises the trope of the Southern belle as a tragic figure. O'Connor admitted to suffering the anxiety of influence when she compared writing in the shadow of Faulkner to stalling her mule and wagon on the same track as the Dixie Limited.[9] "Ancient parody," according to Bakhtin, "was free of any nihilistic denial. It was not, after all, the heroes who were parodied, nor the Trojan War

and its participants; what was parodied was only the epic heroization; not Hercules and his exploits but their tragic heroization" (Bakhtin 55). By the same measure, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" parodies neither white womanhood nor the Old South. For a writer aware of the towering presence of Faulkner and Williams, casting the Southern belle in a tragic role was an artistic dead end. To make room for her own writing, O'Connor mercilessly ridiculed what authors before her treated with a straight face.

Kicking off her debut collection with the title story was a characteristically salty move on O'Connor's part. Because of her close ties with Allen Tate, Caroline Gordon, and the Agrarians, too often she is lumped in with the conservative school of Southern authors. What sometimes gets overlooked is the innovation in *A Good Man Is Hard to Find*. Tate famously said, "With the war of 1914–1918, the South re-entered the world—but gave a backward glance as it stepped over the border: that backward glance gave us the Southern renascence, a literature conscious of the past in the present" (Tate 272). But whereas the high modernists typically wrote about the South in decline, O'Connor quoted this same narrative with a smirk. Her twisted act of literary insurrection, while it did include a backward glance, was in fact supremely cutting-edge.[10] Only by knocking off the Southern belle could she steer her mule and wagon ahead of the approaching curve down the track.

NOTES

1. For more straight-faced commentary on gender in O'Connor's fiction, turn to Katherine Hemple Prown's *Revising Flannery O'Connor: Southern Literary Culture and the Problem of Female Authorship* (Charlottesville, VA: UP of Virginia, 2001). Prown blames O'Connor's mentor Allen Tate and his fellow Agrarians for her apparent misogyny. "Erasure of the female," she asserts, "became, finally, one of the governing forces behind Fugitive/Agrarian discourses on literature and literary criticism and functioned as perhaps the strongest influence on the development of O'Connor's aesthetic sensibilities" (Prown 34).
2. A finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award, Bertram Wyatt-Brown's *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (Oxford: Oxford

UP, 1983) is required reading on the subject of Southern culture before the Civil War.

3. To be fair, Tom's cynical attitude toward his mother's rose-colored memories points up her habit of romanticizing the past. Even so, the overall tone in *The Glass Menagerie* remains quite earnest and wholly tragic.
4. O'Connor grumbled about Hollywood's commodification of a monocultural myth in her essay "The Regional Writer": "The present state of the South is one wherein nothing can be taken for granted, one in which our identity is obscured and in doubt. In the past, the things that have seemed to many to make us ourselves have been very obvious things, but now no amount of nostalgia can make us believe they will characterize us much longer. Prophets have already been heard to say that in twenty years there'll be no such thing as Southern literature. It will be ironical indeed if the Southern writer has discovered he can live in the South and the Southern audience has become aware of its literature just in time to discover that being Southern is relatively meaningless, and that soon there is going to be precious little difference in the end-product whether you are a writer from Georgia or a writer from Hollywood, California" (*Mystery and Manners* 57).
5. The degrees separating O'Connor and Baudrillard (*Simulacra and Simulation*. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor, MI: U of Michigan P, 1995) are fewer than one might suppose. Baudrillard's theories about media and image culture borrowed heavily from Marshall McLuhan, a Roman Catholic whom O'Connor read and recommended to a friend, insisting, "To be understood, it has to be read completely and slowly, as McLuhan has a packed style" (*The Habit of Being* 173–174). Both O'Connor and McLuhan, in turn, read and admired the Catholic philosopher and Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.
6. My hypothetical scenario owes a debt to Don DeLillo's *White Noise*, specifically the scene with the most photographed barn in America. "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," in this context, has far more in common with this postmodernist classic than with the world-weary literature from the modernist period.
7. T. Williams's character sketch for Amanda Wingfield in the production notes for *The Glass Menagerie* hints at just how shopworn the image of the Southern belle had become by 1945: "A little woman of great but confused vitality clinging frantically to another time and place. Her characterization must be carefully created, not copied from type" (395). *Gone with the Wind* dominates popular memory today, making it easy to forget other major studio productions that romanticize the South such as *Jezebel* (1938) and Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes* (1941), both directed by William Wyler and starring Bette Davis. The definitive adaptation of the Broadway musical *Show Boat* (1936) cast Irene Dunne as Magnolia Hawkes in a song-and-dance romance along the Mississippi River, with Hattie McDaniel in another supporting role. Even Shirley Temple cashed in on Civil War–era nostalgia with *The Little Colonel* (1935) and *The Littlest Rebel* (1935), featuring Evelyn Venable and Karen Morley, respectively, in ladylike performances. By the time O'Connor got around to writing her story, Jane Wyman had starred as Amanda in a dreadful adaptation

of *The Glass Menagerie* (1951) and Vivien Leigh had reprised her Southern belle act as Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951).

8. Frederick Asal's *Flannery O'Connor: The Imagination of Extremity* (Athens, GA: UGA P, 1982); Richard H. Brinkmeyer's *The Art and Vision of Flannery O'Connor* (Baton Rouge, LA: LSU P, 1993); Richard Giannone's *Flannery O'Connor and the Mystery of Love* (Bronx, NY: Fordham UP, 1999); and Susan Srigley's *Flannery O'Connor's Sacramental Art* (Notre Dame, IN: U of Notre Dame P, 2004) hardly scratch the surface of single-author titles addressing the role of O'Connor's faith in her fiction. There are, of course, assorted collections of essays by multiple authors, not to mention studies that consider O'Connor alongside other Catholic novelists like Walker Percy and Graham Greene. Searching for a book on the grotesque and O'Connor's Catholicism? See Marshall Bruce Gentry's *Flannery O'Connor's Religion of the Grotesque* (Jackson, MS: U P of Mississippi, 1986). Interested in religion and the South in O'Connor? Try Ralph C. Wood's *Flannery O'Connor's Christ-Haunted South* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004). Film and faith? How about Cassandra Nelson's "Manichaeism and the Movies: Flannery O'Connor and the Roman Catholic Response to Film and Television at Midcentury" (*Literary Imagination* 16.1 (2014) 76–94). And my personal favorite: David J. Piwinski's "*Gone with the Wind* in Flannery O'Connor's 'A Good Man Is Hard to Find': An Anagogical Biblical Allusion" (*English Language Notes* 38.4 (2001) 73–76).
9. O'Connor clearly revered Faulkner. As for her opinion of Williams, she once remarked in a letter to a friend, "Mr. Truman Capote makes me sick, as does Mr. Tenn. Williams," and in another letter (to Sally and Robert Fitzgerald), she deemed *Baby Doll* "a dirty little piece of trash" (*The Habit of Being* 121, 192).
10. *A Good Man Is Hard to Find* puts O'Connor at the forefront of postmodernism. In *Inventing Southern Literature* (Jackson, MS: UP of Mississippi, 1998), Michael Kreyling cites "A Late Encounter with the Enemy" as a prototypical example of what he calls postsouthern parody. "O'Connor's point registers twice," he explains, "once in ['The Grotesque in Southern Fiction'] and once in the story: writers (including self-consciously southern writers like herself caught in the path of the Dixie Limited) work through previous writing, which replaces the 'natural.' For the southern writer that means self-consciously foregrounding southernness as a set of representations already in cultural place" (161).

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