

A Comparative Study of Form and Theology
in the Works of Flannery O'Connor and Simone Weil
by
Catherine Ann Maxwell.

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of PhD
The University of Leeds, The School of English. August 1998.

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that
appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the
work of others.

ABSTRACT

In this comparative study of the form and theology of Flannery O'Connor and Simone Weil I interrogate how Weil's philosophical writings and her theology illuminate O'Connor's use of both narrative and non-fictional forms, and her Catholicism. The Introduction analyses how Weil's concept of superposed reading provides a new method of approaching both O'Connor, her writings, and O'Connor studies, and focuses on how such apparently different women interconnect. Chapter One explores how both Weil and O'Connor attempt to write their theologies on the souls of their readers yet are each subject to constraints imposed by form. Weil's concept of locating equilibrium between incommensurates is discussed, and her distinctively philosophical approach to fictions and fictionality is used to investigate O'Connor's notion of prophetic fictions and the writer's role. Chapter Two assesses how both writers revivify Christian paradoxes. Weil's monstrous concept of affliction, and O'Connor's use of the grotesque genre to jolt secular man into an awareness of the sacred are scrutinised. Chapter Three studies how both writers consider an encounter between God and man is possible through the action of grace. My Conclusion interrogates how Weil's work can deepen our understanding of O'Connor's writings, and examines how successful O'Connor is at realising a truly Christian literature. I conclude that despite being a writer of powerful fictions, O'Connor can not be totally successful in her mission as writer-prophet because ultimately fiction escapes orthodoxy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	3
List of Abbreviations	4
Introduction: Superposed Readings	6
Chapter One: Writing on the Soul	62
Chapter Two: Interesting Monstrosities: Affliction, Grotesquerie and the Strangeness of Truth	121
Chapter Three: Dark and Disruptive Grace: Spiritual Mechanics and the Violent Seed	195
Conclusion: Deeper and Stranger Visions	242
Bibliography	265

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is dedicated to the Maxwells: each and every one, who have given me their complete encouragement and support from the first day of this project until the last. To my inspirational family I offer my grateful and sincere thanks. I would also like to acknowledge my appreciation for the assistance of all my friends, and their untiring faith in both me and my work. Finally, I would like to thank the School of English, the University of Leeds, for its help, and scholarship monies received for research during the period 1993-96.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS
(Full publication details in the Bibliography)

FLANNERY O'CONNOR:

- CFO *Conversations with Flannery O'Connor*
- CS *The Complete Stories*
- CW *The Collected Works*
- FOCB *The Flannery O'Connor Bulletin*
- HB *The Habit of Being*
- MFC *The Manuscripts of Flannery O'Connor*
- MM *Mystery and Manners*
- PG *The Presence of Grace*
- VB *The Violent Bear It Away*
- WB *Wise Blood*

SIMONE WEIL:

- FLN *First and Last Notebooks*
- GG *Gravity and Grace*
- IC *Intimations of Christianity Among the Ancient Greeks*
- LP *Letter to A Priest*
- LPY *Lectures on Philosophy*
- NB *The Notebooks Volumes I-II*
- NR *The Need for Roots*
- OL *Oppression and Liberty*

SE	<i>Selected Essays</i>
SL	<i>Seventy Letters</i>
SNL	<i>On Science, Necessity and the Love of God</i>
SWR	<i>The Simone Weil Reader</i>
WFG	<i>Waiting for God</i>

INTRODUCTION: SUPERPOSED READINGS

'Every being cries out silently to be read differently' according to Simone Weil.¹ The Weilean term 'reading' involves the activity of interpretation, usually subjective emotional responses, or conformity to public opinion which generate incorrect judgements of individuals, texts, and events. 'We read, but also *we are read by others*' she maintains, which is a 'mechanical process. More often than not a dialogue between deaf people' (GG 121-122). Accurate interpretation requires a superior quality of attention, a change of perspective that facilitates 'Superposed readings'² in which two or more distinct elements are viewed simultaneously, and alternative realities are recognised beyond surface appearances.

Flannery O'Connor 'cries out' loudly to be read differently in two ways. First, she personally demands her audience read her fictions differently, and second, despite the voluminous critical material available, O'Connor's work calls for new interpretations. Preoccupied by what she considers the incorrect explications of her narratives by readers deaf to her Christian concerns, O'Connor demands her audience changes its perspective to accord with her own 'anagogical vision', which operating on an equivalent principle to Weil's superposed readings, combines both literal and spiritual realities in a single vista.³ 'The novelist must be characterized not by his function but by his vision', O'Connor insists, and this 'anagogical vision' is the kind 'that is able to see different levels of reality in one image or in one situation', and is concerned 'with the Divine life and our participation in it' (MM 72). But believing she is read by a hostile audience unwilling or unable to hear her Christian message and perceive this superposed reality, O'Connor claims 'you have to make your vision apparent by shock - to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost blind you draw large and startling figures' (MM 34).

But have too many of O'Connor's critics been deafened and blinded by her non-fictional forms of communication: the lectures, essays, letters, and book reviews in which she so emphatically states her anagogical intent in the narratives? Has too large a portion of O'Connor criticism itself become a mechanical process in which O'Connor's comments about her fictions have been so successful in reorientating the critical debate, that her readers too readily accept the stories as prophetic Christian parables, rather than complex, ambiguous narratives which offer both spiritual readings and alternative literal interpretations which undercut them? Frank Kermode's distinction between 'outsiders' who generate literal, 'carnal' interpretations of texts, and 'insiders', an elect band of critics who produce profound

'spiritual' readings through a process of 'aural circumcision',⁴ is useful here in examining O'Connor's work, the state of O'Connor criticism, and how a study of Simone Weil can make a contribution to it.

According to Kermode there is 'seeing and hearing, which are what naive listeners and readers do; and there is perceiving and understanding, which are in principle reserved to an elect' (Kermode, *Genesis*, 3). The elect obtain their insider status by affirming the superiority of latent over manifest senses, and by a process of 'aural circumcision', in which the next generation of elect interpreters is initiated into access to, and control of, these privileged spiritual interpretations.⁵ Amongst these initiates there is 'a preference for spiritual over carnal readings - that is, for interpretations that are beyond the hearing of outsiders', he argues (18). Due to prior expectations of unity, all readers search for textual consonance, but while outsiders only recognise the most obvious literal features, elect interpreters search for occult relations not manifested in the narrative. Locating latent senses in a text requires a 'moment of interpretation or act of 'divination' in which an 'impression point' is discovered.⁶ This crucial juncture 'gives sense and structure to the whole', there may be one or several such moments, but they can only be justified if reconciled with the whole narrative or oeuvre (16, 17).

O'Connor's preference for what she considers the 'intelligent reader' capable of perceiving profound (religious) meanings in her narratives, rather than the 'average reader', who is merely amused by their surface levels (MM 95), corresponds to Kermode's concept of insider and outsider exegetists. Similarly, her equation of the 'legitimate' use of the grotesque genre with prophecy, and insistence that what makes narratives, and specifically her own narratives successful is an anagogical action or gesture which makes 'contact with mystery' (111): this amounts to a demand that her readers perform an act of divination in order to discover the impression point in her texts, and perceive the spiritual rather than see only the manifest.⁷ But are such interpretations supported by the narratives, or reliant on aural circumcision, in which O'Connor's non-fictional work prepares an elect group of literary disciples to maintain her anagogical readings - which are actually alienated from the outsiders who see and hear, rather than perceive and understand? According to Ben Satterfield 'it was O'Connor who told the critics how to read her, and they responded like so many Pavlovian dogs'.⁸ So are her anagogical readers, in their desire to make acts of divination, acting like Pavlovian critics and substituting O'Connor's claimed interventions of grace in the stories for unsubstantiated epiphanies? If as Kermode argues, 'Carnal readings are much the same. Spiritual

readings are all different' (9), after over forty years of O'Connor criticism have anagogical interpretations of her work become themselves carnal?

In response to these questions I have three points to argue. First, the process of 'aural circumcision' is evident in much of O'Connor's non-fictional work, and many of her critics' commentaries, and this has played a significant part in promoting the merits of exclusively anagogical interpretations of the fictions, which readings of the narratives frequently do not justify.⁹ Second, an over-reliance on O'Connor's statements of Christian orthodoxy and intention to communicate her religious beliefs to her audience, often results in readers neglecting to acknowledge O'Connor's equally significant observations on the need for her narratives to be considered as fictions, not just theology.¹⁰ Consequently her over-zealous disciples often ignore the ambiguities within the stories, and by flattening their truly multi-layered structure into one-dimensional religious tracts, ironically, contravene O'Connor's intention to combine both literal and mystical realities in a single text. Third, precisely because her fictions are more than religious dogma, and her non-fictional writings are themselves contradictory,¹¹ O'Connor's work resists the imposition of any single interpretation, and therefore does offer latent, 'spiritual' readings. Her oeuvre 'cries out' to be read in all its complexity, and requires a combination of both insider and outsider interpretations, which when balanced, provide the superposed readings her writings deserve.¹²

Simone Weil's work provides such an equipoise between the insider/spiritual, and outsider/ carnal perspectives, and in doing so offers a framework for the different interpretations O'Connor studies call for. By adopting Weil's superposed reading strategy this thesis will provide a comparative interrogation of the forms and theologies of these at once very different yet similar writers, using Weil's concepts to focus attention on O'Connor's, and provide original readings of her narratives.

But exactly how can a Jewish, French philosopher illuminate the writings of a Catholic, American fiction writer? My argument for bringing these writers together has four strands. First, O'Connor herself recognised the relevance of Weil's life and work to her fiction. Both women shared parallel experiences of marginalisation, illness and premature death, and because Weil, as Christian without a Church, and as a startlingly monstrous yet comic figure embodies the type of religious consciousness and grotesquerie O'Connor is so interested in depicting, this study will begin by examining how such apparently different women are linked. Second, because O'Connor is not just a fiction writer but also a theological, philosophical author, by analysing Weil's polemic, contradictory mode, and her distinctively

philosophical criteria for the spiritual value of fictions, I propose to assess both O'Connor's fictional and non-fictional work. O'Connor's employment of a narrative form intended to function as both entertainment and theology will be examined, and how her contradictory extra-fictional writings have an impact on the stories and their reception. Third, as Weil's mystical philosophy shares many similar concerns and concepts vital to O'Connor's theology, yet Weil's rejection of institutionalised Catholicism is very different to O'Connor's acquiescence to the Catholic Church and its dogma, I will analyse how as both spiritual insider and outsider Weil and her work can illuminate O'Connor's religious thought and its representation, or non-representation in the narratives. Fourth, while my primary aim is to use Weil and her work to shed light on O'Connor, another valuable justification for a comparative study of these writers, is that O'Connor's life and work can also illuminate Weil, and in providing useful and interesting insights into the philosopher and her work, add another dimension to both Weilean and O'Connor studies.

In correspondence that spans her writing career,¹³ O'Connor expresses her fascination with Weil, insisting that from 'what I have read about her I think she must have been a very great person. She and Edith Stein are the two 20th-century women who interest me most' (HB 93). Convinced she existed 'in an unbelieving age but one which is markedly and lopsidedly spiritual', O'Connor found Weil 'the example of a religious consciousness without a religion which maybe sooner or later I will be able to write about'.¹⁴ Contending that her predominantly secular audience requires startling figures to coerce it into appreciating the efficacy of the supernatural, she insists 'when you can assume that your audience holds the same beliefs as you do, you can relax a little and use more normal means of talking to it, when you have to assume that it does not, then you have to make your vision apparent by shock' (MM 34).

O'Connor's fiction revolves around grotesque protagonists whose violent conflicts between atheism and belief are intended to reveal the intervention of grace in a profane world. With her intense spiritual struggle between acceptance and repudiation of the Catholic Church, her claims to have experienced life-changing mystical experiences, yet with absurd moments interspersed throughout her life, O'Connor considers Weil's existence 'almost a perfect blending of the Comic and the Terrible' which epitomises her grotesque fictional narratives. Believing that comedy and terror 'may be opposite sides of the same coin', O'Connor claims that in her experience, 'everything funny I have written is more terrible than it is funny, or only funny because it is terrible, or only terrible because it is funny' (HB 105).

Weil's terrible yet occasionally comic life began when she was born in Paris on 3rd February 1909. Her middle class, Jewish family were assimilated into French, Catholic culture, and she enjoyed a privileged bourgeois education at the Lycées and prestigious Ecole Normale Supérieure. Weil's brother André's mathematical genius instilled in her an inferiority complex, and she considered suicide at the age of fourteen. An indication of her tendency towards self-abasement, this episode is important because it eventually resulted in Weil's conviction that anyone, 'though practically devoid of natural gifts, can penetrate to the kingdom of truth reserved for genius, if only he longs for the truth and perpetually concentrates all his attention upon its attainment'.¹⁵

Her thought pivots on the Platonic conception that ultimate reality, which consists of the Good, Truth and Beauty, are intelligible. Plato's philosophy pervades both Weil's early work on oppression and liberty, and her subsequent mystical thought. Weil's lectures to her students at the Lycée for girls at Roanne (1933-34) are permeated with references to Plato, as are all her notebooks, which span the decade 1933-43. However, her most sustained and eloquent analysis of Plato's work is contained in the essays: 'God in Plato', 'The *Symposium* of Plato', and 'The *Republic*', all published posthumously.¹⁶ Her Platonic assurance that supernal realities are intellectually attainable was reinforced by the teachings of Weil's philosophy professor, Alain, (a pseudonym for Emile Chartier), at the Lycée Henry IV between 1925 and 1928. The central tenets of his philosophy are the acquirement of reality and truth through the assertion of contradiction, opposition to religious institutions and dogmas as restrictions to individuality, and his conception of Christianity as Platonic rather than Hebraic. Plato's philosophy, combined with Alain's schema, constitute the most profound intellectual influences on Weil's own work.⁷ Weil's Platonism is unusual in a twentieth century more distinguished by the existentialist angst of her compatriots and contemporaries, Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre. But although Platonism constitutes the keystone of her philosophy, characteristically Weil superposes it with both similar and radically different philosophies, including a form of existentialism.¹⁷

A brilliant student, Weil won the school's philosophy prize in 1927, coming top of her class (with Simone de Beauvoir in second place). But her intellectual abilities were not combined with the capacity for effective social interaction. As her friend Simone Pétrement has observed, Weil's 'charm remained hidden from most people, who saw in Simone only a totally intellectual being.' Giving 'the impression of a burning, almost indiscreet curiosity', Weil's ruthless pursuit of intellectual arguments allied with her determined social conscience and deliberate lack of

femininity 'evoked the image of the revolutionary intelligentsia', irritating both the educational authorities and her classmates, and making her an object of derision (Pétrément 26-29). Célestin Bouglé, the Director of Studies at Henry IV referred to her somewhat maliciously as 'the categorical imperative in skirts',¹⁸ but even the sympathetic Pétrément acknowledges that due to Weil's fierce intransigence, and the emotional self-restraint which prevented her from displaying any inner feelings or vulnerability; 'it would be true to say that when she was a student, she had not yet attained full humanity'(30).

Alain's prescient summary of Weil's abilities and potential was: 'An excellent pupil; a rare strength of mind, wide culture. Will succeed brilliantly if she does not embark on obscure paths. In any case she will attract attention'(McLellan 16). Attempting to circumvent this penchant for notoriety, Bouglé insisted 'We'll put the Red Virgin as far away as possible so that we won't hear any more about her'(131), and after passing her *agrégation* at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in 1931, Weil was refused her request to be given a teaching post in an industrial area. However, although placed in provincial Le Puy, she remained a high profile political activist.

Beginning her career as a philosophy teacher at twenty-two, she became an active socialist, involved in trade union activities and demonstrations. Transferred to Auxerre because her political actions embarrassed the authorities at Le Puy, Weil's unconventional teaching methods (a restrictive syllabus fused with political broadsides), were popular with her pupils but criticised by the Academy's Inspector.¹⁹ After the failure of her class to gain satisfactory examination results and the consequent abolition of the philosophy course, Weil was sent at her request to the Lycée in Roanne, where she continued to synthesise teaching and politics. Convinced that the 'respect accorded language and the men who are best able to use it has been indispensable to human progress', Weil considered it essential to 'give the workers the ability to handle language and especially the written language'(Pétrément 88-89) if they were to attain the necessary knowledge and culture required to elevate them from a life of oppression. So she began teaching evening classes at the Saint Etienne Labour Exchange, often missing her train back to Auxerre, and forced to spend the night on café benches. Yet despite her dedicated socialism, Weil became increasingly disillusioned by the inability of organised groups to effectively alter the living conditions of the working class. Sympathetic to Communist ideals, she remained sceptical about the Soviet regime's success, infuriating Trotsky by insisting Soviet workers were subjugated by the very system intended to empower them.²⁰

Although she wrote numerous articles for trade union journals, and extensive treatises on Marxism and social oppression which culminated in *Oppression and Liberty* (completed in 1934), her *magnus opus* of this period, Weil never joined a political party. (As women were only enfranchised in France in 1944 she was actually never eligible to vote.) Writing in 1942, she provides a reason for her reluctance to join organisations, insisting that her ‘natural disposition is to be very easily influenced, too much influenced, and above all by anything collective’ (WFG 55). But at the same time Weil claims she is preordained to remain an outsider, and this doesn’t contradict her attraction to various groups as ‘my capacity to mix with all of them implies that I belong to none’ (55). This simultaneous attraction to the communal, and determination to preserve her individuality prefigures Weil’s attitude to the Catholic Church. But it was her decision to spend several months in 1934 as a factory worker, which links Weil’s early preoccupations with the mechanics of an oppressive society, and her later concentration on the workings of supernatural grace.

A consistent concern to convert her intellectual, evangelical principles into action, combined with her admiration for, and attempts to share the lot of the underclass, ensured that Weil strove to engage in manual labour. But suffering from the violent headaches which began four years earlier and would continue until her death, she was overwhelmed by the severe physical conditions, intellectual monotony, and requirement to submit to unjust orders.²¹ Whether her migraines were psychosomatic, or caused by a physical condition remains unclear.²² However, what is certain is the extent to which Weil was traumatised by her factory episode, evident from her frequent references to it during later years as the moment when ‘I received forever the mark of a slave’.²³ Weil’s concept of *malheur* or affliction, draws directly on her factory experiences in its central preoccupation with submission to, and endurance of, the workings of blind necessity. In her seminal essay on this subject, ‘The Love of God and Affliction’, she insists one is ‘entirely subject to this blind necessity in every part of one’s being’.²⁴

However, despite considering she had an affinity with the victims of economic hardship, Weil’s privileged social status ensured that when she was physically and mentally incapable of continuing the factory experiment, her parents took her on holiday to Spain and Portugal to recuperate. A recurring pattern throughout Weil’s life consists of her attempts to belong to, and assist what she considered disadvantaged groups, only to inflict on herself such physical or emotional damage that she too eventually required aid. A self-professed pacifist, she joined the Spanish Civil War to fight the Fascists, only to be seriously (and embarrassingly) burned by

stepping into a pot of boiling oil, and returned to the safety of France by her parents.²⁵ One of several startlingly contradictory actions, Weil's pacifist-combatant status, although on the surface hypocritical, actually typifies her ability to superpose apparently irreconcilable opposites: revolutionary/reactionary, medievalist/existentialist, atheist/Christian mystic.

Weil considers contradiction and absurdity an integral part of experiential reality:

Our life is nothing but impossibility, absurdity. Each thing that we desire is in contradiction with the conditions or the consequences attaching to that thing; each assertion that we make implies the contrary assertion; all our feelings are mixed up with their opposites. The reason is that we are made up of contradiction, since we are creatures, and at the same time God, and at the same time infinitely other than God. (NB 411)

Spiritual development is founded on the same principle. 'Radical impossibility clearly perceived, absurdity-is the gate leading to the supernatural' Weil insists (NB 412-13), and the ludicrous incidents in her life are interlinked with profound religious experiences which increasingly became the major focus of her attention. In her 'Spiritual Autobiography' (1942), she notes that while an agnostic, she had three important contacts with Catholicism that culminated in a mystical experience which changed her life. The first occurred while she convalesced in Portugal after her unsuccessful factory work. Becoming suddenly convinced that Christianity 'is preeminently the religion of slaves', she could not resist 'belonging' to it, she claims (WFG 67). Secondly, in 1937 while on holiday in Italy, she visited the chapel of Santa Maria degli Angeli in Assisi, contending 'something stronger than I was compelled me for the first time in my life to go down on my knees' (67-68). Finally, after asking once again to be relieved from the teaching duties she had only intermittently completed due to ill health, Weil spent ten days at the Benedictine abbey of Solesmes in 1938. While suffering intense migraines, she insists the thought of Christ's Passion 'entered into my being once and for all' (68). During her stay another visitor recommended she read the English metaphysical poets, and while reciting George Herbert's poem 'Love' when experiencing a severe headache, Weil claims to have had the first of several mystical experiences, later assuring her friend Fr. Perrin, 'Christ himself came down and took possession of me' (69).

As an atheist/agnostic Weil's declared contact with God was totally unexpected, and constitutes an 'impression point' in which as Kermode maintains, it is possible to

'perceive in a life some moment that gives sense and structure to the whole' (*Genesis* 16). In Weil's case, although her claimed mystical experiences cannot be authenticated, they undoubtedly occupy a pivotal position in relation to her life and work. Her writings between 1933-1938 contain virtually no references to the supernatural, and are concerned instead with the practical problems of creating a more just society.²⁶ However, her major work written after this date and up to her death in 1943 is concentratedly spiritual. Published posthumously, (here listed with the original French publication date followed by its English translation) *Gravity and Grace* [1947] (1952), *The Need for Roots* [1949] (1952), *Waiting for God* [1950] (1951), *First and Last Notebooks* [1950, 1951] (1970), *Intimations of Christianity Among the Ancient Greeks* [1951, 1953] (1957), *The Notebooks of Simone Weil* [1951, 1953, 1956] (1956), and *Letter to a Priest* [1951] (1954); are saturated with meditations on God, and concerned with how to obtain 'entry into the transcendent' (FLN 335).

Like St. Augustine's *Confessions*, Weil's writings after this pivotal mystical encounter, especially her 'Spiritual Autobiography', take this moment of conversion as the key to her whole life.²⁷ Equally interesting is Weil's mystical narrative apparently describing her encounter with God, which closes her *Notebooks* (NB 638-39). Philosophical discourse is abandoned in this text, and unlike any of Weil's other written forms, this narrative, as Nevin rightly notes, 'might be called Weil's version of a gospel episode, with herself cast at the center, with Christ as "He"' (Nevin 276).

It is extraordinary that Weil never informed her family and friends about such a crucial moment in her life, only confiding in new acquaintances years later - Fr. Perrin in 1941, and Joë Bousquet the following year. Perrin became Weil's spiritual advisor and the recipient of several long and significant letters and essays, including Weil's 'Spiritual Autobiography', 'The Love of God and Affliction', and 'Forms of the Implicit Love of God', all written in 1942. Her disagreements with Perrin over the nature of the Catholic Church are essential to the development of Weil's theology, and despite her opposition to his acceptance of Catholic dogma, he was one of the few close friends she had, and influential to her thinking. Maintaining that Perrin provided her with 'the most compelling and pure inspiration', Weil credits him with developing her ability to reconcile rational attention with faith.²⁸ Bousquet, paralyzed by a wound sustained in the First World war, bedridden, and forced to endure constant pain from his spinal injury, literally embodied Weil's concept of affliction. Although they only met once, according to Pétrement, this single conversation 'was enough to create a deep friendship'.²⁹

That Weil so successfully kept important areas of her experiences completely distinct from each other suggests an ability to compartmentalise her life into interior, spiritual concerns, personal relationships, and professional work. The most significant segment of her work constitutes the development of her theology, and in addition to her meditative notebooks, the major spiritual texts demonstrate how essential to her this was. Merging Catholic doctrine, Greek philosophy and literature, Pythagorean mathematics, Eastern religions and myths, these writings attempt to reconcile human affliction with God's perfection. But although her religious experiences provide the impetus for these texts it is important to recognise that Weil's mystical writings are not solely products of a personal spiritual experience, but are also integrally linked to the socio-historical events of her time.

The complexities within Weil's life are paralleled by the cultural turmoil through which she lived. A child during the First World War and the Russian Revolution, Weil's teaching career took place during the economic instability of the 1930s, the Spanish Civil War, and Hitler's rise to power. Her visit to Solesmes occurred just after the *Anschluss* in Austria, and what she considered her first mystical experience took place two months after Hitler's Munich agreements. With the outbreak of the Second World War and the Fall of France, Weil was forced to flee Paris and took refuge in the South under the Vichy regime. However she was still prevented from teaching, or publishing her work, because of her status as a Jew, despite her controversial protest to the Minister of Education denying her Jewishness, and insisting that although she professed 'no religion and never have', she considered herself closest to the Catholic tradition.³⁰

In the same year Weil began to write her essay '*The Iliad, Poem of Might*' (1939). Although ostensibly a commentary on the *Iliad* as an example of the inexorable workings of necessity and fate, it is also apparently an analysis of the Nazi occupation; with Troy representing the predicament of Vichy France. Eventually published in 1941 under the pseudonym 'Emile Novis', this text constitutes an example of the 'superposed readings' Weil advocated, and would undoubtedly have been perceived as such by her audience in the Free Zone. As Jean-Paul Sartre, himself a member of the Resistance, and a writer whose wartime works gave encoded encouragement to his countrymen observes in 'For Whom Does One Write?':

people of the same period and community, who lived through the same events, who have raised or avoided the same questions, have the same taste in their mouth; they have the same complicity, and

there are the same corpses among them. That is why it is not necessary to write so much: there are key words.³¹

The key words in Weil's philosophy, and her stress on the need to define a vocabulary by which to link the superposed realities of the sacred and profane will be analysed in Chapters Two and Three. At this point it is important to note the key moments in Weil's life, and superpose their often contradictory events.

During the year her *Iliad* essay was published, Weil joined a Resistance network in Marseilles, assisting refugees, and helping to distribute an anti-Fascist publication called *Cahiers du Témoignage Chrétien*. According to her Resistance contact Malou David, 'Simone did not merely help "some" Jews in difficulty, or merely distribute "some" periodicals, she was the very basis of the organization and distribution' in Marseilles (McLellan 179). After the group was betrayed by a traitor, Weil was interrogated three times by the police, but eventually released due to lack of evidence (Pétrement 408-411). Despite her Resistance work Weil wrote prolifically, and it was during this period that she met Perrin, Bousquet, and Gustave Thibon - who permitted her to stay on his farm at Saint-Marcel d'Ardèche, and indulge her desire for manual labour by working on the harvest. Weil's friendship with Thibon is important for two reasons. First, before she began her journey to the United States in 1942 she left him her notebooks for safekeeping during her exile. In a letter from Oran she informed Thibon, 'If you hear nothing of me for three or four years you can consider that you have complete ownership of them', and his arrangement of excerpts from these notebooks comprises *Gravity and Grace*, the first major publication of Weil's work.³² Secondly, as an exercise in teaching him Greek, Weil translated the Our Father, and repeating it daily, she began to pray for the first time in her life. This incident is significant because it apparently marked an intensification of Weil's spiritual experiences. She later claimed to Perrin that 'during this recitation or at other moments, Christ is present with me in person but his presence is infinitely more real, more moving, more clear than on that first occasion when he took possession of me' (WFG 72).

Returning to Marseilles, Weil wrote most of *Waiting For God* and *Intimations of Christianity Among the Ancient Greeks* between January and April 1942. It is no coincidence that her concepts of affliction, decreation, and violent grace developed while she became increasingly isolated within her own country because of the racist repression of the Holocaust, itself made more unbearable due to the collaboration of the Vichy regime. As Chapter Two will demonstrate, the axis around which her

theology revolves is the afflicted's exclamation 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' and the silence which follows. This has an extra resonance when it is considered that her 'Spiritual Autobiography' and the final letters to Perrin were completed in an internment camp in Casablanca in May 1942, while she waited to embark for exile in New York and London.

Just as conversion is the focus of the majority of religious autobiographies, Weil's professed mystical experiences are central to the increased level of spirituality she describes in her own 'Spiritual Autobiography'. But equally important in this text is Weil's less traditional emphasis on her own individuality and rejection of conversion in its institutionalised sense. Baptism into the Catholic church is not a necessary prerequisite for further spiritual progression. 'I have never once had, even for a moment, the feeling that God wants me to be in the Church. I have never even once had a feeling of uncertainty' (74), she categorically informs Perrin. Her correspondence with him is distinguished by its personal tone, and a willingness to reveal her inner thoughts, and Weil's often melodramatic and self-indulgent remarks, what Thibon terms 'a negative preoccupation with self', are apparent in these letters (Perrin and Thibon 138).

Linked to this negativity is Weil's rigorous asceticism, and despite her refusal to convert to Catholicism, as McLellan notes 'she held as firmly to chastity (together with poverty and obedience) as any in a religious order' (McLellan 271). In fact, as Ann Loades has observed, Weil 'resists disorder in her own society like a Medieval mystic, by fasting and by the intensity of her desire to merge herself with the humanity of a suffering Christ'.³³ The extreme degree of Weil's self-abnegation and orientation towards affliction is entirely consistent with the typical behaviour of mystics, and the 'emotional susceptibility' or 'neurotic temperament' which William James posits as 'the chief condition of the requisite receptivity' to spiritual experience.³⁴ Weil's emotional neuroticism sometimes leads to an arrogant and eccentric prejudice. For instance, there is a dichotomy between Weil's spiritual aspirations and her consistent anti-Semitism. Throughout her life she was actively involved in endeavouring to restore social equilibrium by acting as a counterweight to oppression - joining factory workers and trade unionists, and attempting to participate in the Spanish Civil War. But Weil's work attests to a bizarre antipathy to Hebraic civilization.³⁵

One of her most overtly biased texts, *Letter to A Priest*, was written from the safety of exile in New York. It is interesting to note in this work (as in *Waiting for God*) the tension between Weil's opposition to Catholic dogma and her own dogmatism.

Although primarily an attempt to clarify her position on Catholicism, *Letter to A Priest* is also scathingly anti-Semitic. Containing unsubstantiated accusations of a conspiracy theory, it claims that the authentic Greek and Eastern origins of Christianity were systematically erased by the Israelites.³⁶ Although it is understandable that she felt no affinity with a Jewish culture into which she had never been assimilated, it is surprising that for someone so concerned with the suffering of others this prejudice is intensified during the Holocaust. It is difficult to comprehend that in September 1942 Weil could write: 'If some Hebrews of classical Jewry were to return to life and were to be provided with arms, they would exterminate the lot of us-men, women and children, for the crime of idolatry'.³⁷ Her prejudice is largely based on academic argument rather than physical contact with the Jewish community, but this intellectual aversion to Hebrew culture leads to a racist discourse that is disturbingly reminiscent of Nazi ideology.

During her work for the Free French, Weil received a proposal from *l'Organisation civile et militaire*, recommending that after the war the status and influence of Jews in French society should be reduced through a series of prohibitive statutes. Interestingly, Weil's 'Commentary' on this paper is not only sympathetic, but intensifies its racist rhetoric. The existence of a Jewish minority 'does not constitute a good; so the object must be to provoke its disappearance, and every modus vivendi must be a transition towards this objective', she writes. But for any 'fanatical racists' who insisted on retaining their Jewish identity, 'the problem would be to find a criterion to pick them out so as to deprive them of French nationality.' This would involve 'purifying' the nation by removing Jews from positions of public instruction-the identical measure inflicted on Weil by the Nazis.³⁸ Whether or not her attitude would have altered had she lived to see the horrifying consequences of the Final Solution, and the newsreel footage (a consummate depiction of Weil's concept of affliction) which was to haunt Flannery O'Connor, remains unfortunately unknown. However, not surprisingly, when Weil's work began to be published only two years after the end of World War Two, its anti-Semitic content angered and appalled the Jewish community.³⁹

Whilst highly critical of Judaism, Weil refused the 'eager welcome' offered by a 'Catholic circle' keen to adopt her, informing Perrin she did not want to find herself "at home" in any human *milieu* whatever it may be' (WFG 54). Although conceding that to belong to such a group would actually be 'delightful', Weil insists 'I feel that it is not permissible for me. I feel that it is necessary and ordained that I should be alone, a stranger and an exile in relation to every human circle without exception' (54). Cutting through Weil's somewhat melodramatic stance here, it is

important to note as Springstead does, that she 'was neither born into nor brought up within the Church. In this sense she did not go outside the Church; she chose to stay there' (Springstead, *Love* 8).

Ironically for such an anti-Semite, Weil's definition of her identity as that of an outsider replicates the stereotypical caricature of a wandering, exiled Jew.⁴⁰ Her restless migrations a combination of enforced retreat from the Nazis, and a desire to assist the Allied fight against them, the motivation for Weil's trip to New York was her belief that it constituted her only route to the Free French organization in London. She arrived in July 1942, but frustrated by her inability to leave immediately for England, she inundated her friends in London with some typically impracticable proposals for her involvement in the Resistance. Writing to Maurice Schumann, an active member of the Free French, she enclosed her 'Plan for an Organization of Front-Line Nurses', which urged the formation of a mobile band of nurses who would 'be always at the points of greatest danger', to give first aid during battles (SL 146). Including herself among these women who would need to 'offer their lives as a sacrifice', Weil believed such 'formations are necessarily the product of a religious inspiration', and would constitute valuable propaganda (147, 150). Following this idealistic proposition with the request that she be parachuted into France as a secret agent, Weil assured Schumann she 'would accept any degree of risk (including certain death if the objective was sufficiently important)' (154). Her desire to return to France with 'a mission-preferably dangerous' (145), is symptomatic of her consistent attempts to assist the afflicted while decreating herself. 'The suffering all over the world obsesses and overwhelms me to the point of annihilating my faculties' she writes, 'and the only way I can revive them and release myself from the obsession is by getting for myself a large share of danger and hardship' (156). But Weil's plans were inept-she had no medical qualifications, and her characteristically Jewish physical appearance would have made it impossible for her to exist incognito in occupied France. As Thibon has confirmed, 'her racial type was too recognizable to allow this' (GG xvii).

Eventually joining the Free French in December 1942, Weil was commissioned by General de Gaulle to write a report on how a French peacetime society should be founded, and from her own turbulent experiences and migrant exile, she produced *The Need for Roots* (1952), a text which connects Weil's early concerns with the creation of a just society, and her subsequent concentration on individual spirituality. During this period she wrote copiously, but increasingly depressed by her inability to obtain active service, and what she perceived as the neglect of her philosophical work, Weil eventually resigned. Whether or not her dejection would

have been alleviated had she lived to see the tide of war change in the Allies' favour can not be known. After all her efforts to reach the Free French in London, she only worked for four months, and weakened by her insistence on eating no more than the rations available in Occupied France she contracted tuberculosis, and was admitted to hospital in April 1943. The original diagnosis predicted recovery in two months, but either unwilling or unable to eat, Weil's condition deteriorated, and after being transferred to Grosvenor Sanatorium in Ashford, Kent, she died on 24th August 1943 aged thirty-four.

The inquest into Weil's death was held on 27 August, and the Coroner's verdict was suicide. Finding cause of death was cardiac failure 'due to starvation and pulmonary tuberculosis', he concluded 'The deceased did kill and slay herself by refusing to eat whilst the balance of her mind was disturbed' (McLellan 266). However, Weil consistently stated her opposition to suicide. 'One must give one's life for those one loves, but one must not kill oneself', she wrote in 1942 (FLN 331). Pétrement insists that Weil's friends in London thought the inquest and its conclusions 'an absurdity' (Pétrement 526), pointing out, 'it is actually possible that by dint of depriving herself', Weil could 'only take in very small amounts of food' (527), and her death was unintentional. A letter Weil wrote on 26 July 1943, appearing to indicate she had some hope of rejoining her parents and continuing her work, offers some credence to this view.

I am convinced that even a temporary gluing together could only be accomplished by my parents, not by anyone else. If it ever should take place, I will dedicate what little energy and life thus granted to me to thinking and writing down what I have in me. (531)

But typically contradictory, in the same sentence Weil considers her life may yet contain 'some activity in the cannon-fodder line' (531).

Although her ultimate intentions remain uncertain, Weil's death was a culmination of life-long tendencies towards self-immolation and decreation, based on her assurance that the essential truth she sought would only be acquired through physical affliction. 'Life for me means nothing, and never has meant anything, really, except as a threshold to the revelation of truth', she wrote while in London. 'I have the inner certainty that this truth, if it is ever granted to me, will only be revealed when I myself am physically in affliction' (SL 178). Whatever the 'truth' of Weil's affliction and death, it is ironic considering her anti-Semitism, that as Loades

observes, ‘one might regard her as someone who inflicted on herself by accident, the kind of death she might have come to in a concentration camp’.⁴¹ Without her parents to retrieve her from yet another crisis, Weil’s apparent urge towards self-destruction remained unchecked.

Continuing her trait of keeping important aspects of her life separated from her family, she continued to write studiously cheerful letters to them until days before her death. However, a sense of desperation is apparent in one of the last letters Weil wrote to her parents (18 July 1943), when she describes her frustration at not being able to communicate her thoughts due to the inability of her audience to read her work correctly.

I too have a sort of growing inner certainty that there is within me a deposit of pure gold which must be handed on. Only I become more and more convinced, by experience and by observing my contemporaries, that there is no one to receive it [...] They listen to me or read me with the same hurried attention which they give to everything, making up their minds definitely about each hint of an idea as soon as it appears. (SL 196)

Requiring the ability to balance objectively several ideas simultaneously, Weil’s concept of ‘reading’ incorporates the difficulties incurred in making an accurate assessment of another person’s character, without being influenced by personal prejudices. Justifiable interpretations require being ‘continually ready to admit that another person is something other than what we read’ (NB 43). It is ‘a question of uprooting’ stale perspectives (312), and by suspending judgement for a moment, becoming capable of perceiving the various levels of being which constitute a human individual. What distinguishes the elevated levels of existence from their lower counterparts is, ‘in the higher states, the co-existence of several superposed planes’ (312).

Flannery O’Connor shared the same preoccupations with transmitting her ideas and the notion that this process was obstructed by her readers, complaining ‘there will always be people who refuse to read the story you have written’ (MM 95). Subsequent chapters will utilise Weil’s theory of superposed readings to interrogate O’Connor’s narratives and her similar anagogical vision in detail, but at this juncture I intend to use this concept to interpret O’Connor’s life, distinguishing connections with, and distinctions from, Weil’s experiences. By using Weil and O’Connor to illuminate each other, I propose to highlight their complex characters,

and how it is necessary to balance the contradictions in both women's personalities, to 'read' them, and their work accurately.

Born in Savannah, Georgia, on 25th March 1925, the same year in which Weil began her studies with Alain, Mary Flannery O'Connor enjoyed the same privileged economic status as Weil, which allowed her to concentrate on her writing career. O'Connor was also part of a minority culture, as a member of a wealthy Catholic family in the predominantly Protestant South.⁴² However, when her father became ill and suffered business difficulties, O'Connor and her mother moved to Milledgeville, where their relatives owned considerable property, and were socially prominent. Just before she became sixteen her father died of lupus erythematosus, the incurable hereditary disease which became active in her during 1950. Unlike Weil, her education was provincial, and she completed high school in 1942. After graduating from Milledgeville's Georgia State College for Women, she completed a Master of Fine Arts degree at the State University of Iowa, submitting a collection of short stories as her thesis in 1947.

In the year in which O'Connor left high school, Weil was detained in an internment camp, and exiled. O'Connor's life, in contrast to Weil's experiences, was physically unaffected by World War Two, although later references in her letters and narratives to newsreel revelations of Holocaust atrocities emerge as evidence that these incidents were enduring intellectual concerns. 'Anything is credible after such a period of history. I've always been haunted by the boxcars, but they were actually the least of it', she insists in 1963 (HB 539). In her short story 'A Circle in the Fire' published nine years earlier, Mrs Cope is grateful she is not one of 'those poor Europeans [...] put in boxcars like cattle',⁴³ and the impact of documentary film of concentration camps on O'Connor's psyche is graphically displayed in 'The Displaced person' (1954), when Mrs Shortley recalls seeing such a film showing

a small room piled high with bodies of dead naked people all in a heap, their arms and legs tangled together, a head thrust in here, a head there, a foot, a knee, a part that should have been covered up sticking out, a hand clutching nothing. (CS 196)

The extent to which O'Connor was 'haunted' by the Holocaust is evident by her references to it in several other stories, including one of her last, 'Revelation' (1964), when Ruby Turpin dreams repeatedly of the different social classes 'crammed in together in a box car, being ridden off to be put in a gas oven'.⁴⁴

Demonstrating the influence of post-World War Two realities on O'Connor's work, these textual references underline that just as it is important to 'read' Weil via superposing her life and philosophy with the historical issues which shaped them, O'Connor's emphasis on viewing her stories through specifically theological or literary perspectives should not deflect readers from analyzing her narratives within their socio-historical context.⁴⁵

However it is equally important to note that O'Connor's fascination with Weil is part of a wider interest in European theology, philosophy, and literature. O'Connor's letters and the books in her personal library demonstrate her intellectual engagement with such German theologians as Max Picard, Romano Guardini, and Karl Adam, Paul Tillich and Rudolph Bultmann; French philosophers Gabriel Marcel, Etienne Gilson, and Jean-Paul Sartre; and French fiction writers Léon Bloy and Georges Bernanos.⁴⁶ But the three European writers most essential to O'Connor after Weil, and who had the most direct influence on her work were all French: the philosopher Jacques Maritain, the fiction writer Francois Mauriac, and the scientist-theologian Père Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. De Chardin's ideas had an impact on O'Connor's life and fiction, and Mauriac's notion of the author - text - reader relationship was important to O'Connor's concept of her role as a writer.⁴⁷ But it was through reading Maritain's *Art and Scholasticism* that O'Connor obtained her understanding of St. Thomas Aquinas' aesthetics, which became vital to her notion of the autonomous purity of art.⁴⁸

O'Connor's long-term friendships with American Catholic authors such as Robert Lowell, Allen Tate, and most notably Caroline Gordon Tate, were important to her development as a writer. Caroline Gordon Tate, herself personally in touch with Maritain and his ideas, was as friend, correspondent, literary critic, and unofficial editor of O'Connor's manuscripts, a formative influence on O'Connor and her work.⁴⁹ 'Whenever I finish a story I send it to Caroline before I consider myself really through with it. She's taught me more than anybody', O'Connor maintains (HB 260). Writing stories from childhood onwards, O'Connor claims Edgar Allan Poe as another major influence on her writing. 'Many years ago I read a volume of *The Humorous Tales of Edgar Allan Poe*, and I think that started me thinking of a writing career', she insists, and her early work displays the comic grotesquerie which she would develop in her mature fiction.⁵⁰ On several occasions she draws parallels between her own texts and Nathaniel Hawthorne's 'romances', insisting she felt 'more of a kinship with him than with any other American', claiming in 1963 that she wrote "'tales" in the sense Hawthorne wrote tales'.⁵¹

As a member of the Writer's Workshop at Iowa, O'Connor concentrated on writing her 'tales', beginning the practice, which she continued for the rest of her career, of writing a prescribed number of hours each day without interruption. She took a seminar in literary criticism taught by Austin Warren, and chose Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren's *Understanding Fiction*, as a supplementary text. The formative influence of such New Critics on her work is apparent in O'Connor's lectures and essays. She insists on focusing critical attention on the text rather than psycho-social considerations, demands an organic unity of form and content, and that the quality of her fiction be assessed independently of her theological concerns. 'The meaning of a story does not begin except at a depth where adequate motivation and adequate psychology and the various determinations have been exhausted', she claims (MM 41-42), 'a piece of fiction must be very much a self-contained dramatic unity. This means that it must carry its meaning inside it' (75). In 1962 she wrote to a friend, 'I agree that I must be seen as a writer and not just a Catholic writer, and I wish somebody would do it' (HB 464). The plethora of contradictory assertions which subvert these statements will be examined in later chapters, but it is important to recognise that O'Connor's preoccupation with, and dissemination of, New Criticism's major tenets constitutes a significant area of her literary theory.⁵²

After winning the Rinehart-Iowa Fiction Award in May 1947, O'Connor accepted an invitation from the Yaddo Foundation to continue working on her first novel, *Wise Blood*, at its artists' colony near Saratoga Springs, New York. After extending her stay at Yaddo into 1949, O'Connor became involved in a political controversy when she joined colleagues in alleging that a Communist journalist was receiving preferential treatment that threatened the colony's survival. According to O'Connor's friend, Sally Fitzgerald, 'The evidence they had was largely circumstantial, and some of it was subjective' (11-12), and when details of the incident were leaked, over forty writers signed a petition to support the director's actions, attacking O'Connor and her friends. The director was retained, and O'Connor left Yaddo early. Living in New York until September, she moved into Sally and Robert Fitzgerald's house in Connecticut to finish writing her novel.

The Yaddo incident is important in two respects. Firstly, it indicates the emerging anti-Communist paranoia that was to dominate American politics during the 1950s, the period in which O'Connor produced the majority of her work. Secondly, this event appears to have contributed to O'Connor's own conservatism. According to Sally Fitzgerald, this 'episode left a deep impression on her, especially the unexpected and violent attack from the organised left', which she judged 'to be an evil' (12). The animosity between left and right-wing political factions and

O'Connor's response to it, typified the Cold War tensions of her era. Winston Churchill's speech in Missouri, on 5th March 1946, in which he proclaimed that 'an iron curtain has descended across the continent',⁵³ was followed in 1948 by the Soviet blockade of Berlin, and the Communist seizure of power in Czechoslovakia. The Yaddo controversy occurred in the same year in which the Soviet Union detonated its first atom bomb, and due to the prevalent anti-Communist hysteria it was assumed that this technological leap could only have been acquired by espionage.⁵⁴ The significance of the nuclear age to O'Connor is evident in her lecture 'The Nature and Aim of Fiction', when she insists, 'the fiction writer always writes about the whole world, no matter how limited his particular scene. For him, the bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima affects life on the Oconee River, and there's not anything he can do about it' (MM 77). Her sense of this 'global village' is similar to Weil's personalization of international events, but whereas Weil's concern is intensely emotional and engagé, O'Connor remains more detached and resigned.

She completed the preliminary draft of *Wise Blood* in 1950, the year Senator Joseph McCarthy accused the State Department of harbouring Communists; instigating his notorious anti-Communist witch-hunt, assisted by the actions of the House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities.⁵⁵ The effects of such Cold War propaganda are evident in O'Connor's letters, when in 1956 she mentions preventing publication of her work, 'in any Russian-occupied country', because they would probably use the Misfit to represent the Typical American Business Man' (HB 151). In 1961, the year of the Cuban missile crisis, she flippantly informs a friend, 'We talk about the shelter and put it in a different place every day and haven't put it anywhere yet. And at night I dream of radiated bulls and peacocks and swans' (449). As so often in O'Connor's imagination, the comic and the terrible are inseparable.

However 1950, despite its dramatic national, and international events (notably the commencement of the Korean war), was the year in which O'Connor's life altered fundamentally, when she became seriously ill for the first time with lupus. This was the 'impression point' in her life. While hospitalised for several months, O'Connor revised the initial draft of *Wise Blood*, and continued making extensive rewrites throughout the year - despite being re-admitted to hospital several times due to the severity of her illness. In 'On Her Own Work' she maintains 'It is the extreme situation that best reveals what we are essentially' (MM 113), and just as Weil's concept of affliction developed during a personal crisis, it is not surprising that *Wise*

Blood is permeated by an apparent disgust with matter. O'Connor herself recognised the connection between the novel and her disease, insisting that

during this time I was more or less living my life and H. Mote's too and as my disease affected my joints I conceived the notion that I would eventually become paralyzed and was going blind and that in the book I had spelled out my own course, or that in the illness I had spelled out the book. (HB 117-118).

Forced to remain in the South because of her illness, O'Connor moved with her mother to 'Andalusia', a farm owned by relatives and situated a few miles from Milledgeville, Georgia.⁵⁶ Regina O'Connor exerted a deep influence on her daughter's life and work, O'Connor's letters revealing a dominating figure who bears a striking resemblance to O'Connor's fictional farm widows. This similarity is at least in some instances the result of O'Connor's art being a deliberate imitation of aspects of her domestic life. Observing how her mother and the dairyman's wife were preparing for the arrival of a refugee family to work on the farm, she notes they 'have been making curtains for the windows out of chicken-feed sacks' (30). Acknowledging that she aims 'to give my great reading audience a shot of the details some time' (41), O'Connor includes this identical incident in 'The Displaced person' (1954) (CS 196). But more significant than such factual details are O'Connor's duplication of her mother's personality traits in her archetypal female matriarchs. 'Noblesse obleegee with a vengeance' is how O'Connor describes her mother's management of the farm (HB 232), and like her fictional counterparts combining pretentiousness with practicality rather than intellectualism, as O'Connor notes, all the time her mother is reading her manuscripts, 'I know she would rather be in the yard digging'(340).

Regina's attitudes to social decorum and her daughter's fiction provoke either wry amusement, muted rebellion, or repressed anger. In June 1956 O'Connor writes, 'I come from a family where the only emotion respectable to show is irritation' (163-64), and her relationship with her mother is punctuated by conflicts rather than displays of affection. O'Connor relishes appearing defiant, quoting Regina's condemnation of her behaviour, and stressing their political differences.⁵⁷ She obviously enjoys exasperating her mother by contravening the image of Southern femininity which Mrs O'Connor would like her to cultivate. Admitting to regularly wearing a particular sweatshirt, because it was 'my policy at that point in life to create an unfavourable impression' (94), three years later O'Connor informs the

Fitzgeralds that her mother 'is afraid my poor white trash look will disgrace you' (272). But significantly, these rebellions are not sustained. Unlike Simone Weil, whose masculine dress code was provocatively different to the social norm,⁵⁸ O'Connor conforms. 'My urge for such has to be repressed, as my mother does not approve of making a spectacle of oneself when over thirty' (94).

Five years later she concedes 'You can't get ahead of Mother' (423), and despite her self-image as a dissenter, O'Connor's capacity for self-expression appears to have been thwarted by Regina's oppressive personality.⁵⁹ The 'parental presence never contributes to my articulateness' she observes to a friend, 'I might have done better at answering some of your questions had I entertained you in the hen house' (195). This inarticulateness is apparent when she is confronted by Mrs O'Connor's disapproval of her fictional subject matter.

The other day she asked me why I didn't try and write something that people liked instead of the kind of thing I do write. Do you think, she said, that you are really using the talent God gave you when you don't write something that a lot, a LOT, of people like? This always leaves me shaking and speechless, raises my blood pressure 140 degrees, etc. All I can say is, if you have to ask, you'll never know. (326)

The replication of similar mother-daughter conflicts in O'Connor's texts, lends credence to critical opinions which infer that her narratives demonstrate the 'female schizophrenia of authorship' Gilbert and Gubar have identified.⁶⁰ The extent to which O'Connor's texts are dialogic, will be analyzed in subsequent chapters. But O'Connor's tendency to emphasise the humorous aspects of both her illness, and relationship with Regina, while populating her fiction with physical and emotional cripples, suggests that Josephine Hendin's conclusion that O'Connor was 'a woman who lived out a fiction and wrote down her life', is at least partially justified.⁶¹

The majority of O'Connor's letters make light of her deteriorating health. 'I'm informed that its crutches for me from now on out [...] so much for that. I will henceforth be a structure with flying buttresses', she informs 'A' (151). Just as Weil did not reveal details of the mystical 'impression point' in her life until several years later, O'Connor evaded informing 'A' about the exact nature of her disease until she had been writing to her for a year, finally telling her friend she had lupus on 28 July 1956 (168). This suggests how painful to O'Connor the subject was despite her flippant remarks, and that she shared the same tendency as Weil to

compartmentalise her life. That O'Connor's correspondence with 'A' assisted her in coming to terms with, and discussing her illness is apparent when only a few months later she was able to frankly inform Maryat Lee about it the first time they met.⁶²

O'Connor found consolation for her disease in Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's notion of 'passive diminishments'.⁶³ In his book *The Divine Milieu*, de Chardin clarifies 'diminishments' as the ill fortune that may cause illness and accidents etc., and intellectual or moral weaknesses. These diminishments can be transfigured into positive forces for good if they are both struggled against and accepted. 'This hostile force that lays [the victim] low and disintegrates him can become for him a loving principle of renewal, if he accepts it with faith while never ceasing to struggle against it', he claims (*Divine Milieu* 92). However, despite intellectually embracing this positive concept of suffering, the emotional trauma instigated by O'Connor's reluctant return to Georgia is apparent in a letter written in 1957.

This is a Return I have faced and when I faced it I was roped and tied and resigned the way it is necessary to be resigned to death, and largely because I thought it would be the end of any creation, any writing, any WORK from me. (HB 224)

But as she acknowledges in the same letter, 'it was only the beginning' (224), and in the same year she discovered she had lupus *Wise Blood* was published after five years work,⁶⁴ and O'Connor began writing 'A Good Man Is Hard to Find', 'The Life You Save May Be Your Own', 'The River', and 'A Late Encounter with the Enemy', all published in 1953, and included in O'Connor's first collection of short stories, *A Good Man Is Hard to Find and Other Stories* (1955).

Weil's exile from her country, and O'Connor's enforced homecoming, produced periods of prolific writing. In the same manner Weil used letters as a form of contact, and expression of ideas, O'Connor's voluminous correspondence is evidence that she possessed an urge to communicate, as well as narrate.⁶⁵ Her letters are almost as eclectic as Weil's notebooks, containing details of her literary interests, spiritual concerns, world news, and local events. But in contrast to the relentless seriousness of Weil's meditations, O'Connor's correspondence is permeated with humorous anecdotes, directly quoted Southern dialect, and comically bizarre clippings from newspapers.⁶⁶ Between 1952 and her death in 1964, O'Connor wrote to an extensive number of correspondents, but it is her letters

to 'A',⁶⁷ and Maryat Lee which are most significant, revealing her literary and spiritual ideas, and her contradictory personality.

O'Connor and 'A' shared an interest in Simone Weil, and in September 1955 when she was reading *Waiting for God* and *Letter to A Priest*, while discussing Weil in a letter to 'A', O'Connor writes

if I were to live long enough and develop as an artist to the proper extent, I would like to write a comic novel about a woman - and what is more comic and terrible than the angular, intellectual proud woman approaching God inch by inch with ground teeth? (105-06)

Often critical of O'Connor's religious perspective, 'A' became a Catholic before eventually abandoning her faith (to O'Connor's great displeasure), and in an early letter to 'A' it is apparent that this intense spiritual struggle is what intrigues O'Connor about both her friend and Weil. 'I have thought of Simone Weil in connection with you almost from the first [...] your effort not to be seduced by the Church moves me greatly', she writes (93). While a strident defender of institutionalised Catholicism, O'Connor is clearly fascinated by people who resist assimilation into the community of the Church. Apparently riven by her allegiance to the Catholic Church, and a desire to prove that this does not involve relinquishing her individuality, she insists 'I don't find it an infringement of my independence to have the Church tell me what is true and what is not in regard to faith, and what is right and what is wrong in regard to morals' (489). Weil's strident opposition to such a Catholic theory of faith highlights the difference between her notion of the relationship between individual and Church, and O'Connor's. According to Weil, the Thomist concept of faith

implies a 'totalitarianism' as stifling as that of Hitler, if not more so. For if the mind gives its complete adherence not only to what the Church has recognised as being strictly necessary to faith, but furthermore to whatever it shall at any time recognise as being such, the intelligence has perforce to be gagged and reduced to carrying out servile tasks. (LP 39)

Although she insists on the capacity of individual limitations (physical affliction and mental constraints) to contain the potential for spiritual and intellectual progression,

to be regulated by a collective organization such as the Catholic Church is in Weil's thinking automatically restrictive. Clearly opposite to her condemnation of doctrine as intellectually stifling, is O'Connor's assertion that

there is no reason why fixed dogma should fix anything that the writer sees in the world. On the contrary, dogma is an instrument for penetrating reality. Christian dogma is about the only thing that guards and respects mystery. (MM 178)

This viewpoint is consistent with O'Connor's assertion nine years earlier in 1955, that religious beliefs are not artistically restrictive. 'I have never had the sense that being a Catholic is a limit to the freedom of the writer, but just the reverse', she contends (HB 114). However it is important at this juncture to recognise that the frequency of O'Connor's defensive statements about her religion suggests they may conceal a real fear that her faith does in fact compromise her independence. Hinting at this possibility in a letter to 'A' written in 1956 she observes

I can't climb down off the high powered defense reflex [...] If you were Pius XII, my communications would still sound as if they came from a besieged defender of the faith, I know well enough that it is not a defense of the faith, which don't need it, but a defense of myself who does. The Church becomes a part of your ego. (131)

In Weil's case, it is her decision to remain outside institutionalised Catholicism that appears linked to her equally fierce egoism. Critical of Perrin's 'imperfection', which she attributes to his allegiance to the Catholic Church as an institution, Weil offers herself as a model example of the 'intellectual honesty' he should cultivate. 'When I let you have a written sketch of my spiritual autobiography, I had a reason. I wanted to make it possible for you to see for yourself a concrete and certain example of implicit faith', she rather immodestly informs him (WFG 96, 94).

Weil's arguments with Perrin are paralleled by O'Connor's disagreements with 'A' on religious and literary issues. 'Your writing forces me to clarify what I think on various subjects or at least to think on various subjects and is all to my good and to my pleasure' she informs 'A' (HB 103), and Weil's notebooks appear to perform the same interrogative function for her. On 28th December 1956 O'Connor informs 'A', 'reading them is one way to try and understand the age [...] These are books that I

can't begin to exhaust' (189). Her letters to 'A' are important because they do 'clarify' her literary and theological concerns, but unlike Weil's correspondence with Fr. Perrin, O'Connor does not interrogate her beliefs themselves. Weil's theology develops through testing her ideas against Perrin's Catholic perspective, but although occasionally claiming to have doubts about her religious convictions, O'Connor is never specific about them in her letters. 'I think there is no suffering greater than what is caused by the doubts of those who want to believe. I know what torment this is', she contends, but without elaborating further, claims 'I can only see it, in myself anyway, as the process by which faith is deepened' (353-54).

Maintaining her propensity to enjoy appearing controversial, writing to 'A', O'Connor claims she is 'a Catholic peculiarly possessed of the modern consciousness, that thing Jung describes as unhistorical, solitary, and guilty',⁶⁸ a more accurate description of Weil. Yet typically, she refrains from being truly unorthodox by carefully modifying this statement immediately afterwards, insisting she possesses this Jungian consciousness '*within* the Church', and consequently bears 'the necessary burden of the conscious Catholic' (90). Significantly, in over eight years correspondence with Fr. James McCown, O'Connor never challenges Catholic dogma, declaring she has the 'usual Catholic desire not to be a heretic' (171-72). Checking that a lecture she intends to give is theologically sound, she even requests him to obtain permission for her to read Gide and Sartre.⁶⁹ Clearly, O'Connor employs different discourses in different contexts.⁷⁰

Although her correspondence with 'A' concentrates on religious issues, these letters also manage to tease out of O'Connor some noticeably rare, and veiled references to sexuality in both her fiction, and personal life. Referring to 'A's' 'uncanny' ability to identify what she terms 'the lacking category' in her narratives, O'Connor insists

I associate it a good deal beyond the simply virtuous emotions; I identify it plainly with the sacred. My inability to handle it so far in fiction may be purely personal, as my upbringing has smacked a little of Jansenism even if my convictions do not. (117)

She later responds defensively to 'A's' assumption she is romantically inexperienced,⁷¹ but what is significant here is how O'Connor transforms a debate on sexuality into a discussion of theological issues. As with her later arguments with Maryat Lee on racial politics, O'Connor evades confronting subjects she finds disconcerting, by enveloping them in her spiritual perspective. While O'Connor

considers sexual relationships 'the centre of life and most holy', Weil perceives personal detachment as an alternative route to a higher reality. 'Attachment is a manufacturer of illusions and whoever wants reality ought to be detached', she claims (GG 14), 'To love purely is to consent to distance between ourselves and that which we love' (58). The rigorous self-discipline, and almost masochistic denial of affection this demands, is symptomatic of her more severe personality, yet Weil's notebook entries demonstrate her struggle to adhere to such rigorous intellectual stipulations, at the expense of human consolation. Conducting a dialogue with herself, while acknowledging she needs 'the inspiration of friendship', Weil urges herself not 'to be imprisoned by any affection. Preserve your solitude [...] Other affections ought to be severely disciplined' she writes in her notebooks.⁷²

O'Connor's letters are also dialogic, displaying contradictions in her thinking which contravene the stated orthodoxy of the lectures and essays, but it is her fiction which most dynamically explores the conflicting elements of her personality. Claiming to write about Protestant rather than Catholic protagonists, because 'they express their belief in diverse kinds of dramatic action' which best suits her requirements as a writer, O'Connor admits that another reason is 'the prophet is a man apart. He is not typical of a group' (HB 517). Declaring the fierce independence of Southern Fundamentalists both 'painful' and 'grimly comic', she apparently attempts to nullify their implicit challenge to her Catholic ego, absorbing them into her congregation by designating them 'crypto-Catholic'.⁷³ The characteristics O'Connor identifies as typical of her Fundamentalist prophets are strikingly similar to Weil's exaggerated individualism and dramatic combination of the comic and terrible, and just as the questions posed by Weil and 'A' allow her to examine her religious consciousness, O'Connor suggests that her Protestant characters function as an interrogative element in her fiction. Writing to John Hawkes in 1959 she claims

there are some of us who have to pay for our faith every step of the way and who have to work out dramatically what it would be like without it and if being without it would be possible or not. (349-50)

The theological doubts which O'Connor specifically resists acknowledging in her nonfictional work, can be interrogated when dramatised in her narratives.

In 'The Catholic Novelist in the Protestant South' she maintains the 'two circumstances that have given character to my own writing have been those of being

Southern and being Catholic' (MM 196), and her Fundamentalist protagonists are intrinsically products of O'Connor's Southern milieu. But by using them to convey her Catholic theology, she demonstrates the consistent tension between her admiration for, and attraction to individualism, and a conflicting dependence on the communal as the basis for constructing her identity. In this she is diametrically opposed to Simone Weil, who is drawn to Catholicism, Communism, Trade Unionism, and even Fascism (WFG 53), but whose sense of self is reliant on maintaining her separation from such organised groups. Being French is the only impersonal identifying categorization which Weil acknowledges, yet this only becomes an issue when she is threatened with, or actually isolated from her homeland, and she makes plain her patriotism is ultimately reserved for her spiritual rather than her terrestrial country.⁷⁴

For someone to whom retaining a sense of individuality is important, O'Connor's constant definition of herself via the groupings of Southern and Catholic is problematic. Resenting the 'label' she believes is 'pasted' on Southern writers, 'and all the misconceptions that go with it' - most notably the notion that the majority are 'unhappy combinations of Poe and Erskine Caldwell' (MM 37, 28) O'Connor wants to be considered at once a Catholic, Southern, writer, and yet more than that. Whilst using her lectures and essays to emphasise her regional and religious roots, she simultaneously wishes to be considered beyond the restraints of such thematic ghettoism. But the superposed (or in O'Connor's terminology 'prophetic') vision required to achieve this is made more difficult by her essential dialogism. Exactly how to 'read' O'Connor is complicated by the conflict between her individualist and collective tendencies, and a consistent desire to be controversial delimited by orthodoxy.

O'Connor's interest in Weil and 'A' allows her the vicarious pleasure of rebellion against Catholic orthodoxy, and analogously her friendship with Maryat Lee is important because it reveals her relationship with her Southern community. Lee's controversial opposition to racism enables O'Connor to be in contact with radical politics, while remaining conservative herself.⁷⁵ Revealing the nature of their friendship, she notes (16 June 1964), 'It's fortunate we didn't get together at that age. We would have blown something up. I would have found the matches and let you light the fuse' (HB 584). O'Connor first wrote to Lee in 1957, the year in which the National Guard was used to enable desegregation of the school system in Little Rock, Arkansas despite violent protests.⁷⁶ When the NAACP's argument against the 'separate but equal' education system was accepted by the Supreme Court in 1954, the South's historical racial tensions were intensified,⁷⁷ and it is significant

that O'Connor wrote 'The Artificial Nigger' (1955) in the same year. Continuing to redefine disturbing issues in a theological context, she negates the historically specific suffering generated by segregationism, aiming instead in this story to suggest 'the redemptive quality of the Negro's suffering for us all' (78). The Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott dominated Southern politics in 1956, and the extent of the cultural turbulence caused by the Civil Rights movement is apparent when O'Connor requests Lee visits Georgia, 'before we secede from the Union. The Russian moon [Sputnik] is just a light diversion for us' (246).

Just as O'Connor's correspondence with 'A' clarifies her theology, the letters to Lee reveal her position on the race issue. Sally Fitzgerald delicately refers to 'an area of sensibility' in O'Connor 'that seems to have remained imperfectly developed'. Explaining that the Negroes on the O'Connor farm were 'primitive', she tactfully suggests 'they perhaps served as trees obscuring her view of the social forest' (xviii, xviv). Actually, as with Weil, there is a disparity between O'Connor's intellectual concerns, and her practical prejudices. She insists that after hearing a bus driver make a racist remark to some coloured passengers, she instantly became an integrationist.⁷⁸ But two years later, when Maryat Lee suggests O'Connor meet James Baldwin in Georgia, she reacts with near panic.

No I can't see James Baldwin in Georgia. It would cause the greatest trouble and disturbance and disunion. In New York it would be nice to meet him; here it would not. I observe the traditions of the society I feed on - it's only fair. Might as well expect a mule to fly as me to see James Baldwin in Georgia. (329)

The incident highlights a crucial distinction between Weil and O'Connor. Weil is an activist, committed to physically assisting the victims of affliction - Simone de Beauvoir has observed how she envied Weil for 'having a heart that could beat right across the world' (Pétrement 51). But O'Connor resists direct intervention even in her own region, unwilling personally to confront her society, and risk the type of notoriety that distinguishes Weil.

Although aware of the implications of racism, O'Connor constantly emphasises what she perceives as its comic elements.⁷⁹ Yet demonstrating a more subtle awareness of race relations, she claims to C. Ross Mullins, 'the 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'.⁸⁰ In some ways O'Connor's consistently flippant attitude to the race issue, appears an attempt to disguise her genuine apprehensiveness about desegregation.⁸¹

O'Connor's short story 'Everything That Rises Must Converge' (1961), which won first prize in the O. Henry Awards, was written and published in the same year that the Freedom Riders defied segregation laws throughout the South. Applying Teilhard de Chardin's notion of convergence to the desegregation debate, O'Connor insists the text 'expresses what I have to say on That Issue'.⁸² On 28th August 1963, at the climax of the 'March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom', Martin Luther King gave his 'I have a Dream' speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Only four days after King told the protesters, 'I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, sons of former slaves and sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood',⁸³ O'Connor returned to That Issue. In a vitriolic statement she declared, 'The topical is poison. I got away with it in "Everything That Rises" but only because I say a plague on everybody's house as far as the race business goes' (HB 537). Increasingly defensive, in May 1964, she wrote to Lee, 'About the Negroes, the kind I don't like is the philosophizing prophesying pontificating kind, the James Baldwin kind. Very ignorant but never silent' (580). Such caustic criticism is similar to Weil's anti-Semitic rhetoric, but can be at least partially explained by the influence of Regina's reactionary discourse.⁸⁴

O'Connor attempts to justify the South's racial prejudices (and possibly her own), by insisting 'bad manners are better than no manners at all', and consistently equating 'manners' with charity.⁸⁵ Again examining in the narratives issues which she resists discussing in her non-fictional work, 'Judgement Day', O'Connor's final story published posthumously in 1965, depicts a Negro's militant opposition to these Southern 'manners'. Completed only a couple of weeks after the Civil Rights Act became law on 2 July 1964, the text displays a more sophisticated awareness of race relations than O'Connor's belligerent letters to Lee suggest. As a reworking of O'Connor's first short story, 'The Geranium' (1946), 'Judgement Day' reflects the impact of the Civil Rights movement on O'Connor's work. In the first story the Negro character assists Old Dudley into his daughter's apartment, but in the later text, Tanner's request for help elicits a violent response from his black neighbour, resulting in the old man's death. O'Connor's idealistic intention in 'The Artificial Nigger' (1950) to suggest that the Negro's suffering as redemptive (another conversion of a disturbing issue into specifically theological terms); develops in 'Everything That Rises Must Converge' (1961) and 'Judgement Day' into a more plausible appraisal of racial tensions. The apocalyptic tone of Tanner's 'You idiots

didn't know it was Judgement Day, did you?' (CS 549), suggests that O'Connor's combination of humour and irritation when discussing racial politics disguises a more serious concern.⁸⁶

O'Connor's defensiveness about her religion and the race issue, is paralleled by attempts to deny her status as an intellectual. 'I'm not an intellectual and have a horror of making an idiot of myself with abstract statements and theories', she writes in 1957 (HB 202). Scathingly critical of such intellectual abstractionism in her fiction, her narrators consistently disapprove of intellectuals such as Hulga in 'Good Country people' (1955), Asbury of 'The Enduring Chill' (1958), Rayber in *The Violent Bear It Away* (1960), Julian in 'Everything That Rises Must Converge' (1961), and Sheppard of 'The Lambe Shall Enter First' (1962). Like Rayber who 'couldn't do nothing, couldn't act',⁸⁷ they are apparently immersed in the same 'logic, definitions, abstractions, and formulas' O'Connor considers damaging to Catholics because they contribute to an evasion of reality (MM 205).

O'Connor's correspondence, book reviews and personal library supply incontrovertible evidence of her own widespread academic interests.⁸⁸ Yet she deliberately employs backwoods dialect and misspellings to subvert profound comments, cultivating the perception of herself as a provincial eccentric.⁸⁹ In a letter to Maryat Lee (24 February 1957), O'Connor admits that when questioned about what motivates her writing, 'My inclination at such a point is always to get deathly stupid and say, "Ah jus writes"'.⁹⁰ Her complex persona is evident, when although apparently embarrassed to be considered an intellectual, O'Connor is simultaneously intellectually patronizing, as when she declares 'those ladies under the dryer all consider themselves intelligent' (HB 271). Though constantly reiterating her irritation at becoming a local celebrity, O'Connor apparently enjoyed the feeling of superiority it gave her.⁹¹ As early as 1955 she wrote to Sally Fitzgerald, 'my talent lies in a kind of intellectual vaudeville. I leave them not knowing exactly what I have said but feeling that they have been inspired' (80). Her attitude here contrasts with Simone Weil's, who although also a consummate academic and anti-intellectual, actively attempted to diffuse the separation between herself and her audience, especially the uneducated workers she admired.⁹²

O'Connor frequently attempted to detach herself from what she considered unsympathetic audiences, delivering the majority of her lectures to local groups, and Southern or Catholic colleges, seemingly because she felt less intellectually threatened. 'I do fine talking to people who don't know anything but I couldn't say anything at Cornell that they hadn't already heard before' she reveals to a friend.⁹³

This evasion of challenging confrontations is a consistent trait which O'Connor acknowledged to Lee shortly before her death. 'Strategic retreat. I been doing it all my life and it works very well' (574). But despite being intimidated by sophisticated academic audiences, O'Connor persevered with giving lectures because of their financial rewards,⁹⁴ and more importantly, because they granted her access to the physical and intellectual world beyond the confines of Milledgeville. As she explained in 1954, 'while I don't go in for this sort of thing, I go for leaving town occasionally and need almost no persuasion to do so' (CW 922).

The limitations imposed by O'Connor's Southern exile were matched later in her career by a feeling of communicative inadequacy. In 1963, she observed, 'I've been writing for nearly twenty years and the one overwhelming sense I have had, constantly, is of my own inarticulateness' (HB 511). This could account for her dread of interviews,⁹⁵ but O'Connor's physical inferiority complex may provide another reason. The massive cortizone injections required to treat her disease caused facial swelling and temporary hair loss. Understandably she loathed having her photograph taken,⁹⁶ and the humorous references to her appearance fail to disguise a self-consciously grotesque image of herself. Weil shares this self-image, but hers is characteristically self-imposed and melodramatic, as when she likens herself to 'the color of dead leaves', or 'certain unnoticed insects' (WFG 101).

O'Connor's lack of confidence ensured that she was apprehensive about reviews, particularly critical responses to *The Violent Bear It Away*, eventually published in 1960, after seven years work.⁹⁷ Intensely irritated by some of the confused reviews the novel received, she attributed them to the misunderstanding of her intentions, and responded with caustic condemnation.⁹⁸ O'Connor's obsession with reader perceptions, and her notion of an audience predominantly unwilling or unable to understand her fiction, is clearly connected to her insecurities - a sense of inarticulacy, and fear of being misinterpreted. In an interview given in 1962, she told Joel Wells she could wait one hundred years for the right type of readers,⁹⁹ but what O'Connor perceived as adverse reactions to her work, and a feeling that she was creatively exhausted, contributed to a growing sense of frustration. In a letter written in 1963 to Sister Mariella Gable, O'Connor confides 'I've been writing eighteen years and I've reached the point where I can't do again what I know I can do well, and the larger things I need to do now, I doubt my capacity for doing' (HB 518).

Both O'Connor and Weil became increasingly depressed by their physical and mental limitations, but responded differently. Weil's inability to return to France, or

have her work taken seriously by the Free French, prompted an apparently negative response, in which she literally decreated herself. In the last few months of her life Weil appears to have abandoned herself to her depression in a way that O'Connor did not. In a letter to Schumann she writes:

I feel an ever increasing sense of devastation, both in my intellect and in the centre of my heart, at my inability to think with truth at the same time about the affliction of men, the perfection of God, and the link between the two. (SL 178).

Feeling her superposed vision failing, she wrote only short letters to her family, and her very brief London notebook during this period. O'Connor adjusted to her disease in a more positive manner, her adoption of de Chardin's concept of 'passive diminishments' apparently allowing her to perceive personal limitation as a less tortuously self-destructive process than Weil's notion of decreation. Although Weil contends that affliction provides evidence of God's love for man she is emotionally devastated by its onslaught. O'Connor, although acknowledging the alienation caused by physical constraints: 'sickness is a place [...] and its always a place where there's no company, where nobody can follow' (HB 163), also perceives suffering as a positive experience of God's love. 'Sickness before death is a very appropriate thing, and I think those who don't have it miss one of God's mercies', she claims (163). But unlike Weil, O'Connor was able to reconcile her intellectual understanding of suffering with its personal physical consequences, and at greater peace with herself, managed to write prolifically during the final months of her life, producing some of her finest work despite being seriously ill. Frantically working on the manuscripts of 'Revelation' (1964), 'Parker's Back' (1965), and 'Judgement Day' (1965) in hospital, O'Connor prepared her final collection of short stories, published posthumously as *Everything That Rises Must Converge* (1965).

In contrast to Weil, the ultimate outsider, O'Connor died at home in Milledgeville on 3 August 1964, aged thirty-nine. She lived only five years longer than Weil, and both women's premature deaths make it difficult to estimate the extent to which their writing careers would have developed. Weil's unfinished essay 'Is There a Marxist Doctrine?', written in London during 1943, graphically indicates how time ran out for her, the manuscript abruptly breaking off in mid sentence.¹⁰⁰ But more significantly, Jacques Cabaud notes how Weil 'dreamed of undertaking a big work, under the title *The Descent of God*, which according to her publishers, was to be an annotated anthology of the "most beautiful non-Christian texts upon the love of

God” (Cabaud 224). Unfortunately never completed, all we possess to indicate something of Weil’s intended project are several of her essays written about this time, later published as *Intimations of Christianity Among the Ancient Greeks*.

O’Connor never wrote her novel about a female heroine - how different would be our assessments of her work if she had?. Although she had been working on a proposed third novel, *Why Do the Heathen Rage?*, it was never finished. A fragment of this text was published in *Esquire* in July 1963, and substantiates the comments O’Connor made in the previous year that she needed new inspiration, having exhausted her ‘original potentiality’, and ‘being now in need of the kind of grace that deepens perception, a new shot of life or something’ (HB 468). The manuscripts for *Why Do the Heathen Rage?* contain characters named or closely resembling previous protagonists: Julian, Tilman, O.E. Parker and Asbury, including plot-lines and situations from previous stories. For example ‘The Enduring Chill’ (1958) is reworked as a flashback second chapter of the novel.¹⁰¹

As O’Connor and Weil had portions of their work and correspondence published after their deaths by editors, the absence of authorial control ensures it is difficult to assess how representative of their form and theology this material is. In their Foreward to *Mystery and Manners* (1984), Sally and Robert Fitzgerald acknowledge the extensive ‘rearrangements’ and ‘transpositions’ they performed to structure O’Connor’s disparate manuscripts into one volume.¹⁰² In addition, the correspondence in *The Habit of Being* is marked by numerous ellipses indicating editorial deletions, and the letters which O’Connor wrote to her mother are not included - consequently an essential element of her most intimate personal thoughts remain unknown,¹⁰³ whereas Weil’s are more readily accessible via her notebook entries.

However, the problems generated by posthumous editing are particularly relevant to Weil, as the majority of her writings were published after her death. The fragmentary form of Weil’s notebooks lend themselves to selective readings, and *La pesanteur et la Grace*, originally issued in France in 1947, constitutes a distortion of her notebook entries. Edited by her Catholic friend, Gustave Thibon, it reproduces the areas of Weil’s more Christian thinking, while excluding or under-representing the major influences of Eastern religions, Greek philosophy, literature and Pythagorean mathematics on her work.¹⁰⁴ When Fr. Perrin’s collection of Weil’s letters and essays was published as *L’Attente de Dieu* (1950), the image of Weil as a Catholic *manqué* was unduly reinforced.¹⁰⁵ This Catholicisation of Weil led Pope John XXIII and his successor Paul VI to be both interested in, and influenced by her

life and work.¹⁰⁶ Only when a more comprehensive selection of Weil's writings became accessible, was the eclectic nature of her theology finally appreciated.

Considering the congruence between areas of Simone Weil and Flannery O'Connor's lives, and the problems their early deaths create for posthumous editing, it is entirely appropriate that both writers achieved increased recognition for their work during the same year. In 1988, forty-five years after her death, the publication by Gallimard of Weil's *Oeuvres complètes* began with the first volume *Premiers écrits philosophiques* (see Nevin 454). Including a large quantity of unpublished material, this series testifies to the prodigious amount of work Weil produced during her short life, and how much fertile ground her philosophy still supplies for academic research.

The inclusion of *Flannery O'Connor Collected Works* in the prestigious Library of America Series firmly established her place in the canon of American literature, as only the second twentieth-century author to be included by 1988 (William Faulkner being the first). To what extent the enhancement of O'Connor's reputation is dependent on her limited fictional oeuvre or the secondary material of essays, lectures and letters, will be discussed in subsequent chapters. However, as with the new edition of Weil's work, the inclusion of previously unpublished material, notably twenty-two largely unedited letters, has provided scope for renewed scholarly analysis.

These landmark editions of both Weil and O'Connor's work demonstrate a sustained interest in both writers, which has steadily increased rather than diminished since their deaths. Reprints of Weil's books become more frequent, O'Connor's stories are increasingly anthologised, while the disproportionate amount of books, articles and theses written about her short novels and stories multiply. Currently, O'Connor is literally a marketable, as well as a literary commodity, the widely available O'Connor memorabilia testifying to her 'celebrity' status.

But does such over-exposure (academic and otherwise) contribute to reductive readings of O'Connor's fiction by imprinting these one-dimensional images of an easily definable-Southern, Catholic, eccentric writer onto the consciousness of her audience? Has the literary canonization of O'Connor been matched by an undue deification of her authorial intentions, in which her literary and theological concerns (so emphatically delineated in her non-fictional writings), are accepted too readily as successfully implemented within the narratives, rather than subjected to rigorous investigation?

To interrogate these issues and answer the questions they raise demands a degree of detachment difficult to attain after over forty years of O'Connor criticism. Writing in 1955, O'Connor notes that Caroline Gordon Tate 'is always telling me that the endings are too flat and that at the end I must gain some altitude and get a larger view' (HB 78). By using Simone Weil's superposed philosophy, this thesis will endeavour to provide the elevated, expansive perspective which O'Connor's work deserves, beginning in Chapter One with an analysis of each writer's preferred forms of communicating their ideas.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1. Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, trans. by Emma Craufurd (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, ARK edition, 1987), p.121. Further references to this edition (hereafter GG) are given after quotations in the text. See also:

Reading - except where there is a certain quality of attention - obeys the law of gravity. We read the opinions suggested by gravity (the preponderant part played by the passions and by social conformity in the judgements we form of men and events). With a higher quality of attention our reading discovers gravity itself, and various systems of possible balance. (Ibid., p.122)

2. 'Superposed readings: To read necessity behind sensation, to read order behind necessity, to read God behind order', *ibid.*, p.123. 'Truth: many readings at once? An infinite number? But *readings*, not just opinions or thoughts', in Simone Weil, *The Notebooks of Simone Weil*, trans. by Arthur Wills, 2 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), I, p.45. Further references to this edition (hereafter NB) are given after quotations in the text.

3. *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose*, selected and ed. by Sally and Robert Fitzgerald (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), p.72. Further references to this edition (hereafter MM) are given after quotations in the text.

4. *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 2-3.

5. Kermode identifies this process in Christ's explanation of the purpose of his parables to the disciples in Mark 4: 11-12:

To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables; so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand; lest they should turn again, and be forgiven. (*Genesis*, p. 2)

6. *Ibid.*, p.16. Kermode obtains the term 'impression point' from Wilhelm Dilthey's *Gesammelte Schriften* (1913-1958), vols V, VI (*Die geistige Welt*). See *ibid.*, p.147.

7. For O'Connor's comments on the 'legitimate' uses of the grotesque genre and its links to prophecy see her lecture 'Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern

Fiction', MM, pp. 36-50. For her stress on the anagogical gesture as the key to successful fiction, and how closely it relates to Kermodé's notions of divination, impression point, and insider and outsider readers see O'Connor's loaded comments on her short story 'A Good Man Is Hard to Find' and how to interpret it, given immediately before she read the story to an audience: *ibid.*, pp.110-114. For example: 'in this story you should be on the lookout for such things as the action of grace in the grandmother's soul and not for the dead bodies', *ibid.*, p.113.

8. 'Wise Blood, Artistic Anemia, and the Hemorrhaging of O'Connor Criticism', *Studies in American Fiction*, 17.1 (1989), 33-50 (p.42).

9. See O'Connor's 'The Fiction Writer and His Country' for an example of her aural circumcision, MM, pp.25-35. Carol Shloss, amongst others, has noted how this essay radically altered the critical climate:

Since then criticism often has taken statements of faith in her essays as the key to correlative spiritual meanings in her fiction. Working in the manner of biblical exegetes, armed with this privileged and extraneous knowledge, such critics rarely display doubt that submerged meanings of a certain type exist.

See her finely argued *Flannery O'Connor's Dark Comedies: The Limits of Inference* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), p.14. Book length studies by the aurally circumcised include: Carter W. Martin, *The True Country: Themes in the Fiction of Flannery O'Connor* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969); David Eggenschwiler, *The Christian Humanism of Flannery O'Connor* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1972); and most recently Margaret Earley Whitt, *Understanding Flannery O'Connor* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995).

10. 'It is the nature of fiction not to be good for much unless it is good in itself' O'Connor maintains, MM, p.81. She acknowledges that the 'writer has no rights except those he forges for himself within his own work', in Richard Gilman, 'On Flannery O'Connor', in *Conversations with Flannery O'Connor*, ed. by Rosemary M. Magee (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1987), pp. 51-57 (p.57) (first publ. in *The New York Review of Books*, 21 August 1969, 24-26). Further references to this edition (hereafter CFO) are given after quotations in the text.

11. See for example O'Connor's superposed comments on the writer - text - reader relationship. 'It is what writer, character, and reader share that makes it possible to write fiction at all', MM, pp.204-205. Yet the 'writer is only free when he can tell the reader to go jump in the lake' she insists, in Betsy Lochridge, 'An Afternoon with Flannery O'Connor', in CFO, pp.37-40 (first publ. in *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution Magazine*, 1 November 1959, 38-40). For a useful analysis of

O'Connor's dialogism in both her non-fictional work and the narratives, see Robert H. Brinkmeyer, Jr., *The Art and Vision of Flannery O'Connor* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989).

12. Overviews of O'Connor criticism which provide a basis for the superposed study of different critical opinions are found in Suzanne Morrow Paulson, *Flannery O'Connor: A Study of the Short Fiction* (Boston: Twayne, 1988); Brian Abel Ragen, 'Grace and Grotesques: Recent Books on Flannery O'Connor', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 27.3 (1991), 386-398; Michael Kreyling, ed., 'Introduction', in *New Essays on Wise Blood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 1-24. See also Sura P. Rath, 'Introduction', in *Flannery O'Connor: New Perspectives*, ed. by Rath and Mary Neff Shaw (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 1-11; and Sarah J. Fodor, 'Marketing Flannery O'Connor: Institutional Politics and Literary Evaluation', *ibid.*, pp.12-37. The value to O'Connor criticism of superposing carnal and spiritual readings is apparent in Frederick Asals' comment on Josephine Hendin's *The World of Flannery O'Connor* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970): 'How recognize the enlivening effect of Josephine Hendin's book when the main stimulus was to ferocious dissent?', *Flannery O'Connor: The Imagination of Extremity* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1982), p. 4. Despite his friendship with O'Connor and therefore insider status, John Hawkes in his article 'Flannery O'Connor's Devil', in *Sewanee Review*, 70 (1962), 395-407, by offering an essentially outsider's response: attributing to O'Connor's authorial attitude a diabolic impetus, acts as a catalyst for eloquent defences of O'Connor's work. Preston M. Browning's *Flannery O'Connor* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1974), argues persuasively it is precisely the coincidence of the demonic and sacred in O'Connor's fiction which produces its power. By arguing against the ferocious outsider article by Satterfield, Jonathan Witt provides a balanced reading of *Wise Blood* in 'Wise Blood and the Irony of Redemption', *Flannery O'Connor Bulletin* (hereafter FOCB), 22 (1993-1994), 12-24. A fine recent study which acknowledges the impact of the type of aural circumcision I am associating with O'Connor, and analyses the superposed, contradictory nature of O'Connor's non-fictional and narrative forms, perceiving her work as 'spiritual' in Kermode's sense, is Joanne Halleran McMullen's *Writing Against God: Language as Message in the Literature of Flannery O'Connor* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1996).

13. In a letter to Sally and Robert Fitzgerald in Summer 1952, O'Connor states she has read 'a good bit' about Simone Weil, and she was still receiving books on Weil from her friend 'A' in July 1963. *The Habit of Being: Letters of Flannery O'Connor*, selected and ed. by Sally Fitzgerald (New York: First Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1979, 1988), p.40, p.530. Further references to this edition (hereafter HB) are given after quotations in the text.

14. MM, p.159, HB, p. 189. Initially O'Connor considered Weil's life more interesting than her philosophy. 'The life of this woman still intrigues me while much of what she writes, naturally, is ridiculous to me', letter to 'A' (24 September 1955), *ibid.*, p. 105. But after reading more of Weil's work O'Connor's interest in

Weil's ideas is apparent. When reading the *Notebooks* she informs 'A' in December 1956:

Reading them is one way to try to understand the age [...] I am more than a little obliged to you. These are books that I can't begin to exhaust, and Simone Weil is a mystery that should keep us all humble, and I need it more than most. (Ibid., p.189)

Still absorbed in Weil's *Notebooks* a month later she observes there 'are remarkable things there and if I really own the complete Simone Weil I feel very rich', letter to 'A' (12 January 1957), *ibid.*, p.196.

15. Simone Weil, 'Spiritual Autobiography' (1942), *Waiting for God*, trans. by Emma Craufurd (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p.64. Further references to this edition (hereafter WFG) are given after quotations in the text. 'Attention' is a key concept in Weil's philosophy which I examine in subsequent chapters.

16. For details of Weil's lectures at Roanne see: Simone Weil, *Lectures on Philosophy*, trans. by Hugh Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978). Further references to this edition (hereafter LPY) are given after quotations in the text. Weil's essays on Plato, together with several about Greek literature, and Pythagorean geometry are contained in Simone Weil, *Intimations of Christianity Among the Ancient Greeks* (London: ARK Paperbacks, 1987). Further references to this edition (hereafter IC) are given after quotations in the text.

17. For an excellent analysis of Weil's Platonism and its importance to her understanding of Christian theology, see Eric O. Springstead, *Christus Mediator: Platonic Mediation in the Thought of Simone Weil* (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1983). Informative studies on the impact of Alain's work on Weil's philosophy include Thomas R. Nevin, Chapter Two: 'Le Maître', in *Simone Weil: Portrait of a Self-Exiled Jew* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), pp.39-56; and Simone Pétrement, Chapter Two: 'The Encounter with Alain', in *Simone Weil: A Life*, trans. by Raymond Rosenthal (Oxford: A.R. Mowbray, 1977), pp.25-42. On Weil's similarities with and differences to Sartre and Camus see Eric O. Springstead, *Simone Weil and the Suffering of Love* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley, 1986), p.4; on Camus and Weil see Neal Oxenhandler, *Looking for Heroes in Postwar France: Albert Camus, Max Jacob, Simone Weil* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1996). See Robert Coles, *Simone Weil: A Modern Pilgrimage* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1987), p.151 on Weil's Protestant rather than Catholic existentialism; and on French existentialism see Eric Matthews, *Twentieth Century French Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.58-107.

18. David McLellan, *Simone Weil: Utopian Pessimist* (London: PAPERMAC, Macmillan, 1989), p.25.
19. See Jacques Cabaud, *Simone Weil: A Fellowship in Love* (New York: Channel Press, 1964), pp.73-81 for an account of this period.
20. For an account of Weil's meeting with Trotsky at her parent's apartment in Paris, see McLellan, p.65.
21. For a detailed examination of Weil's factory work and its impact on her life and philosophy see Pétrement, pp.214-247.
22. According to Pétrement, 'the doctors could never discover the cause of the ailment, but her symptoms did correspond to larval sinusitis' (Pétrement, pp.69-70). The possible link between Weil's physical and psychological states, the potential for her ill-health and extreme asceticism to be symptomatic of anorexia nervosa and sexual repression are analysed by several critics. See Coles, *Pilgrimage*, pp.23-41 and Ann Loades, 'Simone Weil - Sacrifice: A Problem for Theology', in *Images of Belief in Literature*, ed. by David Jasper (London: Macmillan, 1984), pp.122-137. Also: Judith Van Herik, 'Simone Weil's Religious Imagery: How Looking Becomes Eating', in *Immaculate and Powerful: The Female in Sacred Image and Social Reality*, ed. by Clarissa W. Atkinson, Constance H. Buchanan and Margaret R. Miles (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), pp.260-282; P. E. Cruise, 'The Problem of Being Simone Weil', *Judaism*, 35.1 (1986), 98-106.
23. WFG, p.67. See also Weil's letter to Jöe Bousquet (12 May 1942), written seven years after her factory work. 'The combination of personal experience and sympathy for the wretched mass of people around me [...] implanted so deep in my heart the affliction of social degradation that I have felt a slave ever since', in Simone Weil, *Seventy Letters*, trans. and arranged by Richard Rees (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p.140. Further references to this edition (hereafter SL) are given after quotations in the text.
24. *The Simone Weil Reader*, ed. by George A. Panichas (Mt. Kisco, New York: Moyer Bell, 1977), p.455, p.462. Further references to this edition (hereafter SWR) are given after quotations in the text.
25. For an account of this incident, and Weil's disillusionment with the Spanish Civil War, see Cabaud, pp.136-143.
26. For example see Weil's Pre-War Notebook. The first page is concerned with 'Forms of power - or rather the pursuit of power', while it closes with the

consummate terrestrial concern, 'Confirm whether or not the advanced modern agricultural technique exhausts the soil? Study also the question of artificial manures'! in Simone Weil, *First and Last Notebooks*, trans. by Richard Rees (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp.1-62, (p.3, p.62). Further references to this edition (hereafter FLN) are given after quotations in the text.

27. See Book X of St. Augustine's *Confessions*, trans. by Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 179-220 for how he selects his conversion as the impression point, or key to his whole life. See T. R. Wright, *Theology and Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), pp. 92-110 for a discussion of how spiritual autobiographies such as the *Confessions* constitute a theological form with distinctively literary traits.

28. WFG, p.74. Weil informs Perrin:

you have forced me to face the whole question of the faith, dogma, and the sacraments, obliging me to consider them closely and at length with the fullest possible attention, making me see them as things toward which I have obligations that I have to discern and perform. I should never have done this otherwise and it is indispensable for me to do it. (WFG, pp.73-74)

29. Pétrement, p.456. For Perrin's personal recollections of Weil see his preface to *Attente de Dieu* (Paris: Fayard, 1966), and J.M. Perrin and Gustave Thibon, *Simone Weil As We Knew Her*, trans. by Emma Craufurd (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953). Pétrement's claim that Weil and Bousquet had a deep friendship is sustained by the long letter Weil wrote to him after her visit (12 May 1942), which expresses her admiration for Bousquet's ability to endure affliction without being corrupted by it - a central tenet of her mystical philosophy. SL, pp.136-42.

30. See 'What Is a Jew?' (November 1940):

The concept of heredity may be applied to a race, but it is difficult to apply it to a religion. I myself, who professes no religion and never have, have certainly inherited nothing from the Jewish religion. Since I practically learned to read from Racine, Pascal, and other French writers of the 17th century, since my spirit was thus impregnated at an age when I had not heard talk of "Jews", I would say that if there is a religious tradition which I regard as my patrimony, it is the Catholic tradition. (SWR, p.80)

31. John-Paul Sartre, *What is Literature?*, trans. by Bernard Frechtman (London: Methuen, 1986), p.50.

32. For details of Thibon's friendship with Weil, and his receipt of her notebooks, see his 'Introduction' to GG, pp.vii-xxxvii.

33. Ann Loades, 'Simone Weil and Antigone: Innocence and Affliction', in *Simone Weil's Philosophy of Culture: Readings Toward a Divine Humanity*, ed. by Richard Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.277-94 (p.291).

34. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London and Glasgow: [n.pub.] [1902] 1960), pp.43-45, quoted in T. R. Wright, p.94.

35. See Weil's many comments in her *Notebooks* including:

To speak of "God as educator" in connection with this people is a heinous sort of joke. Is it surprising that there should be so much evil in a civilization - our own which is corrupted at its roots, in its very inspiration, by this atrocious lie? The curse of Israel weighs upon Christendom. The atrocities, the exterminations of heretics and of unbelievers-all this was Israel - (and is so still, up to a certain point...) Totalitarianism is Israel. (NB, pp.570-71)

'The Jews-that handful of uprooted individuals-have been responsible for the uprooting of the whole terrestrial globe', she claims, *ibid.*, p.575.

36. Weil concludes that 'the Hebrews must have distorted history, as Semites and murderers of the Canaanites', and asserts that:

there is one thing which is a practical certainty, namely, that people have wanted to hide something from us, and they have succeeded in doing so. It is not by chance that so many texts have been destroyed, that so much obscurity surrounds so essential a party of history [...] There has probably been a systematic destruction of documents.

In Simone Weil, *Letter to A Priest*, trans. by A.F. Wills (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), p.41, p.84. Further references to this edition (hereafter LP) are given after quotations in the text.

37. LP, p.15. Just how much Weil knew about the Holocaust remains unclear. While working for the Free French in London, a Dr. Kac claims he discussed the atrocities with her, and 'She took refuge in a complete dumbness. When I pressed her, she showed herself profoundly irritated [...] After thirty years, I still see her frozen stare. I felt I was facing two machine guns', he maintains. Quoted by Paul Giniewski,

Simone Weil ou la haine de soi (Paris: Berg International, 1978), pp.48-49. Referred to by Nevin, pp.243-244. Yet Malou David's insistence that Weil actively assisted Jewish refugees in Marseilles, demonstrates that she had knowledge of the Holocaust beyond her own experiences, and therefore her anti-Semitism is itself contradictory.

38. Quoted from Simone Weil's manuscripts: No. 658, 'Bases d'un statut des minorités français non chrétiennes et d'origine étrangère', 'Ecrits de Londres et de Marseille', the unpublished Simone Weil Papers, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. See Nevin, pp.244-46.

39. When *La pesanteur et la grace* was published in 1947, Wladimir Rabi has noted how 'we [the Jews] had emerged from the greatest catastrophe of our history', and Weil's references to Judaism 'constituted an insupportable outrage. I believe it is fair to say that almost no one, excepting a few rare individuals, ever got over the vexation and grief they felt then.' Quoted in Nevin, pp.252-53. Some Catholics were similarly appalled by what they considered the Catholic community's over-eager acceptance of Weil. See Georges Frénaud, 'Simone Weil's Religious Thought in the Light of Catholic Theology', *Theological Studies*, 14.3 (1953), 349-76 for a detailed analysis of Weil's unorthodoxy.

40. The actions of the Jewish, French philosopher Henri Bergson, who was also sympathetic to Catholicism, provide an interesting socio-historical context in which to judge both Weil's refusal to join the Catholic Church and her anti-Semitism. As Eric Matthews notes, in 1937 Bergson

said the only thing which was keeping him from being received into the Catholic Church was his desire to identify with his own Jewish background at such a time of anti-semitic persecution [...] He died in occupied Paris in 1941, from pneumonia contracted while he was queuing in bitterly cold weather to register as a Jew. (Matthews, pp.15-16)

41. Loades, *Images*, p.126.

42. Stanley Edgar Hyman considers O'Connor 'an outsider as a woman, a southerner, and a Roman Catholic in the South', and believes this 'multiple alienation from the dominant assumptions' of American culture was advantageous to her as writer. See his *Flannery O'Connor* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966), p.46. For useful counterpoints to O'Connor's views on Catholicism, and discussions of the extent to which Catholic American culture is or is not a source of marginalisation from the rest of American society, see James T. Fisher, *The Catholic Counterculture in America, 1933-1962* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989). See also: Andrew M. Greeley, *The Catholic Myth: The*

Behavior and Beliefs of American Catholics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990); and Eugene Kennedy, *Tomorrow's Catholics, Yesterday's Church* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

43. Flannery O'Connor, *The Complete Stories* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p.178. Further references to this edition (hereafter CS) are given after quotations in the text.

44. *Ibid.*, p.492. For an informative discussion of O'Connor's Holocaust imagery and its relation to her fiction see Marshall Bruce Gentry, *Flannery O'Connor's Religion of the Grotesque* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1986)

45. For example see the excellent analysis of the Cold War period and its relation to O'Connor's work in Jon Lance Bacon, *Flannery O'Connor and Cold War Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and Thomas Hill Schaub, *American Fiction in the Cold War* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1991).

46. See O'Connor's numerous comments on these writers including those in HB pp. 100, 107, 231, 196-97, 463, 570; and the books she owned by each author listed in Arthur F. Kinney, *Flannery O'Connor's Library: Resources of Being* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1985). For discussions of the impact of European and specifically French writers on O'Connor and her work see: Ted R. Spivey, *Flannery O'Connor: The Woman, the Thinker, the Visionary* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1995); Henry M. Russell, 'Racial Integration in a Disintegrating Society: O'Connor and European Catholic Thought', *FOCB* 24 (1995-96), 33-45; and Stephen L. Tanner, 'Flannery O'Connor and Gabriel Marcel', *Literature and Belief*, 17 (1997), 149-57.

47. See O'Connor on de Chardin: 'The most important non-fiction writer is Père Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. who died in 1955 and has so far escaped the Index, although a monitum has been issued on him. If they are good they are dangerous', HB pp. 570-71. She takes the title of one of her narratives, and the second collection of short stories within which it is published, *Everything That Rises Must Converge*, from de Chardin's concept of the convergence of man, the universe, and God at an Omega point. See his *The Phenomenon of Man*, trans. by Bernard Wall (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), and my following footnote 82. Discussing the problem of whether the author has moral responsibility for the impact of his work on his audience, O'Connor takes refuge in Mauriac's conclusion 'that all the novelist could do was "purify the source" - his mind', and that 'Mauriac says God does not care anything about what we write. He uses it', *ibid.*, p.143, p.360.

48. *Art and Scholasticism* is 'the book I cut my aesthetic teeth on', according to O'Connor, and she takes her notion of the purity of art 'from St. Thomas (via Maritain) who allows that art is wholly concerned with the good of that which is

made'. Ibid., p.216, p.157. O'Connor notes with pride that Maritain was 'so much taken' with *Wise Blood*, that he asked its French translator M. Coindreau to discuss it with him, *ibid.*, p.417.

49. She writes of Maritain's letter to Caroline Gordon Tate concerning *The Malefactors*, and owns and recommends to others Tate's books *The House of Fiction*, and *How to Read a Novel*, *ibid.*, pp.166, 157, 256, 260. As O'Connor's mentor, Tate suggested revisions to O'Connor's manuscripts throughout her career: from *Wise Blood* in 1951 to the short story 'Parker's Back' in July 1964, completed shortly before O'Connor's death. See O'Connor's many references to Tate in HB from p.25 to p.594, and see Spivey, *Woman*, *passim*, on Tate as a major influence on O'Connor's intellect and work. For a useful comparison of O'Connor's fiction with other Catholic American writers, see Ross Labrie, *The Catholic Imagination in American Literature* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997).

50. Frank Daniel, 'Flannery O'Connor Shapes Own Capital', in CFO, pp.91-94 (p.94) (first publ. in *The Atlanta Journal and The Atlanta Constitution*, 22 July 1962). See the six stories O'Connor submitted for her MFA thesis: 'The Geranium', 'The Barber', 'Wildcat', 'The Crop', 'The Turkey' and 'The Train', all included in CS, pp.3-62. For details of the early drafts of these texts, see Stephen G. Driggers and Robert J. Dunn, with Sarah Gordon, *The Manuscripts of Flannery O'Connor at Georgia College* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1989), pp.5-10. Further references to this edition (hereafter MFC) are given after quotations in the text.

51. Letter to John Hawkes (28 November 1961), HB, p.457. Gerard E. Sherry 'An Interview with Flannery O'Connor', in CFO, pp.97-102 (p.98) (first publ. in *The Critic*, 21 (June-July 1963), 29-31).

52. See Ted. R. Spivey, 'Flannery O'Connor, the New Criticism, and Deconstruction', *Southern Review*, 2 (1987), 271-80, and Suzanne Morrow Paulson, pp.7-12.

53. See Hugh Brogan, *The Penguin History of the United States* (London: Penguin, 1990), (p.609).

54. 'The end of the atomic monopoly caused many Americans to start looking for the spies and traitors who (they assumed) must have made it possible for the Russians to catch up so soon. The assumption was wrong, but it was none the less potent.' *Ibid.*, p.615.

55. See John Dumbrell, 'Cold War America, 1945-1960', in *America's Century: Perspectives on U.S. History since 1900*, ed. by Iwan W. Morgan and Neil A. Wynn (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1993), pp.133-57.

56. Not informed she had lupus at her mother's request, and believing she was suffering from arthritis, O'Connor planned to return to Connecticut when possible. Eventually told she was suffering from the disease which killed her father in 1952, O'Connor resigned herself to remaining in Milledgeville. In a letter to Robert Fitzgerald (July 1952), O'Connor declares, 'I now know that it is lupus and am very glad to so know', HB, p.39. See Sally Fitzgerald's account of this period, p.37.

57. 'My mother says, "You talk just like a nigger and someday you are going to be away from home and do it and people are going to wonder where you came from."' Letter to 'A' (24 March 1956), *ibid.*, p.148. O'Connor informs Sally and Robert Fitzgerald (November 1952), 'mamma & I are on the way to the polls to cancel out each other's vote.' *Ibid.*, p.47.

58. Simone Pétrement has noted how Weil 'wore clothes with a masculine cut', Pétrement, p.26. Recalling Weil's insistence on having a tuxedo rather than a dress made for a visit to the Opera, she believes 'there was some element of willfulness in her manner of dressing', concluding this was due to 'Simone's revolutionary inclinations combined with her contempt for bourgeois customs and her sense of mischief, which sometimes gave her pleasure in shocking people.' *Ibid.*, p.28. However Weil's unusual attire may be at least partially explained by her mother's intention, during Weil's childhood, to cultivate masculine rather than feminine values in her daughter. She insists, 'I do my best to encourage in Simone not the simpering graces of a little girl, but the forthrightness of a boy'. *Ibid.* So in this sense Weil too may be conforming to her mother's image of what a daughter should be.

59. Discussing a visit to Andalusia to interview O'Connor, Gilman maintains that Regina accosted him about the failure of O'Connor's publishers to sell more copies of her books. After informing her that O'Connor's reputation was the important thing, he recalls that she embarrassed her daughter by her response. "Important thing!" she snorted, "reputations don't buy groceries". In CFO, pp.56-57. However Sally Fitzgerald insists Regina 'is clearly loved' by O'Connor, and very occasionally a more intimate and relaxed relationship between mother and daughter is revealed in O'Connor's letters. Writing to Thomas Strich (11 February 1964) about her newly acquired record player, O'Connor declares if 'I had known [Regina] would enjoy this thing so much I would have done something about getting one before now [...] I don't know if she listens or not. Every now and then she says, that's pretty.' HB, p.xii, p.564.

60. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p.78. According to Gilbert and Gubar, 'by projecting their rebellious impulses not into their heroines but into mad and monstrous women (who are suitably punished in the course of the novel or poem), female authors dramatise their own self-division, their desire both to accept the strictures of patriarchal society and to reject them.' These female characters are 'usually in some sense the

author's double, an image of her own anxiety and rage', allowing women writers to accommodate 'their own keen sense of the discrepancies between what they are and what they are supposed to be.' Ibid. Many critics have analyzed the domestic relationships and psychosexual dimensions of O'Connor's fiction, notably Hendin, *World*, Claire Katz, 'Flannery O'Connor's Rage of Vision', *American Literature*, 46 (March 1974), 54-67, and Louise Westling, *Sacred Groves and Ravaged Gardens: The Fiction of Eudora Welty, Carson McCullers and Flannery O'Connor* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1985).

61. *Vulnerable People: A View of American Fiction Since 1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p.147.

62. See Lee's account of this meeting in her article 'Flannery, 1957', *FOCB*, 5 (1976), 39-60 (pp.41-44).

63. 'The Passivities of Diminishment', in *The Divine Milieu* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), pp.80-94 (p.92). O'Connor refers to Teilhard de Chardin's 'passive diminishments' in a letter to Janet McKane (25 February 1963): 'He means those afflictions that you can't get rid of and have to bear. Those you can get rid of he believes you must bend every effort to get rid of. I think he was a very great man.' HB, p.509. See also a letter to McKane (31 March 1963): 'the patient is passive in relation to the disease-he's done all he can to get rid of it and can't so he's passive and accepts it'. Ibid., p.512.

64. O'Connor's habit of making extensive rewrites of her novels ensured progress on *Wise Blood* was extremely slow. The sixth story in her MFA thesis, 'The Train', constitutes the earliest version of the opening chapter of the novel, which she began writing in 1947. Published by *Sewanee Review*, 56 (April-June 1948), 261-271, subsequent chapters of *Wise Blood*: 'The Heart of the Park', and 'The peeler', were published the following year in *Partisan Review*, 16 (February 1949), 138-51 and 16 (December 1949), 1189-1206. For details of the numerous *Wise Blood* manuscripts, see MFC, pp.9-72.

65. O'Connor's sense of isolation is apparent in a letter to the Fitzgerald's (September 1953), when she informs them she feels 'like the world is moving off and leaving me in the United States alone', HB, p.63. Over two years later she wrote to Fr. James McCown (20 February 1956), 'I never mind writing anybody. In fact it is about my only way of visiting with people as I don't get around much and people seldom come to see us in the country.' Ibid., p.139. O'Connor asked William Sessions (1 September 1957), to let her know what he was studying, and informed him she couldn't 'return information of similar interest as all that happens here of importance occurs in the barnyard division.' Significantly she closed the letter with 'Cheers and Screams.' Ibid., p.240.

66. 'Harcourt sent my book to Evelyn Waugh and his comment was: "If this really is the unaided work of a young lady, it is a remarkable product." My mother was vastly insulted. She put the emphasis on if and lady. Does he suppose you're not a lady? she says. WHO is he?'. Letter to Robert Lowell (2 May 1952), *ibid.*, p.35. 'Miss Gum Spirits of Turpentine has just been elected for the year [...] The other one I look out for is Miss North Georgia Chick', letter to 'A' (18 April 1959), *ibid.*, p.328. O'Connor informs Elizabeth Bishop (23 April 1960), of a clipping received from a friend: 'about a boy named Jimmy Sneed, a 13 year old evangelist, who hung himself because his mother spanked him for sassing her. A neighbour was quoted as saying "He was a good boy. He had been preaching around here some lately and was doing fine"'. *Ibid.*, p.391.

67. O'Connor's friend requested that her identity remain anonymous. Writing to Robie Macauley (18 May 1955), O'Connor complained that she seemed 'to attract the lunatic fringe mainly', and expressed her desire 'that somebody real intelligent would write sometime'. *Ibid.*, p.82. O'Connor considered she had found such a reader after 'A' wrote to her in July 1955, and they began a correspondence which lasted until O'Connor's death in 1964.

68. *Ibid.*, p.90. This urge to be considered daring is a constant trait. Discussing *The Violent Bear It Away* with 'A' (14 November 1959) O'Connor declares, 'I am not afraid that the book will be controversial, I'm afraid it will not be controversial.' *Ibid.*, p.358.

69. 'You said once you would see if you had the faculties to give me permission to read such as this. Do you and will you? All these Protestants will be shocked if I say I can't get permission to read Gide.' (20 December 1957), *ibid.*, 259. 'I am afraid though they are headed for Sartre-also on the Index. So if you can include him in with Gide, I'd be obliged.' (12 January 1958), *ibid.*, p.263.

70. O'Connor acknowledges in a letter to 'A' (21 April 1956), that a collection of stories by J.F. Powers does not equal the first, but candidly admits evading such direct criticism in a review she wrote of the book. 'However, who am I to be saying that in public? These are the only reviews I have ever written and I make the discovery that they are not the place for that kind of absolute honesty. In the first place you can be so absolutely honest and so absolutely wrong at the same time that I think it is better to be a combination of cautious and polite. I prefer the good manners of an idiot to his honesty'. *Ibid.*, p.152. In her actual review for *The Bulletin*, 31 March, 1956, O'Connor wrote: 'In this collection, Mr Powers again shows himself to be one of the country's finest short story writers.' See *The Presence of Grace and Other Book Reviews* by Flannery O'Connor, compiled by Leo J. Zuber, and ed. by Carter W. Martin (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1983), p.14. Further references to this edition (hereafter PG) are given after quotations in the text.

71. 'That my stories scream to you that I have never consented to be in love with anybody is merely to prove that they are screaming an historical inaccuracy. I have God help me consented to this frequently.' (24 August 1956), HB, pp.170-171.

72. FLN, p.12, p.18. Simone Pétrement has noted this dialogic facet of Weil's personality. 'She forbade herself all weakness with such firm determination that one could mistake for a peculiarity of nature what was in truth a product of her will.' Pétrement, pp.27

73. 'The religion of the South is a do-it-yourself religion, something which I as a Catholic find painful and touching and grimly comic'. Letter to John Hawkes (13 September 1959), HB, p.350. Discussing the character Mason Tarwater in *The Violent Bear It Away*, O'Connor insists, 'essentially, he's a crypto-Catholic. When you leave a man alone with his Bible and the Holy Ghost inspires him, he's going to be a Catholic one way or another, even though he knows nothing about the visible Church.' Letter to Sister Mariella Gable (4 May 1963), *ibid.*, p.517.

74. A 'Christian has only one country that can be the object of such patriotism, and which is situated outside this world' Weil contends, and in doing so marks her similarity with O'Connor's concept of the Christian writer's 'true country', which is 'what is eternal and absolute'. See Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots: Prelude to a Declaration of Duties Towards Mankind*, trans. by A. F Wills, ARK edn (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952, 1987), p.126. Further references to this edition (hereafter NR) are given after quotations in the text. MM, p. 27.

75. Writing to Lee for the first time (9 January 1957), O'Connor obviously delights in her mother's disapproval at Lee's driving from Andalusia to the airport in an automobile owned by her family's black gardener, *ibid.*, p.194. Yet joking about her aversion to radical change O'Connor sarcastically writes to Lee: 'That grasshopper you left in the cage for me reminded me so much of the poor colored people in the jails that I let him out and fed him to a duck. I'm sure you'll understand.' *Ibid.*, p.592.

76. For details of the impact this incident had on the Southern community see *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle, 1954-1990*, ed. by Clayborne Carson and others (New York: Penguin, 1991), pp.97-106.

77. For the full text of the Supreme Court's ruling, and details of the white Southerners' massive resistance to it, including Judge Tom P. Brady's speech condemning the decision, see *ibid.*, pp.61-96.

78. 'I rode the train from Atl. and the bus from M'ville, but no more. Once I heard the driver say to the rear occupants, "All right you stove-pipe blonds, git on back ther [sic]." At which moment I became an integrationist.' Letter to 'A' (16 November 1957), HB, p.253.

79. Writing of a local Ku Klux Klan meeting, she highlights the absurdity of its 'portable fiery cross', which had to be plugged in, as it 'was lit by many red electric bulbs'. Letter to 'A' (31 January 1957), *ibid.*, p.201. O'Connor jokingly tells Maryat Lee (21 May 1962) to journey South, 'at your own expense & let the White Citizens Council send you back. You could tell them that you was a little light but a guaranteed nigger. This would cut your expenses in half and give you a nice vacation in the land of sin and guilt.' *Ibid.*, p.475. O'Connor's view of racial politics as at least partially comical seems to be derived from the humorous episodes she witnessed at Andalusia involving the African-American workers, and she frequently includes anecdotes about them in her letters. For example:

Louise threw potash water on Shot last week (she keeps a supply for this purpose) and Regina told her that one of these days she was going to put his eyes out "Yes'm" she says, "I hope I gets at least one of them"

Letter to the Fitzgeralds (23 November 1963), *ibid.*, p.550.

80. 'Flannery O'Connor: An Interview', in CFO pp. 103-107 (p.104) (first publ. in *Jubilee*, 11 (1963), 32-35).

81. O'Connor voices her fears about desegregation in letters to Janet McKane. On 8 July 1964 she notes, Milledgeville 'passed a peaceful 4th July, with most local restaurants either integrated or not tested. I'm cheered that bombshell is past.' HB, p.591. Discussing the integration of Milledgeville library with McKane (11 October 1963), O'Connor tells her that is 'the way things have to be done here - completely without publicity. Then there is no trouble. I hope the rest of it can be taken care of as well as the library did it, but I have my doubts about it. We shall see'. *Ibid.*, p.542.

82. Letter to Fr. J. H. McCown (4 March 1962), *ibid.*, p.468. See also O'Connor's letter to Roslyn Barnes (29 March 1961), when she discusses writing 'Everything That Rises Must Converge': 'which is a physical proposition that I found in Péré Teilhard and am applying to a certain situation in the Southern states and indeed in all the world.' *Ibid.*, p.438.

83. 'I Have a Dream', in *The Citizen's Handbook*, compiled by T. J. Stiles (New York: Berkley Books, 1993), pp.280-284 (p.282).

84. O'Connor tells Elizabeth and Robert Lowell (1 January 1954), 'mother says every nigger she knows has a better-looking car than she does.' HB, p.65. 'She says [they] are smart as tacks when it comes to looking out for No. 1', letter to the Fitzgeralds (11 November 1953), *ibid.*

85. MM, p.29. 'Manners are the next best thing to Christian charity' she claims. See Sherry, in CFO, p.102, and also Mullins, *ibid.*, pp.103-104:

It requires considerable grace for two races to live together, particularly when the population is divided about fifty-fifty between them and when they have our particular history. It can't be done without a code of manners based on mutual charity. [...] The South has to evolve a way of life in which the two races have to work it out the hard way.

86. See Alice Walker's positive view of O'Connor's treatment of the race issue in the fictions. Discussing the development in O'Connor's depiction of African-Americans between 'The Geranium', and 'Judgement Day' written after O'Connor's experience of the Civil Rights Movement, Walker claims the 'quality added is rage, and, in this instance, O'Connor waited until she saw it *exhibited* by black people before she recorded it'. She maintains O'Connor's detachment

from the inner workings of her black characters seems to me all to her credit, since, by deliberately limiting her treatment of them to cover their observable demeanor and actions, she leaves them free, in the reader's imagination, to inhabit another landscape, another life, than the one she creates for them. This is a kind of grace.

See 'Beyond the Peacock: The Reconstruction of Flannery O'Connor', in *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (London: Women's Press, 1984), p.54, p. 52. See also Ralph C. Wood, 'Where Is the Voice Coming From? Flannery O'Connor on Race', *FOCB*, 22 (1993-94), 90-118.

87. Flannery O'Connor, *The Violent Bear It Away* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), p.169. Further references to this edition (hereafter VB) are given after quotations in the text.

88. Carter Martin catalogues O'Connor's one hundred and twenty book reviews, written between 1956 and 1964 into the following categories: '50 religious and homiletic, 21 biographies and saints' lives, 19 sermons and theology, 17 fiction, 8 literary criticism, 6 psychology, 6 philosophy and science, 4 history, 4 letters, 4 periodicals, 3 intellectual history and criticism, 1 art criticism.' See PG p.3. The seven hundred and twelve items in O'Connor's personal library reveal her extensive

reading in philosophy, theology, literature, literary criticism and history. See Kinney, *Library*, pp. 1-13. .

89. O'Connor declared herself 'a very innocent speller' in 1954, and as late as 25 July 1964, she wrote to 'A', about the 'interpretations' of 'Revelation' HB, p.69, p.594. O'Connor uses her apparently genuine affection for peacocks and poultry to emphasise her supposedly non-intellectual, hometown status. 'I am very glad to be back with the chickens who don't know I have just published a book' she tells Ben Griffith (8 June 1955), *ibid.*, p.29.

90. *Ibid.*, p.204. When asked during an interview at Vanderbilt University, how she wrote a novel, O'Connor replied, 'Well, I just kind of feel it out like a hound-dog.' 'An Interview with Flannery O'Connor and Robert Penn Warren', ed. by Cyrus Hoy and Walter Sullivan, in CFO, pp.19-36 (p.19) (first publ. in *Vagabond*, 4 (February 1960), 9-17).

91. 'Around here if you publish the number of whiskers on the local pigs, everybody has to give you tea.' Letter to Robie Macauley (2 May 1952), HB, p.35. 'I have been discovered by the club ladies of middle Georgia. Last month the Macon Writers Club had a breakfast IN MY HONOR and allowed me to address them for 25 minutes.' Letter to Sally and Robert Fitzgerald (8 May 1955), *ibid.*, p.80

92. Persuading a factory manager to allow her to contribute an article for the factory magazine, Weil attempted to make Sophocles' *Antigone* accessible to the workers.

If I have done what I intended it should be able to interest and touch everyone, from the manager to the last of the workers. And the latter should be able to enter into it with almost no difficulty and yet without the feeling that there has been any effort of condescension to bring it within his reach.

In letter to 'B' (April or May 1936), SL, p.49.

93. Letter to Carl Hartman (2 March 1954), Flannery O'Connor, *Collected Works*, (New York: The Library of America, 1988), p.922. Further references to this edition (hereafter CW) are given after quotations in the text. Her lack of confidence is evident in a letter to Robbie Macauley (13 October 1953), when O'Connor admits, 'I offer all my critical opinions on long sticks that can be jerked back at once because I really seldom know what I'm talking about', HB, p.63. This attitude may explain why out of the one hundred and twenty reviews O'Connor published, almost all were written for two local publications, *The Georgia Bulletin*, and *The Southern Cross*. Only one review, of Teilhard de Chardin's *The Phenomenon of Man* (1959), was written for a secular journal, *The American Scholar*. See PG pp.129-130.

94. In a letter to Maryat Lee (17 April 1957), she declares 'I have a hundred bucks to compensate for any damage that may have been done to my nervous system' by a lecture at Notre Dame, HB, p.215. In 1959 she informs Fr. J.H. McCown that Chicago University 'are paying me well and unfortunately I have to earn me bread.' Ibid., p.318.

95. Writing to Cecil Dawkins (9 December 1958), O'Connor declares that at interviews, 'I always feel like a dry cow being milked. There is no telling what they will get out of you [...] If you do manage to say anything that makes sense, they put down the opposite.' *ibid.*, p.306. Yet this appears to be caused by O'Connor's oral inarticulateness. She admits to 'A' (3 October 1959), that during an interview, 'I sputtered out a lot of incoherencies, which I will really hate to see when they appear.' *Ibid.*, p.352. This is possibly why O'Connor gave the majority of her interviews to obscure magazines and journals.

96. 'I hate like sin to have my photograph taken and most of them don't look like me, or look like I'll look after I've been dead a couple of days.' Letter to Janet McKane (19 June 1963), *ibid.*, pp.524-525. Writing to the Fitzgeralds (April 1952) about the imminent publication of *Wise Blood*, O'Connor insists 'the jacket is lousy with me blown up on the back of it, looking like a refugee from deep thought.' *Ibid.*, p.33. 'The one [photograph] I sent looked as if I had just bitten my grandmother and that this was one of my few pleasures, but all the rest were worse.' Letter to the Fitzgeralds (early 1952), *ibid.*, p.31.

97. O'Connor writes to Cecil Dawkins (17 July 1959), 'I dread all the reviews, all the misunderstanding of my intentions', *ibid.*, p.340. 'I'm afraid it [*The Violent Bear It Away*] will just be dammed [sic] and dropped, genteely sneered at, a few superior kicks from one or two and that will be that [...] I expect the worst'. Letter to 'A' (14 November 1959), *ibid.*, p.358. 'If the modern reader is so far de-Christianised that he doesn't recognise the Devil when he sees him, I fear for the reception of the book.' Letter to Robert Giroux (5 December 1959), *ibid.*, p.361. The extensive rewriting process which preceded publication of *The Violent Bear It Away* (1960), can be seen by studying the relevant manuscripts. See MFC, pp.78-115.

98.

Your criticism sounds to me as if you have read too many critical books and are too smart in an artificial, destructive, and very limited way. [...] Your critique is too far from the spirit of the book to make me want to go into it with you in detail. [...] My Lord, Billy, recover your simplicity. You ain't in Manhattan. Don't inflict that stuff on the poor students there; they deserve better.

In letter to William Sessions (13 September 1960), HB, p.407. Writing to Elizabeth Bishop (23 April 1960) about *The Violent Bear It Away*, O'Connor insists it has 'received considerable attention, most of it simple-minded'. *Ibid.*, p.391.

99. 'Maybe in fifty years, or a hundred, Catholics will be reading the Bible the way they should have been reading it all along. I can wait that long to have my fiction understood.' Joel Wells, 'Off the Cuff', in CFO, pp.85-90 (p.87) (first publ. in *The Critic*, 21, (August-September 1962), 4-5, 71-72).

100. See Simone Weil, *Oppression and Liberty*, trans. by Arthur Wills and John Petrie, ARK edn (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958, 1988), p.195. Further references to this edition (hereafter OL) are given after quotations in the text.

101. See File 232 of the manuscripts held at Georgia College. For details of the complete *Why Do the Heathen Rage?* manuscripts, see MFC, pp.133-151.

102. MM p.ix. Material O'Connor didn't personally revise for publication include some of the most significant lectures and essays in MM: 'Novelist and Believer', 'Catholic Novelists and Their Readers', 'The Catholic Novelist in the Protestant South', and most of 'The Nature and Aim of Fiction', 'Writing Short Stories', and 'On Her Own Work'.

103. Sally Fitzgerald has noted how O'Connor and her mother Regina wrote to each other daily when O'Connor lived with the Fitzgerald's in Connecticut. No reason is given for the absence of O'Connor's half of this correspondence from *The Habit of Being*, but Fitzgerald observes that Mrs O'Connor did not make her daughter's letters to her from Iowa available, because she considers 'they are purely personal and contain nothing of literary interest.' HB, pp.xii, 4.

104. Thibon acknowledges Weil had 'a deep veneration for the great Hindu and Taoistic writings, for Homer, the Greek tragedies and above all for Plato', but he excludes most of these aspects of her philosophy from his selection. He realises there is a 'danger' of 'trying at whatever cost to bend the thought one is studying into conformity with Catholic truth', which constitutes 'a manifest abuse of the text', but significantly, Thibon thinks 'that whatever is true or pure in a human life or work find's its place naturally in the Catholic synthesis without being forced or twisted in order to do so.' GG, p.x, p.xxx. He observes that the entries he has selected 'were interspersed with innumerable quotations as well as philological and scientific studies', *ibid.*, p.xxxvii, but Thibon's arrangement of the extracts into thematic groupings which exclude crucial elements of Weil's thinking such as Buddhism, Hinduism, myth and folklore, amounts to the type of textual manipulation he claims to avoid. His classifications are themselves misleading, for instance the short section on algebra does not include any of Weil's numerous references to the Pythagoreans.

105. Although Fr. Perrin does not distort the information Weil entrusted to him, her respect for him appears to have caused Weil to moderate her criticisms of the Catholic Church. Her genuine admiration for several of the major Catholic doctrines: the Incarnation, Trinity and Redemption, are evident, while the more hostile discourse prevalent in *Letter to A Priest*, is less conspicuous. However, when Fr. Perrin later discovered the extent of Weil's criticism of the Catholic Church, he removed his eulogistic introduction from *Waiting for God*.

106. David McLellan maintains that Weil's influence on the Catholic Church 'around the time of the Second Vatican Council was considerable', McLellan, p.268. Noting how Pope John XXIII wrote to Weil's father and considered visiting the austere room where she worked, he observes how Pope Paul VI 'counted Weil, together with Pascal and Bernanos, as one of the three most important influences on his intellectual development', *ibid*. McLellan obtains the evidence for these assertions from P. Hebblethwaite's books *John XXIII, Pope of the Council* (London: [n.pub], [n.d.]), p.57, and *The Year of the Three Popes* (London: [n.pub], 1978), p.2.

CHAPTER ONE: WRITING ON THE SOUL

In Plato's *Phaedrus*, Socrates defines the most effective type of discourse as dialectic, 'the kind that is written on the soul of the hearer together with understanding'.¹ An inward seeking after truth combined with the exercise of reason allows the soul to recollect essential spiritual truths it had forgotten (*anamnesis*), and in a moment of epiphany or internal unveiling (*alethia*), root them in the soul.² Superior to writing which is its debased, inflexible relation - incapable of answering questions, defending itself, or choosing its audience - dialectic allows its practitioner to select 'a suitable soul', and plant in it truths and knowledge, which 'are not sterile, but contain a seed from which fresh truths spring up in other minds' (276). Successfully communicated to the fertile ground of other souls capable of understanding and disseminating its message, dialectical knowledge is guaranteed immortality and bestows happiness on its possessor (277). This notion of transferring living spiritual truths directly into a soul able to perceive and disseminate them has a Christian equivalent in God's Word being granted to those individuals in a state of grace. In the parable of the sower, Christ informs his disciples that the seed is the Word of God, which in the rich soil of those who hear and accept it yields a plentiful harvest.³

It is significant that both the Platonic and Christian versions of this concept are reliant on figurative imagery to explain them. Plato's philosophical designation of what constitutes 'good' writing is dependant on a metaphor borrowed from the 'bad' writing of mere inscription. Even as it attempts to specify its distinction logic is corrupted by metaphor, because as Jacques Derrida notes 'Metaphoricity is the logic of contamination and the contamination of logic'.⁴ Similarly the Christian notion of the rational principle governing the universe made manifest in Christ as living *logos* is founded on the Scriptures, parabolic, metaphorical narratives which attempt to represent this ultimate Word via the restricted form of human language.

The essential dilemma of how to write on the soul and discourse about God, the limitations and possibilities, similarities and differences between philosophical and literary form are central to a comparative study of Simone Weil and Flannery O'Connor. Both writers are compelled to inscribe their theologies on the souls of their readers, yet subject to constraints imposed by form. As a Platonist, Weil considers philosophical dialectic a superior mode for approaching a knowledge of ultimate truths, but she relies heavily on figurative imagery and the interpretation of narratives to express her ideas.⁵ Indeed the fact she wrote a play and some poetry

indicates that philosophical reasoning is not an entirely sufficient form to satisfy Weil's urge to develop and communicate her ideas; in the same way that O'Connor is a theological, philosophical, and not merely fictional writer.⁶ The regularity with which O'Connor employs other forms (lectures, essays, letters and book reviews) to stipulate specifically anagogical readings of her narratives is indicative of the difficulties she found in writing her Christian ideology on the souls of her audience via an innately ambiguous fictional form dependent on reader response.⁷ But she believes fictions can be prophetic. Equating her role as a Catholic novelist with prophecy, O'Connor insists that for the writer-prophet there is 'the prophetic sense of "seeing through" reality', and (like Plato's *anamnesis*), 'there is also the prophetic function of recalling people to known but ignored truths'.⁸

O'Connor's contention that fictions can be revelatory, that they tell truths beyond an immediately perceived reality and function as a mnemonic device challenges the phonocentric philosophical bias privileging dialectical reason and the spoken word as the most appropriate form for accessing and communicating truth. The breach between Weil and O'Connor's concepts of art demonstrates a crucial distinction between their philosophical and literary perspectives, replicating the divergence between the two disciplines (in)famously delineated in the 'old quarrel between philosophy and poetry' contained in Plato's *Republic*.⁹ As his argument has a direct bearing on Weil and O'Connor's aesthetics it is necessary briefly to summarise Plato's main points before analyzing Weil's own theories and how they impact on O'Connor's work.

Plato's argument with art and specifically literature can be categorised into four elements: first, the relation of art to reality, second, its emotional and psychological effect on its audience, third, the relationship between ethics and aesthetics, and finally, authorial intention and its censorship. Making a distinction between the transcendent Forms of the Good, True and Beautiful that exist in nature and those manufactured by both craftsmen and artists, Plato insists the latter reproduce merely insubstantial imitations that are progressively distanced from the unique actuality of the Forms; with the artist's representation 'at third remove from reality' (597e) at the lowest level of this vertical hierarchy.

Reserving his severest criticism for poets who 'have no grasp of truth but merely produce a superficial likeness of any subject they treat' (601), he considers literature ethically dangerous because its ersatz realism contrives to ensure humanity's baser instincts appear more interesting and exciting than their morally edifying counterparts. Aware of literature's capacity to have profound psychological effects,

Plato maintains that portraying immorality and human weakness ‘wakens and encourages and strengthens the lower elements in the mind to the detriment of reason’ (605b), encouraging audiences to admire and imitate the faults depicted, stimulating uninhibited indulgences in emotions which should be restrained (606d).

Clearly Plato does not share Aristotle’s notion of the cathartic benefits of poetic drama and poetry’s capacity to be philosophical.¹⁰ However, although doomed to remain inferior to dialectic, art can be inspirational in Plato’s schema when rigorously controlled by moral criteria rather than motivated by a concern with its artistic value. As elsewhere in his philosophy goodness and beauty are inseparable in Plato’s concept of artistic form, and directly linked to ethical content and authorial rectitude. Fictions which distort the essential truth that God is good and not responsible for evil are ‘ugly’ (377e, 379c), while the text’s aesthetic beauty and harmony is dependent on the author’s ‘goodness of character’ (401a). Authorial intention should be based on revealing divine justice and mercy, writers must ‘say that God’s acts were good and just, and that the sufferers were benefited by being punished’ (380b). They must be ‘severe rather than amusing’, and obey the specific orders of the State requiring them ‘to portray good character in their poems or not to write at all’ (398b, 401b). To ensure no psychological or spiritual damage is inflicted, artists must perceive ‘the real nature of what is beautiful’, and when this is achieved they lead their audiences ‘into close sympathy and conformity with beauty and reason’ (401c).

Sharing Plato’s insistence that fictions are inferior to philosophy, Weil believes literature has no value apart from its spiritual function of writing on the soul. Literary works are perceived as vehicles for communicating earthly and through them spiritual realities rather than self-contained, self-justifying entities. Rejecting ‘the sacred privilege of art for art’s sake’ (NR 24), she insists that the majority of fiction writers ‘unless they have a philosophical bent in addition to a literary one, which is rare’, are unworthy of intellectual attention (SWR 293-94). Their ‘conceptions about life and the world and their opinions on current problems can have no interest at all, and it is absurd that they should be called upon to express them’ (294). Concurring with Plato that fiction writers misrepresent reality and cater to mankind’s baser instincts, Weil maintains that although authors should replicate experiential actuality by giving ‘the feeling that it is good which is something abnormal’, and making ‘evil appear as vulgar, monotonous, dreary and boring’ (NB 113), the majority of fictions reverse the realities of good and evil. ‘Fictional good is boring and flat, while fictional evil is varied and intriguing, attractive, profound, and

full of charm', and consequently 'immorality is inseparable from literature' (SWR 290).

The idealistic naivety of considering experiential evil uninteresting will be examined in Chapter Two, but here concentrating on Weil's links with Plato, it is worth noting that in addition to her insistence on a connection between ethics and aesthetics, she is also Platonic in championing the State's right to censor authorial freedom. Resembling Plato's severe rather than amusing writer, Weil proposes measures disturbingly similar to the repressive authoritarianism of the Fascist regime which stifled her own artistic license. In *The Need for Roots* her own version of an ideal State (post-war France) is strikingly Platonic in its subjugation of authorial autonomy. The 'moment a writer fills a role among the influences directing public opinion, he cannot claim to exercise unlimited freedom' (NR 25), she insists. To 'protect the population from offenses against the truth', Weil proposes special courts able to suppress publications, publicly condemn and sentence to prison or hard labour those responsible for persistent and 'proven dishonesty of intention' (36). These reactionary measures would not undermine public liberty but 'only mean satisfaction of the human soul's most sacred need-protection against suggestion and falsehood' (36-38).

As these remarks demonstrate, Weil considers some narratives not only fictional but dangerously fictitious. In doing so she underlines an important ambiguity in the meaning of 'fictionality' stemming from the Greek term for fiction (*pseudos*), which embodies the dual sense of fictions as both 'what is not true', and narratives. In its twentieth century terminology 'fiction' retains this double connotation as a deliberately, deceptively false invention, and/or an imaginative creation.¹¹ Weil is extremely interested in fiction(s) and a substantial portion of her writings are concerned with analyzing fictionality in each of its dual aspects, which in her own schema she divides into two types: ontological and literary. What makes Weil's theory of fictionality particularly relevant to a study of O'Connor's narratives is that it highlights the areas in which their thinking is both similar and distinct. First, Weil's concept of being fictional, and the need to transcend this state to achieve spiritual knowledge is comparable with O'Connor's notion of secularity. Second, Weil's philosophical view that literary fictions only write on the soul when their fictionality is overcome, is markedly different from O'Connor's literary notion that narratives have the capacity to be prophetic precisely because they are fictions.

Initially I want to analyze Weil's concept of, and proposed remedies for ontological fictionality. In her essay 'Morality and Literature' (published posthumously in 1944)

she explains this as mankind's endemic capacity to be fictional by evading the confrontation of painful realities which are a necessary part of human life, and vital to spiritual growth. While most literary narratives generate immorality by reversing the actualities of good and evil, human individuals replicate this process by shunning what is manifestly real and living fictionally.

The substance of our life is almost entirely composed of fiction. We fictionalize our future and unless we are heroically devoted to truth, we fictionalize our past, refashioning it to our taste. We do not study other people; we invent what they are thinking, saying, and doing. (SWR 292)

Weil offers two solutions to rectify this state: first physical, and second intellectual. To escape the 'waking dream peopled by our fictions' (292), mankind must be forcibly returned to reality and coerced into abandoning the 'armour of lies' by which men 'can only appear to elevate themselves above human misery by disguising the rigours of destiny in their own eyes' (IC 54). The most harrowing awakening to what is real is achieved by confronting, and ultimately consenting to the violent suffering caused by physical affliction. As Weil's concept of affliction comprises a crucial part of her theology this form of writing on the soul will be analyzed in detail in Chapter Two. At this juncture it is necessary to concentrate on her intellectual method of overcoming ontological fictionality, which constitutes the exhaustive contemplation of contradictions. Although also relevant to her theology, Weil's theory of contradictions is a crucial part of her philosophical form, and must be comprehended before her theories of reading, language, textuality and literary fictions can be adequately analyzed.

Contradiction is for Weil the mental equivalent of physical affliction. Just as the body confronted by corporeal suffering is forced to acknowledge its limitations and through them discovers what is real rather than a spurious, fictionalised reality, so is the intellect which meditates on contraries. 'We must touch impossibility in order to emerge from the dream state' (FLN 410) she claims. Contradictions 'are the only realities: they are the criterion of the real' (GG 89), because they make us 'experience the fact that we are not All. Contradiction is our wretchedness, and the feeling of our wretchedness is the feeling of reality' (NB 411). Only through the intensely human reality of limitation can a higher spiritual Reality be approached. 'There is no entry into the transcendent until the human faculties' have 'come up against a limit', with the individual forced to wait at this threshold, attention fixed,

in 'a state of extreme humiliation' (FLN 335). This concentrated and relentless contemplation of impossibility which Weil terms 'attention',¹² constitutes the 'proper method of philosophy', which 'consists in clearly conceiving the insoluble problems in all their insolubility and then in simply contemplating them, fixedly and tirelessly, year after year, without any hope patiently waiting' (335).

What on the surface appears a somewhat futile exercise, is for Weil a dynamic process of using reason to gradually approach an understanding of mystery. Her philosophical form is founded on dialectical thinking. 'Method of investigation: as soon as we have thought something, try and see in what way the contrary is true' (GG 93). This active search for contradictions is perceived as a way of writing on the soul. Access to truth, and eventually a transcendental Truth via concentrating on contraries is the basis of Weil's philosophy, because she revisions impossibility and constraint as not the nullification of intellectual and spiritual progress, but paradoxically its beginning. Radical impossibility 'is the gate leading to the supernatural' (NB 413), the 'links that we cannot forge are evidence of the transcendent' (GG 87), and consequently contradiction 'is the lever of transcendence' (FLN 134). But this leverage only occurs when attempts to reconcile the contraries are legitimate, and Weil is careful to discriminate between defective and correct efforts to locate solutions.

The illegitimate use of contradiction involves 'coupling together incompatible thoughts as if they were compatible' (OL 173). This delusive attempt to unite the opposites consists of being prematurely satisfied with an erroneous, one-dimensional solution to linking the contraries. 'Bad union of opposites (bad because fallacious) is that which is achieved on the same plane as the opposites' (GG 91), she insists. This is caused by evading the immensely difficult and painful process required in the legitimate use of contradiction. The 'right union of opposites' she argues, 'is achieved on a higher plane' (91). Involving 'a wrenching apart' which 'is impossible without extreme suffering' (92), because it requires tearing the individual out of a subjective viewpoint and into a more objective perception. When achieved a 'sort of unsticking process takes place', and by continuing to focus on the contradiction 'one finally reaches detachment' (NB 411).

The multi-dimensional impartial vision necessary to the proper correlation of contraries constitutes a form of superposed reading. As we observed in the Introduction to this thesis, superposed reading involves a great deal more than its more orthodox notion of purely textual exegesis, although this too is an important area of its use. Superposed reading in the Weilean sense includes interpreting the

whole universe, including other people and even ourselves, with complete neutrality. Learning to transcend the restrictively partisan readings which prejudice and distort our view of what is real is a crucial factor in solving the problem of ontological fictionality. We must be 'continually ready to admit that another person is something other than what we read-perhaps something altogether different' (43). Paradoxically this requires non-reading. 'What distinguishes the higher states from the lower ones is, in the higher states, the coexistence of several superposed planes', and it is 'a question of uprooting our readings of things, of changing them, so as to arrive at non-reading' (312), Weil claims. This requires attention in which above all 'our thought should be empty, waiting, not seeking anything, but ready to receive in its naked truth the object that is to penetrate it' (WFG 112). Non-reading is actually a prelude to the truest of readings, which require not only balancing multiple interpretations of an external event, person, or intellectual problem, but also incorporating a detached contemplation of our own involvement in this reading process. 'To read, and read at the same time one's own reading' (42) is the ultimate goal, because only then does objectivity replace subjectivity.

This dispassionate view of reality is achieved when superposed reading is successfully applied to contradictions, which in Weil's work are divided into two major types: first paradoxes, and second, incommensurates. Derived from the Greek for 'beside' or 'beyond opinion', paradoxes are a legitimate use of contradiction and correlation by which Weil attempts to escape biased readings and overcome ontological fictionality.¹³ Central to her philosophical thinking, paradoxical statements are a crucial aspect of her written form.

But the most vital type of contradiction allowing the superposed thought upon which Weil's philosophical form is based is incommensuration, the comparison of things which have no common measure. Drawing her ideas on incommensuration from Pythagorean mathematics, Weil's major essay 'The Pythagorean Doctrine' provides a sustained analysis of how Pythagoreanism manages to assimilate irrational numbers by providing mediation on a higher plane to numbers rationally deprived of it. As this mathematical concept became a corner-stone of Weil's philosophical form it is necessary to briefly outline its main points.

Believing the rational, intelligible principle governing the universe (the *logos*) to be located in proportion, the Pythagoreans perceived reality as a harmony between opposing forces: limit and infinity, unity and diversity, and were concerned to identify the proportional means which unite these contraries. Basing their thought on a cosmology which allocated all created things a number with the divine represented

by One, they were interested in how square root numbers have a bond with unity, and through mediation share an equality of relations eg. $1/3 = 3/9$. But confronted by the fact that not all numbers conform to this equation, they extended the definition of *logos* beyond mathematical ratios between rational numbers to include ratios involving incommensurates - the *alogos*. These *logos alogos*, having no common measure cannot be formulated, and therefore remain inexpressible. But although the Greeks could not alter the incommensuration between the two numbers, they did manage, as Eric O. Springstead notes, to 'transcend the limitations of the natural and irrational numbers by conceiving an order of numbers that incorporates both but is not reducible to the definitions of either'.¹⁴

This discovery proved revelatory to Weil, and she swiftly recognised the potential of applying such Pythagorean principles to other areas of her thought. 'Since it is possible in this way to equalize the notions in the case of two completely different pairs of magnitudes one could hope to be able also to apply the notion of ratio to psychological and spiritual matters', she writes in her *Notebooks* (162), and it is in Weil's theology that the concept of an equilibrium of incommensurates is most keenly pursued. A '*logos alogos* is a scandal, an absurdity, a thing contrary to nature' (IC 162), yet the fact that proportion can be discovered at a higher level of cognition 'forces the mind to deal in exact terms with those relationships which it is incapable of representing to itself', and is consequently 'an admirable introduction to the mysteries of faith' (164) which are 'not of the order of truth but above it' (LP 57).

The 'basis of the supernatural is asymmetry, non-reciprocal relations' (FLN 194), and the intense struggle to conceive links between incommensurates is 'at the intersection between the natural and supernatural part of the soul', having the capacity to 'in a way give birth to reality' (IC 188) imitating God's wisdom in creating the universe. Using a Hegelian analogy Weil contends that just as when we see only the visible angles and surfaces of a box we conceive through it a cube, humanity must cultivate this 'sort of transference of the sense of reality' (200) to approach divine mysteries. These secrets cannot be known directly but can be inferred by extension or 'resemblance' (201), providing we reorientate our viewpoint to perceive what is mysterious through the literal. By proceeding from 'easily grasped thoughts about the sensible world' it becomes possible to prove there is 'an authentic, rigorous certainty concerning the incomprehensible mysteries' (164-65).

Weil's paradoxical concept of mystery as simultaneously accommodating certainty and incomprehensibility is made possible by the valid use of incommensuration. The greatest mysteries are conceived as those in which incommensurates, whilst remaining impossible to comprehend, are not only connected but display a mutual dependency. (The symbiotic relationship between God and ontic and moral evils is an example of this, see Chapter Two.) These ultimate contradictions allow mankind to realise with certainty that a transcendent unity does exist, yet remains unfathomable not due to an innate opacity, but because the human intellect is too limited fully to understand the connection. No less real because mankind is unable to discern them, when these enigmatic truths are recognised, they allow thoughts to be elevated beyond intelligence to a higher level of knowledge.

The notion of mystery is legitimate when the most logical and rigorous use of the intelligence leads to an impasse, to a contradiction which is inescapable in this sense: that the suppression of one term makes the other meaningless and that to pose one term necessarily involves posing the other. Then, like a lever, the notion of mystery carries thought beyond the impasse, to the other side of the unopenable door, beyond the domain of the intelligence and above it. (FLN 181)

The correct use of contradiction and correlation is vital to overcoming ontological fictionality and offers a method of intellectual progression towards an ultimate Truth. It facilitates 'a contact between the mind and that which is not thinkable. It is supernatural, but real' (OL 173). Yet it is important to note that Weil considers this breakthrough to gnosis unachievable by purely human means and dependent on supernatural assistance. 'We cannot by suggestion obtain things which are incompatible. Only grace can do that' (NB 435), she insists. Human effort is essential and must be concentrated on attempting to locate connections between the opposites, because like 'a ladder', each correlation 'raises us to a higher level where resides the connection which unifies the contraries' (412). But human reason is exhausted before this connection can be fully understood, and the intellect can only accept its incapacity whilst acknowledging 'in the domain of the transcendent contradictories are possible', and 'like doors on which one must knock again and again, because in the end they will open' (FLN 269). Grace is the key. One 'should fix the soul's gaze on that limit with the longing for that which lies beyond [...] Grace will accomplish the rest, causing one to go up and emerge' (NB 527).

Mysteries finally have divine rather than human solutions, because a higher, unnatural reason exists. In her New York notebook Weil clarifies a distinction between two different kinds of rationality - supernatural and natural - based on her familiar hierarchical model. Supernatural reason is not surprisingly superior, with its logic *'more rigorous than that of natural reason'* (FLN 109). What is 'contradictory for natural reason is not so for supernatural reason', but crucially, 'the latter can only use the language of the former' (109).

The action of writing on the soul is inextricably allied to the human vocabulary by which it must, in its philosophical, literary, or theological forms attempt an explanation of the inexplicable, stretching words to their limits of inference in order to discourse about divine realities.¹⁵ Weil's advocacy of the superposed reading of contradictions constitutes an effort to read spiritually by moving beyond the confines of a horizontal, literal perspective. Her endemic use of unconventional analogies, metaphors and paradoxes mirrors this linkage of contraries by stimulating the perception of a connection between entities which conflict or are not normally associated with each other. The more startling the connection the greater its ability to defamiliarise (in the Formalist sense) habitual viewpoints and stimulate an alternative vision.¹⁶ But although Weil communicates her spiritual notion of truth through a vibrantly figurative syntax she is convinced that language must be rigorously controlled and defined if it is ultimately to provide an effective medium for adequately expressing human, and through them spiritual truths, and participate in establishing a more religiously conscious community.

Weil was appalled by what she considered 'the enfeeblement of the sense of value' rife in the twentieth century and encouraged by such movements as Dadaism, and Surrealism: 'a literary equivalent for the sacking of towns' (SWR 288). Attributing to writers a 'special responsibility' for the fate of language 'since words are their business', Weil's solution to this morally destabilizing tendency to erect 'nonorientated thought as a model', is to introduce a hierarchy of language to prevent the debasement of words by revitalising their spiritual dimensions whilst ensuring they are simultaneously relevant to human life (289, 288).

Weil considers it absolutely crucial that words be a rigorously accurate representation of the intellectual and physical realities they represent, because language, thoughts, actions and their consequences are integrally connected. 'To clarify thought, to discredit the intrinsically meaningless words, and to define the use of others by precise analysis-to do this, strange though it may appear, might be a way of saving human lives' she writes in her essay 'The Power of Words' (published

in 1937) (270-71). Where 'there is a grave error of vocabulary it is almost certainly the sign of a grave error of thought' (314). Such inaccuracies allow words to serve any purpose, making them susceptible to the dangerous sloganizing of political extremism, and when

empty words are given capital letters then, on the slightest pretext, men will begin shedding blood for them and piling up ruin in their name, without effectively grasping anything to which they refer, since what they refer to can never have any reality. (270)

Weil's experiences of both Communism and Fascism undoubtedly contributed to this pessimism and obsession with linguistic clarity, and it is no coincidence that the language of the collective, with its reductive, ill-defined generalizations which mean essentially nothing and lead to examples of 'lethal absurdity', is the lowest rung in her hierarchy (271). At the intermediate level are properly clarified words useful for earthly needs, such as 'right', 'democracy' and 'person'. The highest level of language refers to perfection mankind cannot actually conceive: 'God', 'truth', 'good', 'love', 'justice' and 'beauty'. When legitimately used, these words are not limited to any particular concept as they are beyond human understanding (337-38).

That at its supreme level language is not bound to definite concepts appears to contradict Weil's emphasis on linguistic clarity. But her approach is consistent with the rest of her thinking on physical, intellectual, and spiritual constraints and the surpassing of these boundaries. 'A mind enclosed in language is in prison' because it is restricted to the number of connotations each word invokes, remaining 'in ignorance of thoughts which involve the combination of a greater number' (330). To escape the confinement of a horizontal signifier-signified vocabulary requires linguistic precision and superposed thinking. Yet critically, superposed thoughts are 'outside language, they are unformulatable, although they are perfectly rigorous and clear and although every one of the relations they involve is capable of precise expression in words' (330).

In essence, superposed thinking exceeds the vocabulary available to it. The mind circumscribed by language 'can possess only opinions', while in its capacity to conceive multiple relationships, the superposed intellect escapes subjectivity attaining the point where it 'dwells in truth' (331). To achieve this plane of cognisance the human mind 'has come to the end of its intelligence, such as it was, and has passed beyond it' (331). Writing on the soul is dependent on surmounting

the impediments of human form: corporeal suffering and intellectual humiliation, and similarly language becomes a bridge to a transcendent reality when not confined to human concepts. The revelatory, redemptive power of words is ultimately due to the mysteries which exist beyond them. But if appropriately used the highest language has a totemic quality. Visible signifiers of ungraspable truths, these words, like the *logos alogos*, have the power to inspire humanity and elevate it towards grace. 'Since the proper use of these words involves not trying to make them fit any conception, it is in the words themselves, as words, that the power to enlighten and draw upwards resides' (337).

Ultimately it is the Word of God which is revelatory and redemptive, and Chapter Three will analyse how Weil and O'Connor paradoxically conceive this Word as silence, the ultimate failure of human language. However, Weil considers that texts produced by genius can offer 'the ever-flowing source of an inspiration which may legitimately guide us', which 'if we know how to receive it', tends to 'make us grow wings to overcome gravity'.¹⁷ The texts Weil classifies as the product of genius are drawn from various discourses: Pythagorean mathematics, Plato's philosophy, Eastern and Judaeo-Christian religious writings, and English, French, and Greek literature. Finding them inspirational is dependent on reading them all theologically, and one of the most interesting facets of Weil's interpretative strategy is how she reads non-Christian texts as alternative Christian gospels. Paradoxically, despite her concern to promote objective rather than subjective readings, Weil is parochial in her biased distortions of these writings.

By splitting her proposed works of genius into two groups I want first, to examine how Weil considers the mathematical, philosophical and religious texts transcend their textual status, before second, analyzing her criteria for overcoming literary fictionality. The key to understanding the first group of writings is Weil's perspective of history, which rejects Judeo-Christian notions of linear, chronological progression. 'Past and future are symmetrical' she claims in *Letter to a Priest*, chronology 'cannot play a decisive role in a relationship between God and man, a relationship one of the terms of which is eternal' (LP 16-17). Rejecting the orthodox Christian concept of the Old Testament as a prefigurement of the New, Weil substitutes pagan texts of genius in its place. These non-Christian writings are considered not merely texts but prophecies of God, revelations of the same truth later contained in the Gospels, and as such, alternative scriptures which transcend their textual status to write on the soul. Greek geometry is 'the most dazzling of all the prophecies which foretold the Christ' (IC 171), with references to proportion designating 'the relationship of the disciples to Christ and of Christ to His Father'

(160). Weil even claims Christ recognised himself 'as being that mean proportional of which the Greeks had for centuries been thinking so intensely' (161).

Locating the 'haunting of the Passion' in Greek civilization (71), she interprets Prometheus, Dionysius, Apollo, Artemis, Aphrodite and other mythic figures as multiple renditions of the single being of Christ.¹⁸ This tendency to recast Greek texts in Christian terms is notable in Weil's readings of Plato,¹⁹ whom she frequently interprets theologically rather than philosophically. As a 'mystic', his wisdom constitutes 'not a philosophy, a search for God by means of human reason', but rather 'an orientation of the soul towards grace' (74,85). Eastern religious writings are equally subject to Weil's relentless process of Christianization. The Hindu trinity of Vishnu, Brahma and Shiva is perceived as an analogy of the Christian Trinity (LP 32), China's Tao ('I am the Way') is interpreted as an image of Christ (FLN 322), and she classifies the Egyptian myth of Osiris as a 'prophecy' of Christ 'infinitely clearer, more complete and closer to the truth than everything which goes by that name in the Old Testament' (19).

Stressing the connection between pagan civilizations and Christianity, Weil insists it is 'a matter of urgency to remedy the divorce' between them if Christianity is to 'impregnate the whole of profane life as it ought to do' (LP 19,85). Old Testament writings, like their non-Judaic counterparts are denied their socio-cultural specificity, with Job read palimpsestically as an adaptation of an earlier work about dying and reviving gods, and a representation of Plato's 'just man'.²⁰

This elision of Hebrew culture is most apparent in Weil's readings of the New Testament, which she explicitly links to Greek rather than Judaic narratives. The gospels 'are the last and most marvellous expression of Greek genius' (IC 52) she contends, and in her essay 'God's Quest for Man' Christ's parable of the mustard seed (Mark 4:30-32) is read as a representation of both the myth of Persephone, and Plato's seed of spiritual knowledge (3). The Christian distinction between the 'called' and 'Elect' is related to Plato's cave analogy (4), while the accounts of the Passion, by showing how even a divine being when made flesh is subject to human affliction and feels 'at the moment of deepest agony, separated from men and from God', replicate the bare depiction of human misery which 'is the stamp of Greek genius' (52). Weil maintains these various 'concordances' between pre-Christian and Christian texts do not deny the gospels' historicity, and are 'no threat to the faith', but 'on the contrary an overwhelming confirmation of it' (119). Yet Weil's subjective readings distort and deracinate the historical and cultural contexts from which these writings are derived. Her blatant antipathy to Judaic, and admiration for

Greek and Eastern civilizations warps her judgement to the extent that she can be accused of fictionalizing these texts.²¹

Weil's notions of literary fictionality and the writer's role comprise a vital part of her writings and provide important guidelines for interrogating O'Connor's literary schema, so I shall now concentrate in detail on Weil's criteria for solving the 'problem' of literary fictions. Again genius is required, and in its literary form can be categorised into four important aesthetic requirements. Literary texts of genius must first, overcome their fictional status by accurately rendering experiential reality, second, demonstrate a superposed structure, third, recall the reader to spiritual truths through depicting suffering and showing that grace comes violently, and finally must display crucial epiphanic moments in which individuals momentarily defy the forces of gravity by which they are normally constrained, and in doing so locate their souls.

If for Weil human life may be, and usually is fictional, fictional narratives can partake of reality. The greatest value literary fictions possess is ironically the capacity to overcome their fictional status. Only writers of genius (those with a philosophical in addition to a literary perspective) can achieve this by giving their readers, 'in the guise of fiction, something equivalent to the actual density of the real' (P 292). Art 'is an attempt to transport into a limited quantity of matter, modeled by man, an image of the infinite beauty of the entire universe' which when successfully achieved 'should reveal its reality to all' (WFG 168). In the cosmos this beauty is comprised of 'necessity which while remaining in conformity with its own law and with that alone, is obedient to the good' (GG 135). In artistic creations the principle is the same.²² In a beautiful poem a word is in a particular place simply because 'it is suitable that it should be' (WFG 176). Obedient to the laws appropriate to its composition, it is aesthetically good when 'the reader does not wish it other than it is'. (176)

Just as her philosophical form is essentially organic, with contradictions ultimately reconciled, Weil's notion of the universe and art is predicated on an awareness of multiplicity yet eventual cohesion. Literary forms as microcosms of the cosmos are governed by parallel laws of necessity and limitation encapsulated within an all encompassing organic unity that finally reconciles competing internal elements. Art is the '*necessary harmonizing of expressive parts*' (NB 177), in which the equivalent of necessity

is the resistance of matter and arbitrary rules. Rhyme imposes upon the poet a direction for his choice of words which is absolutely unrelated to the sequence of ideas. Its function in poetry is perhaps analogous to that of affliction in our lives. (WFG 177)

Texts of genius make manifest the reality of affliction that experiential existence offers but which we are unable to appreciate due to living fictionally. Although constructed of words, 'there is present in them the force of gravity which governs our souls', ensuring they 'are outside the realm of fiction and they release us from it' (SWR 292).

In Weil's second qualification for texts of genius, literature transcends its textuality and exposes mankind's ontological fictionality when it displays 'gravity' with detachment. This requires a superposed structure in which 'several slopes are simultaneously visible and perceptible' (293). The reader

does not descend any of them. He feels gravity in the way we feel it when we look over a precipice, if we are safe and not subject to vertigo. He perceives the unity and diversity of its forms in this architecture of the abyss. (293)

What this hierarchical vision reveals is that the two major forms of gravity (the indifferent mechanism controlling the natural world, and humanity's perpetration of evil) are united in their submission to the brute force of necessity. The capacity of this force 'to transform man into a thing is double and it cuts both ways; it petrifies differently but equally the souls of those who suffer it, and those who wield it' (IC 44-45). Despite attempts to evade this force no-one escapes its horrifying power, and consequently all are both victims and agents of gravity, sharing in the common human experience of enduring suffering against the will.

This brings us to the third of Weil's criteria. Narratives must depict this most essential of human realities, enforced submission to necessity and the terrible agonies it inflicts, because only through such sufferings are spiritual truths obtained. Weil here incorporates two important features of Greek thought into her theory of literature. First, the notion of an arbitrary force which encourages wisdom by inflicting suffering equally on the just and the unjust with 'geometric strictness' (35), and which is derived from the Greek concept of Nemesis. Second, her conviction that affliction endured against the will leads to specifically spiritual

knowledge is influenced by the principle of *anamnesis*. To be jolted into remembrance of this sacred wisdom requires suffering against the will, because precisely in and through human misery the soul, if it resists corruption, becomes capable of divine knowledge.

There is no value in suffering for its own sake, its function is to make grace possible by forcing the ego to reluctantly accept its domination by necessity. Man must 'consider himself a limited and dependent being' and 'suffering alone can teach him this', Weil claims, misfortunes 'break a man by violence, and make him fit, in spite of himself to receive wisdom' (57). The crucial, core principle which Weil's theories of necessity and affliction share with the Greeks is that grace is violent. In her essay 'Zeus and Prometheus' she quotes a chorus from Agamemnon which concludes:

By suffering comes understanding.
So accrues to the heart, drop by drop, during sleep,
The wage of dolorous memory;
And even without willing it, wisdom comes.
From the Gods who sit at the celestial helm,
 grace comes violently. (56-57)

Believing this '*suffering that contains within itself remembrance*' functions 'as mediation' for the Greeks (NB 390), Weil concludes literary texts of genius share this mediatory function. Through their ability to render affliction, like the reality of violent affliction itself, they have the capacity to escape fictionality and write metaphysical truths on the soul. Great literature manifests the crucial relationship between violence, affliction, and redemption. There is 'a transmutation of violence into suffering', and consequently a 'participation in the work of redemption' (507). Vitality, these texts are themselves involved in the redemptive process, and have an impact on the soul. This pivotal moment of agonizing affliction must not be cheapened in value by being just fictional. 'The nobleness of suffering is not to be spoken of lightly or too often; it can too easily become mere literature in the mouth of people who have not suffered pain that can break the very soul'. (SL 104)

A distinguishing factor between the merely literary and texts of literary genius is their ability to evoke both the bitterness and beauty of a world dominated by gravity but ultimately sustained by grace. All first class art contains a 'core of bitterness', but accurate depiction must include the final of Weil's literary criteria, not only the portrayal of extreme suffering, but also, 'sprinkled here and there, luminous

moments, brief and divine moments' where 'men find their souls' (NB 258, IC 46). In these epiphanic 'moments of grace' the soul 'awakes pure and intact' and 'realizes itself whole', briefly escaping necessity before being condemned 'to lose itself again to the empire of might'. (46)

In the greatest literature this inexplicable combination of human suffering and the mysterious interaction of grace provides a source of meditation and inspiration for dealing with the crucial and universal cry of all humanity: 'Why must I suffer?' This question resonates through the Weilean canon of literary texts of genius which is characterised by a concentration on narratives that are subsumed by depictions of suffering. Weil's favourite English and French fictions are significantly their author's most harrowing texts, providing the minimum consolation for affliction. Omitting to acknowledge the importance of comedy to these writers is typical of Weil's severe vision, epitomizing her tendency to distort texts and consequently provide subjective interpretations rather than the objective, superposed readings she considers essential. Shakespeare's tragedies are all 'second-class except for *Lear*', which is a supreme 'tragedy of *gravity*' (GG 136, NB 138). Villon is the finest French poet because 'his purity of soul is clearly manifest through the heartbreaking expression of misfortune', while the greatness of Racine's *Phèdre* is due to the fact that 'human misery is revealed in its nakedness'. (NR 225, IC 54)

In Greek epics such as Sophocles' *Antigone* and Aeschylus' *Prometheus* Weil found texts more naturally suitable to her vision of mankind weighed down by gravity but intermittently illuminated by grace.²³ The narrative most important to Weil, and the one she considered a superlative example of literary genius is Homer's *Iliad*, and her extensive essay 'The *Iliad* Poem of Might' is a *tour de force* on how fictions can transcend their fictionality and demonstrate the interrelationship of gravity and grace.²⁴ But Weil considers literary writers of genius as rare as the instants of grace they depict, and significantly believes these authors are themselves graced. The *Iliad* and the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles 'bear the clearest indication that the poets who produced them were in a state of holiness' (NR 224), she claims. Their genius resides 'beyond the scope of our effort', and is 'pure to the extent of being manifestly very close to the greatness characteristic of the most perfect among the saints' (SWR 293, NR 225). This notion of the sanctity of writers of genius is both contentious and important, connecting Weil's theories of writing on the soul and overcoming fictionality. By insisting on equating genius with sanctity she stresses the prophetic function of writing at the expense of its artistic creativity and autonomy. Typical of Weil's philosophical/theological approach to literary fictions and their reception (texts must transcend textuality, great writers require sanctity,

readers must read spiritually), writing on the soul is intimately connected to the soul of the writer.

Weil's concept of the author's role is a crucial area of her literary aesthetics, and involves making distinctions between writers of genius and their inferior counterparts, whose sole *raison d'être* consists of providing the appropriate milieu to support the emergence of genius. She considers it imperative to distinguish between true and false genius, and significantly uses an analogy from Christ's parable urging vigilance against false prophets (Matthew 7:15-20). 'True greatness is the good fruit which grows on the good tree, and the good tree is a disposition of the soul akin to holiness' she contends in *The Need for Roots* (227). Only writers sanctified by genius can fulfil their prophetic function, having 'the power to awaken us to the truth' (SWR 292). In 'The Responsibility of Writers' Weil explains that to achieve this they 'do not have to be professors of morals, but they do have to express the human condition. And nothing concerns human life so essentially, for every man at every moment, as good and evil' (289). Because writers and readers participate in the actual world at the same time as creating literary worlds, 'it is impossible for literature to be exempted from the categories of good and evil' (292). To those who contend immorality is not an aesthetic criterion Weil insists 'they must prove as they have never done, that aesthetic criteria are the only ones applicable to literature' (292). The morality of both text and author is, as we noted when tracing Weil's links with Plato, a vital part of her own literary aesthetic.

'When literature becomes deliberately indifferent to the opposition of good and evil it betrays its function and forfeits all claim to excellence' (289), she claims, and it is essential to correct 'the usurpation by writers [of non-genius] of the function of spiritual guidance, for which they are totally unsuited' (293). Only authors 'of the highest order of genius in their full maturity' (293) are capable of avoiding this 'Messianic delusion' (294). The genuine sanctity of genius is very different from the sanctimoniousness of non-genius. 'Writers with pretensions to high morality are no less immoral than the others, they are merely worse writers' (291) she insists. Only the greatest saints and geniuses may legitimately direct the consciences of their readers, but making an exception for priests, Weil claims that although often corrupt, as they have the saints and principally Christ as their inspiration and try to imitate them, they are 'able to communicate more good than they themselves possess' (295). A writer however has 'only himself to fall back on', and although he may 'be influenced' by other authors, 'he cannot draw his inspiration from them'. (295)

Weil's dismissal of the average writer's religious role is flawed by her exception of the non-genius category of priests. This point seriously undermines Weil's classically philosophical concept of the inferiority of art, and specifically her notions of the writer's role and her equation of immorality with literature. If writers of non-genius can also be prophetic, literary fictionality may not be a problem to overcome but a medium through which to write successfully on the soul.

The obvious personal importance to Weil of literary texts such as the *Iliad* in articulating and developing her philosophy, raises the important question of whether fictions may be as effective, and possibly even more capable of writing on the soul than rational philosophical logic.²⁵ Weil's implicit recognition that it is, could at least partially explain her critical assaults on what she considers inferior writers, and her attempts to philosophise fictions. But if the finest fiction writers and their narratives are philosophical, are philosophers of genius and their texts in a sense fictional?

This is an important point touched upon by Gustave Thibon. Observing that 'no genius is a mere witness: he is not content to discover, he invents; his productions are an amalgam of revelation and creation', he argues this should be as acceptable in philosophy as literature (Perrin & Thibon 141). Allowing 'philosophic myths' would 'save a great number of things which the bare criterion of fact and fiction would eliminate for ever from the works of great thinkers', particularly Weil, with 'her unflinching gift for creating myths' (142). Therefore, instead of

taking what she says literally and accepting or rejecting it according to whether or not it fits in with logic or facts, we should find the true meaning of the construction of her genius and restore to it its deep value which is above all a *symbolic* and *evocative* value. (142)

Controversially, Thibon's argument requires Weil's audience not to judge her philosophy by philosophy's most essential criteria: logical discourse. Instead his claim for the primarily evocative and symbolic value of her work emphasises its prophetic quality, which he equates with a creative rather than rational impulse. Fictions, like reality, have various levels and perspectives and consequently narratives such as *The Divine Comedy* are 'untrue in the order of facts and true in the order of greatness and beauty', and therefore he claims 'we should use analogous criteria in order to appreciate the "mythical" side' of Weil's philosophy.²⁶ Myth is a complex term,²⁷ but Thibon apparently suggests that

Weil's works can benefit from being read as philosophical narratives or fictions, creations which reveal truths beyond a simple literal/fictional, logical/illogical axis, and in doing so awaken readers to a profounder reality.

The suggestion that Weil's philosophy writes on the soul most effectively when read as a fiction or kind of philosophical fiction is significant because it implies fictionality can be an important element of writing prophetically. O'Connor, as prophetic writer considers fictions a more successful form for the revelation of truth than philosophy. Claiming the Southerner 'knows he can do more justice to reality by telling a story than he can by discussing problems or proposing abstractions', she insists she lives 'in a complex region and you have to tell stories if you want to be anyway truthful about it' (Mullins, CFO 103). However, I want to commence my discussion of O'Connor with this point and reverse it, using my analysis of Weil to demonstrate how O'Connor's 'philosophical bent', her essentially theological inclination, is integral to her attempt to write on the soul. Because O'Connor as writer-prophet addresses many of the same theological issues as Weil, before analysing O'Connor's concept of literary fictionality, and the major differences and similarities with Weil's schema; it is useful to provide a brief preliminary analysis of three particular aspects of Weil's theology. First, Weil's doctrine of creation, second, theodicy, and third, her understanding of the nature of grace.

Weil's doctrine of creation is founded on the principle that the act of creation amounts to a voluntary self-diminution through which God is agonisingly distanced from himself. 'On God's part creation is not an act of self-expansion but of restraint and renunciation'(WFG 145). Between the persons of the Trinity 'there is more than nearness; there is infinite nearness or identity. But through the Creation, the Incarnation, and the Passion, there is also infinite distance', Weil maintains (SWR 446). Controversially, the creation coincides with Christ's crucifixion. The persons of the Trinity are distanced from each other across space, and from the beginning of time. God is crucifixingly separated from God by the whole of creation, and allowing the existence of a humanity that is 'distinct from himself and worth infinitely less than himself' (WFG 145). God is riven by permitting the autonomy of his creatures. Man is at the furthest distance from God, separated by the whole of necessity, and the moral evils which result from human existence. Therefore in 'our being God is torn asunder. We are God's crucifixion' (NB 564).

According to Weil, although God is omnipotent, paradoxically he is impotent, because he refrains from exercising his sovereign power within the world. He effectively abandons it to the forces of necessity.²⁸ Mankind is itself subject to

immense torment via the impact of the indifferent mechanism of gravity: affliction and evil. But if as Weil claims, 'God created through love and for love' (SWR 444), how is it possible to justify establishing and abandoning a cosmos in which horrifying ontic and moral evils exist? Weil's theodicy depends on reconceiving the world of necessity and affliction as not merely a separation of God from man, but also as the primary source of contact between them. Weil conceives this in two ways. First, by considering that the indiscriminate forces of necessity in the natural world are ultimately obedient to external parameters imposed by God. 'The brute force of matter, which appears to us sovereign, is nothing else in reality but perfect obedience', she insists, each 'visible and palpable force is subject to an invisible limit which it shall never cross' (NR 272, 274). This concealed 'plexus of limits' ensures that although it is pitiless, the 'order of the world is to be loved because it is pure obedience to God', and consequently, all human life, including the terrible experience of affliction, 'places us in contact with the absolute good formed by the divine will' (275, 276). Although there is no answer to why human beings suffer, by perceiving, and accepting, the superposed nature of necessity as both brutal force, and evidence of God's love, the traumas of ontological existence form a bridge, rather than a barrier, between God and man.

The second way in which Weil considers the forces of necessity a source of contact between humanity and God, is by regarding man's affliction as a kinship with Christ's agony on the cross, through which mankind can be united with God's love. 'The mutual love between God and man is suffering' according to Weil, 'God's love for us means passion. How could Good love Evil without suffering thereby? And Evil suffers too in loving Good' (NB 564). It is Christ, as both God and man, who reconciles God's love and man's distress, through the cross. At the instant when he feels forsaken by his Father, the crucified Christ is like mankind, at the furthest point from God, separated by the immensity of space and time, and questioning why he has been abandoned in his agony. Yet by consenting to his affliction whilst continuing to love God, Christ spans the universe and is reunited with his Father in the Trinity. Through participating in Christ's cross by accepting the reality of his own inconsolable distress, man has the capacity to be reconciled with God. Any human being 'has his part in the Cross of Christ if he loves truth to the point of facing affliction rather than escape into the depths of falsehood', Weil maintains (SWR 464). 'By assimilation with the Christ, who is one with God, the human being lying in the depths of his misery, attains a sort of equality with God, an equality which is love' (IC 170).

The linkage between the incommensurates of God and man through a combination of love and affliction, self-loss and redemptive suffering, is essential to Weil's understanding of the nature of grace.²⁹ Because mankind is incapable of independently raising itself above the restraints of gravity and moving towards God, grace constitutes a gratuitous self-communication of God to man, in Weil's schema. But she insists 'it would be a mistake to count on grace alone. Energy from this world is also needed' (FLN 348). A relationship between God and man is possible through first, God's bestowal of grace on humanity, and second, man's capacity to co-operate with God's gift by disposing his soul to receive, accept, and cultivate grace in the soul.

God's part in the action of grace takes three principle forms. First, although he has abdicated his control of the creation by abandoning it to the forces of necessity, God is 'really though secretly present' within the world (WFG 137), in religious rituals, the beauty of the world, and in human beings. Second, God descends into the souls of all 'those who ask him to come, and he cannot refuse to come to those who implore him long, often, and ardently', Weil claims (111). Third, God crosses the infinity of time and space to seize man's soul by violent grace. 'Grace abducts (it is a ravishment) then seduces. The soul does not give itself, it is taken'.³⁰ This seizure of the soul by violence can itself be divided into two manifestations. First, God tears open the soul through man's joy in the beauty of the world, or the impact of affliction. Second, God's compulsion on the soul enables man to inflict violence on his own will. Man becomes capable of compelling himself to carry out moral obligations which raise the soul to a higher level, and eventually, enable man to accept the loss of his fictional self, which is necessary to effect a saving reunion with God.

Weil's concept of man's part in co-operating with grace depends on the notion that God crosses the universe to make contact with humanity, and man must make the return journey to God. Three main responses to God's action are available to make this possible. First, man should seek out, and focus his love and attention on the bridges through which God makes himself available in the natural world. Second, if man assents to the tribulations of human life, and waits obediently, focusing all his attention, love, and desire on God, God is drawn into the soul. Third, it is essential for man to consent to the violent grace which rends his soul. This requires man's unqualified acceptance of the world of necessity and his subjection to affliction, acquiescence to the terrible experience of void which this lack of consolation generates, and finally; man must tolerate his loss of self, or 'decreation'. 'De-creation [is] regarded as the transcendent completion of creation' by Weil,

because the annihilation of man's egocentric 'I' makes direct contact between God and man possible, by bringing full circle God's act of self-renunciation in the creation.³¹ Man becomes a passageway through which God is finally reconnected with himself in the supernatural part of the soul. After experiencing such an epiphanic encounter with God, man's soul is decisively changed. Although he remains subject to the forces of necessity, man himself becomes a mediator for God's love within the world.

Having established the basic tenets of Weil's theology, I will now indicate how O'Connor's vital philosophical, theological inclination, is displayed by her concept of fictionality as more than literariness. Like Weil, O'Connor perceives fictionality in two forms: ontological and literary. To appraise her notion of ontological fictionality it is necessary to recognise how O'Connor's notion of being fictional is intrinsically connected to how she perceives reality.

All novelists 'are fundamentally seekers and describers of the real, but the realism of each novelist will depend on his view of the ultimate reaches of reality' (MM 40-41), O'Connor contends. Her own metaphysical perspective is based on Christian dogma. 'I see from the standpoint of Christian orthodoxy. This means that for me the meaning of life is centred in our Redemption by Christ and what I see in the world I see in its relation to that' (32). If for O'Connor the ultimate Reality is spiritual, ontological fictionality consists of being secular, and is a consequence of modern man being 'increasingly convinced that the reaches of reality end very close to the surface, that there is no ultimate divine source, that the things of the world do not pour forth from God' (157). Her solution to being fictional is like Weil's, dependent on the notion that physical suffering and violent grace facilitates a stripping away of grotesquely solipsistic perceptions of self and world, ensuring a forcible return to what is real, an epiphanic moment when men find their souls and encounter the divine. The idea that 'reality is something to which we must be returned at considerable cost' is 'implicit in the Christian view of the world' (112) according to O'Connor, and as her concept of ontological fictionality forms an essential element of her theology and notion of the grotesque, it will be analysed in detail in Chapter Two. In the discussion which follows I will concentrate on O'Connor's concept of literary fictionality and its major differences and similarities with Weil's schema, concluding with an examination of how Weil's criteria for texts of literary and spiritual genius interrogate O'Connor's concept of the Catholic novel, and her attempts to write Christian truths on the souls of her readers.

First it is important to identify the reasons why as a prophetic writer O'Connor adopts a primarily fictional rather than philosophical or theological form of communicating her ideas. Considering prophecy 'a matter of seeing near things with their extensions of meaning and thus of seeing far things close up' (44), O'Connor believes fictions are uniquely capable of encapsulating this dual vision. It is

the peculiar characteristic of fiction that its literal surface can be made to yield entertainment on an obvious physical plane to one sort of reader while the selfsame surface can be made to yield meaning to the person equipped to experience it there. (95)

Its ability to render both literal and profound levels of meaning ensures that fiction is 'so very much an incarnational art' (68), but the 'peculiar problem' confronting the prophetic fiction writer is how to actualise this vision, and 'make the action he describes reveal as much of the mystery of existence as possible' by making 'the concrete work double time' (98). O'Connor considers the solution to this dilemma of endowing fictions with a prophetic dimension is to replicate the form of religious narratives. Each time 'the sacred text describes a fact, it reveals a mystery' she insists, and this 'is what the fiction writer, on his lesser level hopes to do' (184). To be great storytellers 'we need something to measure ourselves against', and these 'guides' exist in 'the form of stories which affect our image and our judgement of ourselves' (202). Philosophical and theological abstractions are inadequate. It 'takes a story to make a story', requiring a narrative 'of mythic dimensions, one which belongs to everybody, one in which everybody is able to recognize the hand of God and its descent' (202). The 'Hebrew genius for making the absolute concrete' ensures that the scriptures, by displaying the eternal meaning and consequences attached to human life, are a paradigm for the prophetic fiction writer. As the sacred myths most commonly shared (especially in the South), the bible narratives provide 'ties to the universal and the holy', allowing the meaning of an individual's 'every action to be heightened and seen under the aspect of eternity' (202, 203).

Like Weil, O'Connor considers this capacity of fictions to encourage the perception of a sacred dimension to human existence their most admirable aspect. But O'Connor deviates from Weil's theory of literature in four major areas. First, on the value of fictions, second, her approach to immoral fictional content, third, the writer's role, and fourth, the uses of comedy. In direct contrast to Weil, O'Connor insists that art and specifically fictions have an autonomous value distinct from their ability to write on the soul. Influenced by the aesthetics of St. Thomas Aquinas, in

'The Nature and Aim of Fiction' she contends that 'all I mean by art is writing something that is valuable in itself and that works in itself' (65). Claiming that contemporary society rejects this notion of art in favour of making 'something that will have some utilitarian value' (171), O'Connor believes narratives can be mediums for spiritual revelation but only if they are firstly successful as fictions. It is 'the nature of fiction not to be good for much unless it is good in itself' (81) she maintains. Unlike philosophy which is explicitly directed towards the attainment of truth, great fictions may contain and reveal truth, but this is not their sole *raison d'être*.

The divergence between Weil and O'Connor's concepts of literature is most apparent in their views on immoral fictional content and its relation to the writer's role. As we have seen, Weil considers the majority of fiction immoral because it reverses the nature of good and evil by making good boring, evil interesting, and neglecting to depict the essential oppositional relationship existing between them. Sensitive to accusations that the immoral and grotesque content of her fiction damages her Christian viewpoint, O'Connor significantly spent the majority of her career defending both her motives and narratives from what she termed this 'pious argument' (MM 179). Her own explanation for the 'striking preoccupation with what is seedy and evil and violent' (178) in Catholic, and specifically her own fictions, has three strands. First, due to mankind's Fall this is actually an accurate depiction of reality, second, the concentration on evil is a consequence of having to demonstrate this reality to readers unwilling or unable to comprehend it, and third, the writer is limited by the nature of his vocation and talent.

Replying to the premise that belief in the Redemption and a consequent optimistic vision of goodness as the transcendent reality should preclude depictions of evil in Christian fiction, O'Connor insists 'though the good is the ultimate reality, the ultimate reality has been weakened in human beings as a result of the Fall, and it is this weakened life that we see' (179). Consequently the writer 'has to make the corruption believable before he can make the grace meaningful' (HB 516).

More significant is O'Connor's second justification for the gratuitous use of immorality and violence in religious fiction, which shifts responsibility from writer to reader. In 'Novelist and Believer' she observes 'if writers with a religious view of the world excel these days in the depiction of evil, it is because they have to make its nature unmistakable to their particular audience' (MM 168). O'Connor divides her own readers into a hostile secular majority she is 'conscious of writing for' who 'think God is dead' (HB 92), and a minority Catholic audience she believes equally

problematic because it perceives 'nature in literature in only two forms, the sentimental and the obscene' (MM 147).

The Christian author finds in secular life 'distortions which are repugnant to him, and his problem will be to make these appear as distortions to an audience which is used to seeing them as natural' (33). Yet the 'general intelligent reader today is not a believer' (181) she claims, and these distortions are a consequence of readers who are unable or unwilling to perceive the universe as the Catholic author does. Negativity is therefore a legitimate tactic for writing on the souls of a recalcitrant secular audience, and is equally defensible when the author is confronted by the Catholic reader who is a victim of 'the parochial aesthetic' and a 'cultural insularity' which ensures he has 'reduced his conception of the supernatural to pious cliché' (145, 147). This Manichean tendency to separate nature and grace is considered by O'Connor to be a major source of misreadings of immoral fictional content. Unable to read such work in its religious context Catholic audiences are 'constantly being offended and scandalized' by fictions which are actually 'permeated with a Christian spirit' (151).

O'Connor's third defence for the immoral content such readers find objectionable is that the writer's vision is limited by his vocation, which is itself constrained by the extent of his talent. Vocation is 'a limiting factor which extends even to the kind of material that the writer is able to apprehend imaginatively', because although he can choose his subject 'he cannot choose what he is able to make live' (27). The Christian writer must not destroy his 'gift' from God by 'trying to use it outside its proper limits' (27), which are circumscribed by his perception and ability to render it. The competing tensions of beliefs and artistic vocation are reconciled by concentrating on aesthetic demands. 'If writing is your vocation, then, as a writer, you will seek the will of God first through the laws and limitations of what you are creating; your first concern will be the necessities that present themselves in the work' O'Connor maintains in 'The Church and the Fiction Writer' (153). By developing what Jacques Maritain terms the 'habit of art', writers can cultivate 'a certain quality or virtue of the mind' (64-65), which allows them to be faithful to both their art and concept of truth.

Yet despite O'Connor's attempt to reconcile the grotesque content of her narratives with her Christian vision through her concept of vocation, she remains preoccupied with this problem of balance throughout her career, and the realization of a tension between her fiction and religion is central to O'Connor's notion of the writer's role.

In 'Catholic Novelists and Their Readers' she outlines the Christian writer's dilemma.

Just how can the novelist be true to time and eternity both, to what he sees and what he believes, to the relative and the absolute? And how can he do all this and be true at the same time to the art of the novel, which demands the illusion of life? (177)

O'Connor attempts to harmonise her negative vision of a grotesquely fallen world with her positive belief in man's eternal potential for redemption, by abdicating authorial responsibility for immoral and grotesque fictional content, explaining its use via a combination of proclaiming the inadequacies of her readers, and the necessity of conforming to the aesthetic requirements of fictional form. Weil's views on authorial responsibility and spiritual guidance are useful here in illuminating O'Connor's position. Weil's theory of the author's role is a direct challenge to O'Connor's stance in two major ways. First, Weil's insistence that only the sanctity of genius is an antidote to the innate immorality of literature and is essential to enable the prophetic function vital to writing on the soul, disputes O'Connor's claim that authorial morality is not vital to prophetic vision. Second, Weil's contention that writers who depict baseness and immorality are directly responsible for weakening spiritual values, and consequently it is vital to correct the usurpation of the spiritual role from all but writers of genius, questions the validity of O'Connor's assertion that the Christian writer can not be held responsible for any spiritual corruption his work may incite.

O'Connor's alternative to Weil's first point takes two forms. First she denies that prophetic vision requires sanctity by championing the autonomy of fiction, but second, claims when prophetic vision is allied to the Catholic Church's viewpoint the conflicting demands of fiction and belief can be successfully amalgamated. 'The Catholic novelist doesn't have to be a saint; he doesn't even have to be a Catholic; he does, unfortunately, have to be a novelist' O'Connor contends (172). Invoking St. Thomas Aquinas in her defence of the independence of prophetic vision she insists it 'is a quality of the imagination' that 'does not have anything to do with the moral life of the prophet. It is the imaginative vision itself that endorses the morality' (HB 365). Acknowledging this was 'a lucky find' (365) for both developing and substantiating her own imaginative vision, she again relocates the issue of morality within literary rather than theological criteria, conveniently allowing her to champion both without being limited to either.

Yet by extending the notion of prophetic vision to include a collective religious viewpoint O'Connor attempts to maintain her autonomy of art stance whilst allying herself to the ideal of sanctity Weil considers essential. In their attempts to use literal realities to suggest deeper subtexts all fiction writers are characterised by prophetic vision. However the Catholic novelist's is 'not simply a matter of his personal imaginative gift; it is also a matter of the Church's gift' (MM 179). A major function of the Catholic Church is to transmit 'the prophetic vision that is good for all time' and when this is included in the novelist's personal vision 'he has a powerful extension of sight' (180). But adherence to dogma 'cannot fix what goes on in life or blind the believer to it' (150), and to a certain extent O'Connor agrees with the Weilean notion that writers with pretensions to high morality are merely worse writers. When the author's personal view of reality is sacrificed in favour of an over-reliance on the Church's collective vision its consequence is another contribution to 'that large body of pious trash' typical of Catholic literature (180). A conflict between individual and Church perspectives is therefore desirable (and eventually inevitable), but when these 'two sets of eyes' are successfully integrated, authorial freedom is maintained and simultaneously the Church provides the 'reality of an added dimension' (150), an intensification of the fiction writer's innate prophetic vision.

O'Connor's view of the author-Church relationship also provides her with a reply to Weil's second contention that writers who depict immorality are responsible for the spiritual degradation of their readers. 'The business of protecting souls from dangerous literature belongs properly to the Church' she contends (149), even if this involves forbidding the reading of the writer's work (the same draconian censorship advocated by Weil). In such instances the Catholic author should be grateful for this 'service' because it 'means he can then limit himself to the demands of his art' (149). O'Connor acknowledges that remaining true to the requirements of both art and personal vision does not prevent the writer from being 'read by all sorts of people who don't understand what he is doing and are therefore scandalized by it', and appreciates it 'is very possible that what is vision and truth to the writer is temptation and sin to the reader' (187). However, although this is a dilemma for the conscientious novelist O'Connor disclaims individual liability by insisting 'to force this kind of total responsibility on the novelist is to burden him with the business that belongs only to God' (187). Writers only have an obligation to the aesthetics of their work, and their best protection against its immoral potential is 'strict attention to the order, proportion, and radiance of what they are making'.³² If the writer's attention is applied to producing a work 'good in itself', he will take

great pains to control every excess, everything that does not contribute to his central meaning and design. He cannot indulge in sentimentality, in propagandizing, or in pornography and create a work of art, for all these things are excesses. They call attention to themselves and distract from the work as a whole. (187-88)

But despite her apparent desire to avoid artistic excess, O'Connor acknowledges she 'can't write about anything subtle' (HB 517). Rejecting demands for 'an apologetic fiction' which aims to 'make Christianity look desirable', she insists 'if I set myself to write about a socially desirable Christianity, all the life would go out of what I do' (516-17).

Limited by both her vision and vocation O'Connor must depict the profound realities dictated by her Christian perspective, yet produce dramatic and entertaining fictions. Because fiction is a narrative art and 'relies heavily on the element of drama' (MM 74), unlike theological or philosophical writings there 'is no room for abstract expressions of compassion or morality in the fiction itself' (125). Consequently, to specify her religious concerns O'Connor is forced into using the alternative forms of lectures and essays. But as subsequent chapters will demonstrate this involves a degree of propagandizing which itself constitutes an excess. However, despite the undoubted excesses contained in both her fictional and non-fictional forms, O'Connor's concept of the writer's role is dependent on achieving equilibrium between the contraries of 'principle and fact, judgement and observation' which is necessary to maintain 'if fiction is to be true' (53-54), and resisting the separations of nature and grace, reason and imagination which are 'inimical to art' (184).

O'Connor, like Weil, thinks dialectically yet is compelled to correlate these contraries. Before analyzing how this process works in the areas of O'Connor's work which are similar to Weil's, it is necessary briefly to outline the final major difference that separates the two writers - their disparate attitudes to comedy. As the flip side of the terrible (see HB 105), comedy is part of O'Connor's dialectical imagination but not Weil's. As we have already observed Weil resembles Plato's severe rather than amusing writer, displaying little evidence of a comic vision,³³ which is compounded by her omission of the comic elements within her chosen texts of genius, and concentration on their author's most harrowing works. In contrast, O'Connor insists prophetic vision neither 'precludes comedy' nor 'the pleasure taken in producing it' (Wells, CFO 89). In fact being earnest about

salvation presupposes a comic vision. It is 'well to realize that the maximum amount of seriousness admits the maximum amount of comedy', O'Connor maintains, only 'if we are secure in our beliefs can we see the comical side of the universe'. (MM 167)

Weil's greater religious insecurities may at least partially account for the absence of humour in her work, but more likely it derives from her personal disposition and the fact that it is not a prerequisite of philosophical forms to entertain the reader. Yet in addition to its obvious amusement value, comedy constitutes a vital element in O'Connor's armoury of devices for writing on the souls of her audience. Irony, with its ability of 'yoking together in a single figure the "most widely separated" opposites in such a way that they are seen to belong together without losing their contrariness',³⁴ comprises a superposed method of connecting comic and terrible, sacred and profane in a single vista. While satire permits O'Connor to juxtapose the actual with the ideal and ridicule the vices and folly by which the sacred is denied.³⁵

Despite their own very real differences on the value and content of fiction, the writer's role, and the function of comedy, Weil and O'Connor share similar notions of first, form and its relationship to perception, second, supernatural reason, third, language, and finally and most importantly, the redemptive possibilities of texts. Like Weil, O'Connor perceives literary forms as organic and ultimately unified, her New Critical stance insisting on the cohesion of disparate or contradictory elements within the text. In the best narratives form is 'something that grows out of the material', a 'piece of fiction must be very much a self-contained dramatic unity' she contends (102, 75). But as with Weil's notions of both philosophical and literary form, O'Connor conceives this ultimate unity encapsulating within it both a multilayered vertical hierarchy and contradictory elements and realities. Perceptions of unity are dependent on cultivating a superposed perception capable of both conceiving multiplicity and contradiction whilst at the same time correlating their different levels and oppositions.

As we noted earlier, the Judaeo-Christian scriptures provide O'Connor with a model for the creation of fictional narratives and prophetic vision. Yet although like Weil O'Connor draws spiritual inspiration from these mythic narratives, her conviction that the majority of her readers are unfamiliar with biblical texts leads her to refine this paradigm with two important strategies. First, she encourages readers to cultivate anagogical vision by interpreting her texts using the hierarchical infrastructure provided by medieval allegory, and second, O'Connor uses the

grotesque genre as a narrative form to emphasise the disparities, yet ultimately reconcile both physical and mystical realities within the stories.

Weil's intellectual ladder of contradictions and the superposed vision it requires is similar to O'Connor's notion of anagogical vision and allegory, which relies primarily on educating the reader to make the appropriate intellectual responses to her texts: ie. progressing from literal to spiritual cognition within the conceptual model of a vertical hierarchy.³⁶ As a development of traditional Judaeo-Christian notions of God's Word being unambiguously written in both the world and Scriptures, medieval allegory allows a more flexible system of textual interpretation, while still privileging religious rather than secular readings.³⁷ The literal, allegorical, tropological and anagogical readings this exegetical strategy permits, allows narrative to escape its temporal horizontality and achieve a tiered structure combining literal text and mystical subtext. At the pinnacle of this hierarchy and considered most valid are anagogical readings, the 'kind of vision that is able to see different levels of reality in one image or one situation', which O'Connor believes provides the 'enlarged view of the human scene' essential to great fiction writers and great texts (72).

Accommodating the multilayered perception of both world and narrative O'Connor as Catholic writer demands, this medieval aesthetic simultaneously allows a method for attempting to control reader response. Despite its apparent openness in encouraging readers to search for alternatives to literal readings, medieval allegory establishes strictly prescribed interpretative criteria. What is actually made available as Umberto Eco notes in *The Open Work* (1989)

is a range of rigidly pre-established and ordained interpretative solutions, and these never allow the reader to move outside the strict control of the author [...] The reader can concentrate his attention on one sense rather than another, in the limited space of this four-tiered sentence, but he must always follow rules that entail a rigid univocality. (Eco 6)

O'Connor's own use of this exegetical framework involves privileging anagogical readings through biblical analogies and an equally limited system of signification (sun, sky, tree and colour imagery etc) that allows carnal, literal readings whilst encouraging readers to accept their spiritual connotations. Operating on a similar principle to anagogical vision, symbols, 'while having their essential place in the

literal level of the story, operate in depth as well as on the surface, increasing the story in every direction', according to O'Connor, the 'truer the symbol, the deeper it leads you, the more meaning it opens up'.³⁸

But the post-Renaissance shift of perspective from vertical to linear concepts of the universe, combined with the collapse of automatically accepted relationships between signifier and signified post-Freud and Saussure, ensures the religious certainties which uphold medieval concepts of humanity, the cosmos, and art are no longer easily sustainable.³⁹ As Mircea Eliade observes, for secular man 'the cosmos has become opaque, inert, mute; it transmits no message, it holds no cipher'.⁴⁰ As a result, O'Connor's sacramental viewpoint and connected allegory and symbolism are frequently neither perceived nor accepted by her audience. She was acutely aware that the 'model of balance' she believed medieval allegory provided was unavailable to the twentieth-century Catholic writer who 'often finds himself writing in and for a world that is unprepared and unwilling to see the meaning of life as he sees it' (49, 185). Recognizing this problem in 'Novelist and Believer' she complains it is impossible to

have effective allegory in times when people are swept this way and that by momentary convictions, because everyone will read it differently. You can't indicate moral values when morality changes with what is being done, because there is no accepted basis of judgement. (166)

This being so, O'Connor's emphasis on promoting anagogical vision appears a flawed method of communicating her religious viewpoint, evidenced by the necessity to specify its use in her non-fictional writings. However, O'Connor's second major fictional strategy, her employment of the grotesque genre, provides her with a more radical method of altering her audience's perspective.

Just as Weil considers the scandalous, irrational *logos alogos* a superior method of transcending earthly contradictions and approaching divine mysteries, O'Connor uses the grotesque mode as an irrational mediator. By forcing the mind to consider shocking relationships (e.g. murderers and tricksters can be agents of grace), she attempts to reconcile the dialectical opposites of sacred and profane, comic and terrible, at a higher level of cognition; using grotesque physical realities to approach divine mysteries by the type of resemblance or transference of the sense of reality advocated by Weil. Significantly O'Connor equates grotesque realism with exactly

the same type of prophetic vision demanded by her sacramentalism. The writer of grotesque fiction is 'looking for one image that will connect or combine or embody two points; one is a point in the concrete, and the other is a point not visible to the naked eye, but believed in by him firmly' she contends (44). In contrast to Weil's dispassionate intellectual method for overcoming contradiction and connecting incommensurates, O'Connor's grotesque fiction chiefly relies on sensual experience: shock, horror, comedy. She considers these responses essential to generating an altered (specifically religious) cognition, because the 'beginning of human knowledge is through the senses', and 'you cannot appeal to the senses with abstractions' (67). O'Connor's point sheds some light on Weil's philosophy and the impact of her work. While her use of contradiction and dialectic is a distinctly rational form, the frequently grotesque content of Weil's writings and the often shocking figurative language she uses impact on her readers, generating the kind of perturbed and horrified (but not comic) reactions from her readers that O'Connor's fictions produce (see Chapter Two).

The powerful, conflicting sensations unleashed by the literary grotesque genre ensures it opens up ambiguities which offer multiple perspectives that frequently rival O'Connor's own. Aware that the polyvalent meanings generated by narratives and their readers are an essential element of fictional form, O'Connor maintains a good story 'can't be reduced, it can only be expanded'; and a narrative is successful 'when you continue to see more and more in it, and when it continues to escape you' (102). But if fictions (and especially grotesque fictions) are characterised by their ability to escape definition, and medieval allegorical frameworks are no longer readily sustainable by a mass audience, how can O'Connor's narratives write Christian concepts on the soul? This is a crucial problem requiring a combination of imaginative perception and belief. If as she claims, in fiction 'two and two is always more than four' (102), it requires a suspension of rational belief in order to 'make believe' an alternative fictional world. Christian theology necessitates a similar deferral of rationality to believe, or have faith in, the paradoxes on which it is based. Both fictions and theology demand this kind of imaginative perception, and this is also vital to philosophers.⁴¹ In its philosophical aspect imaginative perception does not require creating or believing in an object, but rather a re-creation of it in the mind. (Weil's analogies rely on this process: consider her Hegelian cube.) But what is 'seen' in this manner 'goes beyond what is given, in just the way that a fictional thought outstrips reality', it is 'the perceptual equivalent of a fictional thought' (Scruton 350-51).

Weil's concept of the imagination is useful in illuminating O'Connor's endeavours to write Christian concepts on the soul via a fictional form. Weil consistently considers the imagination negatively by connecting it with a damaging tendency to be fictional that obstructs the intervention of grace in human life and prevents superposed vision.⁴² Yet as Martin Andic notes, 'imagination in a positive sense is constantly implied in Weil's treatment of discernment, reading, and attention'.⁴³ When combined with attention and love, imagination allows the superposed reading and supernatural reason that is essential to faith, writers and texts of genius. At its lowest level imagination produces ontological fictionality and at its highest level faith, which as a 'gift of reading' which is 'supernatural' (NB 220), goes beyond the fictional to perceive a transcendent spiritual reality. This same type of positive imagination is shared by writers of genius, who as we have seen, produce texts which surpass their status as fictions and in doing so provide the density of the real.⁴⁴

O'Connor's Catholic faith and fictional form are based on similar notions of a positive imagination that includes supernatural reason and superposed reading. O'Connor's world vision and the content of her narratives are founded on Christian paradoxes. She explicitly specifies that the 'assumptions that underlie' her work are 'those of the central Christian mysteries' (109), and that for her it is 'the virgin birth, the Incarnation, the resurrection which are the true laws of the flesh and the physical. Death, decay, destruction are the suspension of these laws' (HB 100). This necessitates no 'leap into the absurd', rather she finds it 'reasonable to believe even though these beliefs are beyond reason' (479). Relying on an imaginative perception equivalent to Weil's unnatural reason, O'Connor contends her fiction 'takes its character from a reasonable use of the unreasonable, though the reasonableness of my use of it may not always be apparent' (MM 109). Like Weil, she applies rational criteria to irrational mysteries, insisting that what is contradictory and ridiculous to the limited human intellect is resolved at a higher level through faith, and ultimately, grace. The depiction of human limitation, absurdity, and the intervention of grace within her fictional microcosms is intended to demonstrate to the hostile reader his or her own equally parallel limits and absurdities, yet active potential for grace in a world where a higher reason operates.

But the imaginative perception that allows the reader to believe in a fictional world and be intellectually and emotionally affected by it does not necessarily equate to sharing the author's religious belief system. O'Connor's obsession with her audience and the fact her religious philosophy is proclaimed so frequently in the non-fictional forms of her lectures, essays and letters, indicates the difficulty of

writing specifically Christian concepts on the soul through an innately ambiguous medium dependent on reader response. However, sharing with Weil the same problem of how to articulate her nonrational beliefs and talk about God within a human vocabulary, O'Connor also attempts to connect the contrary aspects of her dialectical vision by figurative language. Like Weil she uses unusual analogies, metaphors, paradoxes, oxymorons and hyperbole in an attempt to maximise the capacity of words to demonstrate both the separations and links between the sacred and profane, a tension of opposites Frederick Asals terms 'the language of extremity' (*Imagination* 35).

Analogies, with their explicit threads of connection, allow O'Connor to exert a measure of control over their connotations, and her specifically biblical analogies equate to her preferred allegorical vision, suggesting alternative perceptions of images and events while operating within a limited scale of (religious) possibilities. O'Connor's similes fulfil a similar function, making precise comparisons which allow her to constrain their implications yet invoke spiritual meanings beyond a literal level.⁴⁵ The prevalence of the 'as if' construction in her narratives and its apparent function of linking human limitation with spiritual potential is particularly interesting and will be analyzed in Chapter Three.

The implicit and consequently more startling comparisons made available by metaphor are an integral and vital component of O'Connor's literary vocabulary, repeatedly embodying the religious themes of her stories. Their freer suggestion ensures they form an important part of her grotesque narratives, and through their reliance on a similar perception of the connection between often very dissimilar objects, are powerful tools for provoking alternative perspectives.⁴⁶ As we have noted, paradoxes are inherent in her Christian viewpoint, and as 'an apparently self-contradictory (even absurd) statement which, on closer inspection, is found to contain a truth reconciling the conflicting opposites', are as important to O'Connor's fictional form as they are to Weil's philosophical form.⁴⁷ Oxymorons are equally prevalent in O'Connor's texts, like her paradoxes yoking together incongruous elements to defamiliarise stereotypical perspectives and offer alternative visions of reality. Hyperbole and its antithetical opposite litotes are also regularly featured. In contrast to Weil, who does not possess an ironic vision, these linguistic forms are important to the reader's recognition of the narrator's ironic perspective, which as we have already noted is an integral part of O'Connor's attempt to write on the soul via comedy.⁴⁸ Finally, one of her most important rhetorical devices consists of the repetition of clichés, banalities, and profanities,

whose frequency is apparently intended to draw attention to their original literal meanings.

However, a comparison of Weil and O'Connor's vocabularies reveals that while they use very similar types of figurative language to convey meaning, they prioritise words quite differently, with O'Connor inverting Weil's hierarchy of language. Sharing with Weil a belief that the erroneous use of language betrays (what in her view) are equally mistaken philosophies, O'Connor agrees the lowest language of the collective: blasphemy, pious cliché, advertisements and propaganda allow words to serve any purpose, with men suffering because of them (see the following analysis of *Wise Blood*). Like Weil she is concerned that writers should clarify their vocabulary, insisting writing classes 'should not be to teach you how to write, but to teach you the limits and possibilities of words and the respect due them' (83). But O'Connor is less interested in a Weilean rigorous, rational control of language, and more concerned with the imaginative use of words, and their potential to be entertaining as well as spiritually revelatory. Consequently she differs to Weil in not separating the lowest vocabulary from the highest, and there is little evidence in her work of Weil's intermediate level of language with its properly clarified words useful for earthly needs. Most importantly, O'Connor's contention that prophecy does not preclude comedy allows her the freedom to use ironically what Weil classes the highest language referring to God, truth, goodness, love, justice; amalgamating this vocabulary with its opposite, the basest of words.

As we have noted, for Weil the highest words have a redemptive, revelatory power because they cannot be limited to any particular concept and are above mere human opinion and understanding. As such when legitimately used they enlighten and elevate mankind towards grace, visibly signifying the ungraspable mysteries beyond them when perceived with superposed vision. O'Connor's ironic inversion of the highest language works on a similar principle, also attempting to both revitalise the spiritual dimension of words whilst ensuring they are equally relevant to human life. The profanities, clichés and banalities which saturate her grotesque narratives debase the highest language yet paradoxically draw attention to it. As Gentry observes, O'Connor's use of banality 'licences the expression of radical ideas under the cloak of conventionality' as 'the literal meaning of a cliché always threatens to break through the conventional meaning'.⁴⁹ When read with a superposed ironic perspective the literal meaning of the lowest exclamations refers to a spiritual connotation that subverts its intended profane or banal intention, pointing beyond itself to infer the mysterious, religious meaning above its constrained, merely human opinion or prejudice.⁵⁰

O'Connor's inverted vocabulary relies on the 'intelligent' superposed reader to perceive the irony and spiritual subtext she intends to convey. The limited secular readings she believes most readers perceive corresponds to Weil's theory of defective efforts to reconcile contraries by unifying them on a one-dimensional plane rather than at a higher level. Just as Weil believes a superposed perspective is only acquired through great attention and effort, O'Connor insists art is 'only for those who are willing to undergo the effort needed to understand it', because it requires 'humility and a real love of the truth to raise oneself and by hard labor to acquire higher standards' (189). Thanks to modern society's 'naturalistic bias', the reader 'doesn't realize that he has to shift his sights to read fiction which treats of an encounter with God' (163) she insists. Even though narrative form and language provide multi-layered opportunities for perceiving the sacred through the profane, successful religious fiction is ultimately dependent on a capacity to read spiritually which is largely lacking in contemporary audiences. 'I don't believe that we shall have great religious fiction until we have again that happy combination of believing artist and believing society' O'Connor complains in 'Novelist and Believer' (168).

Despite championing the autonomy of fiction and its independence from any utilitarian function, O'Connor's preference for superposed rather than literal readers and stress on her own spiritual concerns, leaves no doubt she considers that the most competent readers and the greatest narratives have a profoundly religious dimension. In this she concurs with Weil, who contends 'the only form of extreme attention is a religious one' while 'all art of the first order is, in essence, religious' (NB 441-42).

Using Weil's four criteria for texts of literary and spiritual genius, I want to interrogate O'Connor's concept of religious fictions and how they operate. Weil's first point: that fictions must accurately represent reality and the force of gravity which dominates it, can be found in O'Connor's definition of the Catholic novel. While acknowledging the term 'Catholic novel' is 'suspect', she describes it as portraying 'reality adequately as we see it manifested in this world of things and human relationships', a text 'in which the truth as Christians know it has been used as a light to see the world by' (MM 172, 173). The basic theological 'truths' which illuminate the Catholic writer's universe are the Fall, Redemption and Judgement, requiring a combined belief in sin, 'the value that suffering can have', and 'eternal responsibility' (185). This equal stress on a Fallen yet redeemed reality ensures O'Connor's Catholic novel sees man 'as incomplete in himself, as prone to evil, but as redeemable when his own efforts are assisted by grace' (197). Consequently the narrative's 'center of meaning will be Christ, its center of destruction will be the

devil' (197): the oppositional relationship between good and evil Weil considers essential to moral fictions.

Weil's second rule for fictions of genius, that they demonstrate a superposed structure capable of depicting gravity's multiple levels yet ultimate unity, and in doing so transcend their textual status, equates to O'Connor's advocacy of the medieval allegorical hierarchy and its related anagogical vision as a model for narrative form, and the prophetic vision required to see mystical through literal realities. Although relying on emotional rather than dispassionate responses, the grotesque genre, with its capacity to link dialectical opposites, provides the type of 'architecture of the abyss' Weil perceives combining gravity's many forms.

As O'Connor's primary shock tactic for awakening readers to forgotten spiritual truths, the grotesque, both as fictional character and literary genre allows O'Connor's narratives to conform to Weil's third condition for genius. The pivotal notion that texts must manifest grace intervening violently in human life, causing suffering against the will which leads to a redemptive cognition of spiritual truth, is as vital to O'Connor as it is to Weil. Grace 'can be violent' she observes, in 'my own stories I have found that violence is strangely capable of returning my characters to reality and preparing them to accept their moment of grace' (HB 373, MM 112). The 'notion that grace is healing omits the fact that before it heals it cuts with the sword Christ said he came to bring' (HB 411) O'Connor claims, and her stories, by to some extent reproducing the crucial experiential relationship between violence, affliction and grace, qualify as Weilean redemptive texts - fictions which transcend their fictionality and write on the soul. But although recognizing that her philosophy is not always accepted by readers, Weil's literary criticism frequently neglects to anticipate the kind of negative reader response which obstructs O'Connor's efforts to produce redemptive fictions that attack what she perceives as her own audience's ontological fictionality. Part of contemporary man's propensity to be fictional is an inability to recognise the concept of violent grace. 'Our age not only does not have a very sharp eye for the almost imperceptible intrusions of grace, it no longer has much feeling for the nature of the violences which precede and follow them'(MM 112), O'Connor complains.

This constitutes a significant problem for O'Connor, because she endeavours to fulfil the last of Weil's criteria for fictional genius: rendering the beauty as well as bitterness of the world by portraying brief epiphanic instants of grace when men manage to rise above the strictures of gravity and find their souls. 'There is a moment in every great story in which the presence of grace can be felt as it waits to

be accepted or rejected, even though the reader may not recognize this moment', according to O'Connor (118). The vital moment which 'makes a story work', is when a character makes an action or gesture towards this presence and makes contact with mystery (111). This act is 'unlike any other in the story, one which indicates where the real heart of the story lies' (111). It would have to be

an action or a gesture which was both totally right and totally unexpected; it would have to be one that was both in character and beyond character; it would have to suggest both the world and eternity. The action or gesture I'm talking about would have to be on the anagogical level, that is the level which has to do with the Divine life and our participation in it. (111)

These sublime interludes in the midst of a Fallen world equate to Weil's notion that great narratives must represent the beauty as well as the bitterness of the universe. O'Connor perceives this combination of gravity and grace as the axis around which her fictions revolve: 'my subject in fiction is the action of grace in territory held largely by the devil' she insists' (118). But in an important distinction with Weil's insistence that fictions must depict an oppositional relationship with good and evil, O'Connor's Catholic perspective ensures (despite her insistence on the dialectical opposition of Christ and the devil), that evil is often part of the anagogical gesture: 'frequently it is an action in which the devil has been an unwilling instrument of grace' (118) she contends.

O'Connor and Weil's (often contradictory) concepts of good and evil will be discussed in Chapter Two, as will how Weil's first two guidelines for literary genius can be applied to O'Connor's stories, with Chapter Three examining how her third and fourth precepts illuminate *The Violent Bear It Away*. In this chapter I want to proceed with a reading of O'Connor's first novel, *Wise Blood*, focusing on how Weil's concepts of immoral fictional content, and the writer's function can interrogate O'Connor's role as Christian prophet.

Michael Kreyling claims O'Connor's novel 'looms as one of the most significant religious novels in American literary history'.⁵¹ If this is a valid statement O'Connor's role as prophetic writer has been successful despite (and perhaps because of) the immoral and grotesque content of the narrative. Despite Weil's objections, it appears possible to write on the soul with material that makes evil interesting and displays little evidence of morality. Is this because O'Connor's

hostile and/or inept readers have been persuaded by her fictional devices to recognise the religious context through which the content of *Wise Blood* should be filtered? Or is the text actually failed prophecy, only considered religious because O'Connor tells us it is? With its 'Author's Note' to the second edition, depiction of several immoral and grotesque 'prophets', and inversion of Christian symbolism, *Wise Blood* provides an important early test case of how O'Connor explores the problem of how to talk about God, and how her work can be illuminated by Weilean concepts.

O'Connor uses her 'Author's Note' to instruct her readers how to read the novel. 'That belief in Christ is to some a matter of life and death has been a stumbling block for readers who would prefer to think it a matter of no great consequence', she complains.⁵² For these secular readers who are unable or unwilling to perceive Hazel Motes as 'a Christian *malgré lui*' and erroneously consider his 'integrity' consists of trying to rid himself of Christ, the author's corrective position is unambiguously specified. *Wise Blood* is, she claims, a comic but serious novel about the 'mystery' of complex human free will. Haze's 'integrity' inheres in his inability to escape 'the ragged figure who moves from tree to tree in the back of his mind'. But are O'Connor's extra-fictional statements here and in her letters and lectures supported by the text? To examine this question I will divide my analysis into three sections. First, a discussion of the Fallen world depicted in the novel, second, whether the ending manages to balance this gravity with grace, and third, how Weil's concepts of immoral fictional content and the writer's role assist in interrogating O'Connor's mission to recall readers to forgotten spiritual truths in both *Wise Blood* and her comments about it.

In *Wise Blood* O'Connor presents a world where 'Jesus been a long time gone' (WB 21). Populated with the 'stone souls' Haze's grandfather insists Jesus died to redeem (15), Taulkinham, as a microcosm of a Fallen universe dominated by gravity and yet displaying little evidence of grace, offers an unrelenting vision of man trapped in a carnal, unredeemed world. The 'dark sour-looking sun' hangs in a sky that leaks over an equally unenlightened wasteland of vacant lots, empty warehouses, and trailer camps, which gives Haze 'the feeling that everything he saw was a broken-off piece of some giant blank thing that he had forgotten had happened to him' (62, 68). Recollections form part of the narrative structure of the novel, which unfolds as frame within a frame flashbacks that combined with repetitive imagery, is designed to encourage readers, like biblical exegetists, to interpret later events as revelations of significant truths symbolically foreshadowed earlier. But what these memories and dreams retrieve is not spiritual truths but images of confinement which intersect

with, and reinforce the depiction of a carnal world in which men and beasts share the same (vacant) lot and are indistinguishable. As William Rodney Allen argues, these images intensify *Wise Blood's* theme that 'the world without its spiritual dimension, is merely a prison for an odd collection of inmates - a zoo for the human animal'.⁵³ Haze's 'coffin' berth on the train leads him into the half-waking dreams of the funerals of his grandfather, father, two brothers (13-14), and his mother, whose coffin he sees from inside 'closing, coming closer closer down and cutting off the light and the room' (21). The association of his mother's casket with the woman in the 'lowered place' of the 'box lined with black cloth' in the carnival tent (56-57), links to the other mummy exhibited in its 'coffin-like' case in the museum (91). Appropriately at the centre of the park which is itself 'the heart of the city' (74), is a shrunken dead man whose eyes are 'drawn almost shut as if a giant block of steel were falling down on top of him' (92). This literal embodiment of human limitation and mortality shares its place in the park with the zoo, whose imprisoned animals literally bear human characteristics. The two bears who are 'like two matrons having tea, their faces polite and self-absorbed' (87), have more dignity, and appear more human than Enoch Emery, who, as 'a hound dog with light mange' with a 'fox-shaped face' torments them (77, 32), and who eventually evolves into Gonga, a human beast (191). These episodes form part of the series of symbols and motifs that interweave men and creatures throughout the novel: from the three women in the train dining car 'dressed like parrots' (9), to Mrs Flood, who has 'got a place' in her heart for Haze but whose heart is 'shaking like a bird cage' (221). But Taulkinham offers 'no place' for anything other than dehumanised men, and the question of how Haze, and humanity, can be saved from this spiritual displacement forms the basis of O'Connor's treatment of prophecy and Christian symbolism in the novel.

'Where you come from is gone, where you thought you were going to never was there, and where you are is no good unless you can get away from it' Haze declares, 'Where is there a place for you to be? No place' (159). But if Taulkinham is a no place, a spiritual void, what are the alternative truths offered by its prophets?. The question of who is 'true', what is the 'truth' and how is it found? is central. Onnie Jay Holy/Hoover Shoats boasts 'I can get prophets for peanuts' (153), and the various false prophets in the novel offer merely the same kind of enlightenment provided by the signs and lights Haze sees advertising peanuts and detergent that 'blinked frantically' as he arrived in the city (23). Onnie Jay's 'The Holy Church of Christ Without Christ' is an inversion of an inversion (145). Plagiarising Haze's 'Church Without Christ', and adapting it via his usual marketing techniques, his (un)Holy variant of how to talk about God offers a purely human salvation that

mixes sentimentalism, commercialism, and the prejudices of his audience. Working on the principle if 'you want to get anywheres in religion you got to keep it sweet' (151), he refutes the reality of Fallen man that exists everywhere around him, insisting every human being 'is born sweet and full of love', and offers 'Soulsease' through three doctrines. First, demystification: his disciples 'don't have to believe nothing you don't understand and approve of. If you don't understand it, it ain't true, and that's all there is to it' (146). Second, consumer choice: 'your own personal interpitation of the Bible' (147). Third, contemporaneity and status: 'This Church is up to date!' he claims, 'you can know there's nothing or nobody ahead of you, nobody knows nothing you don't know' (147). His side-kick employee Solace Layfield, 'the True Prophet', proclaims the only consolation apparently available in a world of untrue prophets: 'The unredeemed are redeeming themselves [...] Help yourself to salvation' (161).

Asa Hawkes offers more evidence that God's Word has been corrupted by human words, by asking for money not to disseminate his version of prophecy. 'Wouldn't you rather have me beg than preach?' he asks (34). But unlike Onnie Jay Holy, he appears to believe in the reality of a Jesus he now flees. At the instant when he had attempted his self-blinding 'he saw himself standing there as he was' and fancied he saw Jesus 'standing there too, beckoning to him; and he had fled out of the tent into the alley and disappeared' (108). Consequently through his knowledge that 'you can't run away from Jesus. Jesus is a fact', the fake blind man has some insight into Haze's inverted desire for salvation. Recognising 'the urge for Jesus' in Haze's voice, he correctly identifies that 'some preacher', Haze's grandfather, 'has left his mark' on him (44, 45). In a direct reference to the parable of the sower and its explanation by Christ (Matthew 13: 4-23), Hawkes tells the appropriately named Haze Motes: 'I can see more than you! [...] You got eyes and see not, ears and hear not, but you'll have to see sometime' (48).

It was what Haze 'saw' as a boy which ensures, like Hawkes, his attempts to cure himself of Jesus stem from his belief in the reality of Christ and the fear this causes. After witnessing his grandfather preach 'Jesus wasn't going to leave him ever. Jesus would never let him forget he was redeemed [...] Jesus would have him in the end', Haze 'saw Jesus' (16). Afraid to follow the 'wild ragged' Christ who moves 'from tree to tree in the back of his mind', motioning him to 'come off into the dark where he was not sure of his footing, where he might be walking on the water and not know it and then suddenly know it and drown', as a child Haze only decides to become a preacher because he believes 'the way to avoid Jesus was to avoid sin'

(16). But when no one is interested in his soul, he attempts to be 'converted to nothing' (18), and advocates a doctrine that parodies and denies the Incarnation.

Haze's Church without Christ, where 'the blind don't see and the lame don't walk and what's dead stays that way' is founded on the principle that 'there was no Fall because there was nothing to fall from and no Redemption because there was no Fall and no Judgement because there wasn't the first two. Nothing matters but that Jesus was a liar' (99). His call for a human saviour, a 'new jesus' that 'would speak plain' (134), is a demand for a literal not mystical reality, and when he proclaims he is 'peaceful' because 'my blood has set me free', and recommends his prospective flock 'take counsel from your blood' (135), he suggests humanity has an inherent ability to approach the truth independent of God. In the central concept of 'wise blood' O'Connor attempts to show the absurd consequences which develop from such humanism, and before analysing how she tries to convince the reader Haze's blasphemy eventually leads to his salvation, I will briefly examine this central motif, and its links to the depiction of Fallen man, prophecy, and the search for redemption in the novel.

Enoch Emery claims he has 'wiser blood' than Haze (53). He 'had wise blood like his daddy', who significantly 'looks like Jesus' (53, 75, 45). But Enoch's 'daddy' has deserted him, and his attempts to 'justify his daddy's blood' (123), and find redemption in the Fallen world of Taulkinham are mercilessly parodied by O'Connor. Enoch searches for the sacred level of reality that Haze strives to deny, and erroneously considers he has discovered it when he believes the mummy in the museum has spoken, and his mission is to be Haze's disciple. Undergoing a comic version of a mystical experience he 'rolled over and lay stretched out on the ground, with an exalted look on his face. He thought he was floating' (93). But his 'secret blood' which 'had been beating drum noises' (94, 90), and eventually prompts him to steal the mummy/new jesus, is not the conveyor of the sacred Word which has been issued from a new Messiah, but is instead the animal instinct that finally culminates in his transformation into the man/beast Gongga (192). By being 'in communication with his blood' and not his reason - the part of his divided brain which is 'stocked up with all kinds of words and phrases' (81), Enoch doesn't think 'in broad sweeps', he only 'thought what he would do next' (123), and after taking counsel from his blood and impulsively stealing the new jesus, he believes it 'was going to do something for him in return for his services' (185). Appropriately receiving his revelation through the comic papers - the advertisement for Gongga's visit to the 'Victory' theatre - Enoch receives his remuneration for being the disciple

of a purely human saviour, when wearing the gorilla outfit, his momentary happiness is due to the fact his 'god had finally rewarded him' (187, 192).

In *Wise Blood* O'Connor satirises what she considers contemporary man's separation from grace, and through Haze's humanism she attacks what she considers the misguided belief in mankind's ability to be its own saviour, through an egocentric denial of God. I will now examine how she explores this issue further through Haze's attempt to find a purely human redemption based on his doctrine that 'the only way to truth is through blasphemy' (142).

'In yourself right now is all the place you've got. If there was any Fall, look there, if there was any Redemption, look there, and if you expect any Judgement, look there' her argues, 'because they all three will have to be in your time and your body and where in your time and your body can they be?' (160). Yet initially, Haze's denial of another level of reality is based on his subconscious desire to provoke a reaction from Asa Hawkes which will countermand this denial. Crowds gathered to watch his grandfather preach 'because he seemed to dare them to', and operating on the same principle as a child, by walking with rocks in his shoes, Haze tried to incite a response to his guilt from God and if 'a stone had fallen he would have taken it as a sign' (15, 58). But he received no sign then, and when his expectation of a 'secret welcome' from Hawkes, in which the preacher will try to save his soul, does not materialise and he realises Hawkes is a fake, it leaves him with 'a deeper blankness' (102, 156).

Haze's nihilism is intensified after this episode, preaching that 'there are all kinds of truth, your truth and somebody else's, but behind all of them, there's only one truth and that is that there is no truth' (159). His belief in this total absence of truth as paradoxically 'the only truth there is!' is what causes him to destroy the new Jesus/mummy (183, 182). He brutally murders Solace Layfied for the equivalent reason. As preacher for the Holy Church of Christ Without Christ Solace pretends not to believe in Jesus, when he actually does, and so he 'ain't true' to his false prophecy (197). He must be destroyed in Haze's logic because he is both untrue to his personal beliefs and 'mocks what is' true - that there is no truth (198). Haze argues that he 'had only a few days ago believed in blasphemy as the way to salvation, but that you couldn't even believe in that because then you were believing in something to blaspheme', yet immediately afterwards he begins to 'curse and blaspheme Jesus' with 'conviction' (200). O'Connor would convince her readers that Haze's inner conflict is resolved by a kind of Pauline conversion, when on the road to preach his message to the 'new city', his car, which he considers a

'lightening bolt couldn't stop', is arbitrarily destroyed by a patrolman (199, 201). 'Nobody with a good car needs to be justified' he had claimed (107), and when this symbol of his self-justification, his 'place to be' (109), is destroyed, O'Connor aims to suggest his reply to the question 'Was you going anywheres?' with a 'No' marks some spiritual instead of physical progression (203-04).

Haze's self-blinding, and his walking with broken glass and rocks in his shoes in order to 'pay' (216), connects his behaviour to his earlier self-mortification when he waited for a sign. His assertion that the barbed wire he wraps around his chest is because he is 'not clean', implies the loss of the car has been perceived by him as some kind of a sign which provokes an altered perspective, because it leads him to revoke his earlier assertion 'I AM clean' (218, 85). When Mrs Flood alleges such asceticism means he 'must believe in Jesus', he significantly does not deny it (219). But is Haze really 'going backwards to Bethlehem' as Mrs Flood imagines? (213). Is the 'pushing look', the 'straining toward something' she identifies in his blind face (208), actually indicative of some kind of spiritual in-sight attained by Haze? Or is it rather O'Connor as Christian writer-prophet pushing her readers - both insider/intelligent and outsider/average too hard towards an eventual interpretation of his spiritual redemption which strains the text too much to accept?

Mrs Flood is herself established by O'Connor as a secular reader of events who sees literally: 'she took every word at its face value but all the faces were the same' (204). Yet her fascination with Haze leads her to imagine 'the whole black world in his head and his head bigger than the world, his head big enough to include the sky and planets and whatever was or had been or would be' (212). To understand how it would be possible for him to know in which direction he was travelling, she envisages 'it was like you were walking in a tunnel and all you could see was a pin point of light' which she sees 'as some kind of a star, like the star on Christmas cards' (212-13). Again O'Connor employs her own kind of typology to recall the reader to an earlier event and imply added significance to the current episode. This mystical idea of Haze's head becoming a microcosm of the universe evokes the description of the night sky over Taulkinham given at the beginning of Chapter Three, in which there were 'depth on depth' thousands of stars which were moving very slowly 'as if they were about some vast construction work that involved the whole order of the universe and would take all time to complete' but 'no one was paying any attention to the sky' (31). The fact that Mrs Flood fastens all her 'attention' on Haze because 'she wanted to penetrate the darkness behind it and see for herself what was there' (219), seems to demonstrate at least the desire for a profounder vision which neither she, nor the other inhabitants of Taulkinham

displayed earlier in the novel. When Haze is returned to her dead by the patrolmen, the narrator informs us 'the deep burned eye sockets seemed to lead into the dark tunnel where he had disappeared', but Mrs Flood 'couldn't see anything' when she stared into his face (225). But when she shuts her eyes she sees:

the pin point of light but so far away that she could not hold it steady in her mind. She felt as if she were blocked at the entrance to something [...] and felt as if she had finally got to the beginning of something she couldn't begin, and she saw him moving farther and farther away, farther and farther into the darkness until he was the pin point of light. (225-26)

In her 'Author's Note' O'Connor admonishes her readers for their 'stumbling block' in not being able to believe that belief in Christ is a matter of life and death, and consequently understand Haze's true integrity, and by implication, that of her novel. But I would argue that what blocks, or should block, O'Connor's readers from perceiving the anagogical light at the end of this particular tunnel, is not an incapacity to be an intelligent reader, and see spiritually, but that the narrative, unlike the night sky over Taulkinham, is not underpinned with sufficient scaffolding to support the weight of an unambiguously spiritual interpretation.

The heavy handed symbolism in which O'Connor prepares the reader to accept the loss of Haze's car acts as a catalyst for an epiphany leading to his conversion, is difficult to accept, because the evidence for a vital change of perspective is minimal. even though she attempts to prefigure it when he tells his audience 'they needn't to look at the sky because it's not going to open up and show no place behind it' (159). Although his face 'seemed to reflect' the distance over the embankment, and he slumps down onto it, there is nothing to suggest Haze's expression implies he has seen any alternative 'place' behind the 'blank' grey sky overhead (204). His demeanour is too similar to his expression when he discovered Hawkes was a fake and was converted to a deeper nihilism. That deeper blankness also 'reflected something' (156). In the later episode Haze's 'face didn't change and he didn't turn it toward the patrolman. It seemed to be concentrated on space' (205). But there is at least as much evidence here to suggest he is merely shocked by the bizarre way in which he has lost his most valued material possession, as there is to assume he recognises the error of his sinful ways. As Asals maintains, *Wise Blood* is 'a book of many nightmares but no visions' (*Imagination* 53), and although Haze's blinding and self-punishment suggests atonement, what this is for remains ambiguous. Even

he does not specifically connect it to either his earlier blasphemy or the murder of Layfield, informing Mrs Flood it 'don't make any difference for what' (216). This self-mutilation is not in itself sufficient to suggest that Haze has now become an anti-anti-Christ,⁵⁴ and those readers who claim he is spiritually saved coalesce atonement with redemption. As Satterfield rightly observes, such readers 'mistake his acts of penance' for 'the goal they are employed to achieve; they mistake the means for the end. But atonement is not redemption and should not be confused with it' (Satterfield 34).

But even if Haze's conversion and atonement are accepted, there remains a problem with associating his redemption with the tunnel, star, and pinpoint of light symbolism used by O'Connor, because this imagery is itself ambivalent. Not enough distinction is evident between Haze's star apparently guiding him backwards to Bethlehem and the point of light he becomes, and the more frequent use of the symbol with profane connotations. The several other stars who appear in the novel suggest either no, or at best a warped redemption is attained. The white woman in the black, coffin-like box at the carnival is its star display (24), and the distinctly unholy Onnie Jay is 'a radio star' (150). When he visits the movies Enoch proceeds Haze-like down a dark tunnel towards the celluloid movie stars at the end of it (132), and when his desire to become the 'Great Star' Gongga (171) is eventually achieved, the comedy dilutes rather than strengthens the case for Haze's redemption through almost equally bizarre events later in the novel.

Mrs Flood 'thanked her stars' every day that she 'was not religious or morbid' (204), and although the star imagery may be unsuccessful in communicating her own religious beliefs, O'Connor is more successful in recalling the reader to Christian concepts via some of the other themes she employs in the narrative. Haze's exodus in the wilderness of Taulkinham, and the stress on his Augustinian desire to find a physical/spiritual 'home' a heavenly city or 'place' to be, and the distortion of the good Samaritan parable, when the patrolmen find Haze lying afflicted in a ditch by the road and help him on his way to a different 'place' through the brutality that kills him.⁵⁵ Equally, the inversion of Christian symbolism is if anything too obviously delineated: the new Jesus as a parody of the Incarnation, its residence in Enoch's 'tabernacle-like' washstand (125) while he waits for it to give him a sign, and Enoch's reading of his comic strips 'every morning like an office' (187). The blood symbolism and its connection to Christ's crucifixion likewise work through ironic reversal. Declaring 'Where has the blood you think you been redeemed by touched you?' (98) Haze unconsciously indicates a truth: that the Fallen inhabitants of Taulkinham show little evidence of having been redeemed. His attempt to escape

the fact he has been personally saved by Jesus leads him to create a church 'that the blood of Jesus don't foul with redemption' (99), yet his call for a 'new jesus' that is all man 'without blood to waste', points through inversion to the deeper truth that Christ's agony appears to have had little impact on the amoral universe in which Haze exists (134-35). Similarly, the crucifixion imagery which surrounds the death of the True Prophet, Solace Layfield: the repeated call of 'Jesus hep me' (199), and the large amount of blood that 'was coming out of him and forming a puddle around his head' (198), is successful in alerting the reader to the Christian truths which O'Connor attempts to prophesy.

But these successes are unable to countermand the overwhelmingly grotesque and immoral content of the novel. Ultimately the world exhibited in O'Connor's fictional carnival tent is 'so SINSational' it fails to recall readers to an 'EXclusive' Christian truth (54). While she aims to prophesy like Haze's grandfather, make the reader 'never forget he was redeemed' and intends to 'have him in the end' (16), we are left with the fact that behind all the distorted versions of 'truth' offered by her fictional prophets the only truth may be there is little Christian truth in this novel. O'Connor as writer-prophet finds it extremely difficult to balance God's Word with her own words in fictional form. Like the new jesus/mummy, the narrative 'ain't anything but a way to say something' (152), but the mystery it contains is too great to be confined in fictional form. *Wise Blood* and its 'Author's Note' is like the mummy and its tag. The text remains 'a mystery' although it is 'right there in a glass case for everybody to see' with 'a typewritten card over it telling all about it' (75). But there is something the 'Author's Note' 'couldn't say and what it couldn't say was inside' [O'Connor], 'a terrible knowledge without any words to it' (75).

Referring Weil's theories on the value of fictions, their immoral fictional content, the writer's role, and O'Connor's responses to them to *Wise Blood* offers some interesting insights into the novel and O'Connor's proclaimed role as Christian prophet. First, *Wise Blood* does refute Weil's bias against the autonomous value of fictions, by offering an intriguing text, which independent of its limited ability to write Christian truths on the soul, is both interesting and entertaining. But second, Weil's insistence that to escape being fictitious and communicate religious truths successfully spiritual narratives must demonstrate the experiential reality of an opposition between good and evil is borne out by *Wise Blood*. Despite O'Connor's defence that she needs to emphasise the reality of a Fallen world for readers too stupid or desacralised to recognise it, in *Wise Blood* she makes the corruption believable but fails to make the grace meaningful. Its unrelenting physical and moral corruption is not balanced by a sufficient amount of goodness or beauty, and

consequently the narrative is too deeply embedded in the devil's territory to make the action of grace plausible. Unable adequately to balance the incommensurates of her theology and fiction,⁵⁶ O'Connor succeeds in making evil interesting but in doing so she dilutes her religious imperative, and consequently, it is difficult for her readers to accept that such well delineated Fallen characters can be, have been, redeemed.

O'Connor does not need to possess sanctity to write religious truths on the souls of her readers, but her habit of art, and aim to make fictions good in themselves are not sufficiently well executed in this novel to bridge the gaps between her religious intentions and the content of the narrative. Where O'Connor has most success in writing prophetically and linking the incommensurates of sacred and profane is where she differs most from Weil: the uses of comedy, and the inversion of the type of linguistic hierarchy Weil advocates.⁵⁷ While Enoch Emery's comic sub-plot obscures rather than illuminates her main subject, it is the ironic uses of language, profanity especially, which refer the reader back to the original, sacred meaning of specific words. 'Jesus' is the curse constantly on the lips of the characters throughout the novel, and like the boy at Slade's used car lot where Haze buys the car which he wrongly thinks offers him justification, the repeated refrain of 'Jesus on the cross', 'Christ nailed', and 'Sweet Jesus', refers to what is spiritually, rather than physically 'wrong with him' (64, 66).

But even this form of O'Connor's attempts to recall her readers to an alternative sacred reality is problematic, because as Northrop Frye notes, irony requires not merely understanding but 'overstanding' to communicate meaning,⁵⁸ and therefore to perceive the religious inferences beyond the literal blasphemy requires some kind of awareness of what is being abused. Consequently if O'Connor is to convince her readers the endemic profanity in the narrative is actually meant to suggest spiritual rather than carnal interpretations, she requires an insider reader willing to perceive latent connotations, rather than an outsider reader who accepts only the literal signification. So finally, despite the two sets of eyes and added dimension O'Connor claims her allegiance to the Catholic Church provides her with as prophetic writer, because *Wise Blood* is so grotesque she does need to overcome its fictional form in order to make her theological intent manifest.

Only O'Connor's process of aural circumcision provides the means to find the equilibrium between principle and fact, judgement and observation, nature and grace which she believes necessary to make fictions true prophecy, but which is difficult to find in *Wise Blood's* narrative. This does entail an element of

sanctimoniousness in her extra-fictional writings and the kind of usurpation of spiritual guidance that Weil condemns. From the book's publication onwards O'Connor ensured her own interpretation of the novel was vigorously disseminated. Haze's car we are informed is 'a kind of death-in-life symbol, as his blindness is a life-in-death symbol', and he 'does not really escape his predicament until the car is destroyed by the patrolman' (MM 72). His 'nihilism leads him back to the fact of his Redemption', she insists, 'which is what he would have liked so much to get away from' (HB 70). 'The fact that these meanings are there makes the book significant' she contends, the 'reader may not see them but they have their effect on him nonetheless. This is the way the modern novelist sinks, or hides, his theme' (MM 72).

Even though O'Connor's Christian themes are well submerged in the narrative, her aural circumcision has proved extremely successful at inducing spiritual interpretations of *Wise Blood*. Jonathan Baumbach claims that at the novel's ending 'Haze immolates himself, re-enacting, in effect, the redemption of Man'.⁵⁹ Carter Martin insists Mrs Flood 'undergoes conversion progressively' and even claims she 'lives to pursue greater knowledge of herself and ultimately God' (*True Country* 117). Dorothy Walters believes Haze returns 'to God through acts of extreme expiation', yet uses O'Connor's 'Author's Note' as her evidence, insisting it 'should dispel any final doubts as to Haze's intentions'.⁶⁰ As Josephine Hendin argues, the religious argument that Haze blinds himself to atone for his earlier disbelief is 'a simplistic view that can best be maintained by readers with dogmatic glasses. It is, I feel, their glasses and not the text that suggests this' (Hendin *World* 54-55). However, as Lewis A. Lawson claims, 'if one cannot create the perfect form perhaps the next best thing is to create the perfect deformity',⁶¹ and I will now proceed in Chapter Two to interrogate how both Weil and O'Connor find connections between monstrosity and spiritual revelation.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. Plato, *Phaedrus and the Seventh and Eighth Letters*, trans. by Walter Hamilton (London: Penguin, 1973), (276) p.98. Due to the large number of other editions of Plato's texts available, to enable readers to locate quotations easily further references to *The Phaedrus* refer to the standard pagination to be found on the margins of most texts of Plato, and are given after quotations in the thesis text.

2. For useful and concise discussions of Plato's concept of recollection and its connection to the soul, knowledge of the Forms and dialectic, see Christopher Janaway, 'Ancient Greek Philosophy I: The Pre-Socratics and Plato', in *Philosophy: A Guide Through the Subject*, ed. by A.C. Grayling (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp.336-97 (pp.366-69). See also: David E. Cooper, *World Philosophies: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), pp.107-15; and Richard Tarnas, 'The Philosopher's Quest and the Universal Mind', in *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our World View* (London: Pimlico, 1996), pp.41-47 (pp.42-44).

3. See Mark 4. 13-20 in *The Jerusalem Bible: New Testament*, general ed. Alexander Jones, 4th edn (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973), p.78. Further references to biblical passages are given in the standard pagination after quotations in the text. Whilst Christian notions of writing on the soul and how to express them are influenced by Platonic philosophy, it is important to note that Christianity insists the revelation of ultimate reality is not possible by intellectual effort alone, but is dependent on divine grace and faith. For an analysis of Plato's concept of the soul, use of dialectic to approach spiritual knowledge and its similarities to and distinctions from Christian theology see Diogenes Allen, 'Plato: This World Is Not Our Home', in *Philosophy for Understanding Theology* (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press; London: SCM Press, 1985), pp.39-59.

4. 'Plato's Pharmacy' in *Dissemination*, trans. by Barbara Johnson, paperback edn (London: Athlone Press, 1981, 1993), pp.63-171 (p.149). See this essay for Derrida's use of the *Phaedrus* to examine the function of writing as both remedy and poison, and specifically his analysis of writing on the soul: pp.63-171 (pp.148-55); translated here as writing 'in' the soul, p.148.

5. Figurative imagery is a crucial part of the form of her philosophical writings and as the following quotation demonstrates, is inseparable from her reasoning.

'The use of reason makes things transparent to the mind. We do not, however, see what is transparent [...] We see either the dust on the window or the view beyond the window, but never the window itself. Cleaning off the dust only serves to make the view visible. The

reason should be employed only to bring us to the true mysteries, the true undemonstrables, which are reality. The uncomprehended hides the incomprehensible and should on this account be eliminated'. (GG, p. 119)

The most famous precedents for this philosophical use of figurative imagery and narratives are found in Plato. See the similes of the Sun, Divided Line and the Cave, and the Myth of Er in *The Republic*, trans. by Desmond Lee, 2nd edn, rev. (London: Penguin, 1974, 1987), (507-21), pp. 305-25; and (614-16) pp.447-50.

6. Weil's unfinished play is composed of both verse and prose, see *Venise sauvée, tragédie en trois actes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1955). See SWR, pp.408-09 for two of Weil's poems written in 1938: 'The Threshold' (trans. by William Burford, first publ. in *The Phoenix*, 3.1 (1970), 86-87); and 'The Stars' (first publ. as 'La Porte' in 'Les Astres', *Poèmes, suivis de 'Venise sauvée' Lettre de Paul Valéry* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968). Most of the lectures and essays in *Mystery and Manners* are as much theological and philosophical as they are literary, in both their didactic form and spiritual content. O'Connor consistently discusses her fiction and role as author within a specifically metaphysical framework, using theological vocabulary to refer to literary issues. See for example 'Novelist and Believer', MM, pp.154-158. See also *The Presence of Grace and Other Book Reviews* for O'Connor's critiques of relevant theological and philosophical writers and issues.

7. Her essay 'The Fiction Writer and His Country' (1957) provides an example of how O'Connor specifies her Christian viewpoint and successfully reorientated the critical debate towards her anagogical perspective which had not been widely recognised previously. For discussions of this process see Carol Shloss, pp. 13-14, and Satterfield, p.42.

8. In Wells, CFO, p.89. O'Connor makes the same point in her review of Bruce Vawter's *The Conscience of Israel*: 'Twentieth-century biblical criticism has returned the prophets to their genuine mission which was not to innovate but to recall people to truths they were already well aware of but chose to ignore', PG, p.141.

9. See Mark Edmundson, 'Prologue: An Ancient Quarrel' in *Literature Against Philosophy, Plato to Derrida: A Defence of Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp.1-29 for a discussion of Plato's argument and its implications for both philosophy and literature. For an excellent contemporary analysis of the interconnection between philosophy and literature which also respects each discipline's distinctiveness, see H.P. Rickman, *Philosophy in Literature* (Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1996).

10. See Aristotle's *Poetics*: Chapter Six on tragedy as the 'arousal of pity and fear effecting the katharsis' of the emotions; and Chapter Nine which contends 'poetry is more philosophical and more serious than history, since poetry speaks more of universals, history of particulars'. In *The Poetics of Aristotle*, trans. by Stephen Halliwell (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1987), p.37, p.41.
11. See 'Fiction', in Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, rev. edn (London: Fontana, 1983, 1988), pp.134-35 and 'Fiction' in *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms*, ed. by Roger Fowler, rev. edn (London: Routledge, 1973, 1987), pp.94-96. See also 'Fictions', and 'Literary Fiction and Reality', in Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966, 1967), pp.35-64, pp.127-52.
12. Weil's 'Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God', WFG, pp.105-16 provides a succinct clarification of her concept of attention. See Chapter Three of this thesis for an analysis of attention's crucial role in man's preparation for contact with God.
13. 'Paradox' in Roger Scruton, *Modern Philosophy: A Survey* (London: Mandarin, 1996), pp.397-412 gives a detailed analysis of the term which acknowledges its place in philosophical and theological thinking.
14. 'Contradiction, Mystery and the Use of Words in Simone Weil', *Religion and Literature*, 17.2 (1985), 1-16 (p.4).
15. See 'Towards a Poetics of Faith', in T.R. Wright, pp.1-40 and 'Talking about God' in Brian Davies, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp.20-31.
16. For detailed discussions of how figurative language produces alternative perceptions see *On Metaphor and Thought*, ed. by Andrew Ortony, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). See also 'Identity and Metaphor', in Northrop Frye, *Words With Power: Being a Second Study of 'The Bible and Literature'* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990, 1992), pp.63-96. On Weil's figurative language and imagery see: Jeffrey Eaton, 'Simone Weil and the Problem of Analogy', *Theology*, 87 (1984), 13-19; and 'Analogies' in David Anderson, *Simone Weil* (London: SCM Press, 1971), pp.99-115. See also: Ann Loades, 'Eucharistic Sacrifice: Simone Weil's Use of a Liturgical Metaphor', in *Religion and Literature*, 17.2 (1985), pp.43-54, and Van Herik, pp.260-82.
17. SWR, p.295. It is significant that to describe the inspirational quality of texts of genius Weil borrows this image from Plato's allegory of the charioteer and his horses in the *Phaedrus* (246-57). Nourished by beauty, wisdom and goodness, the

wings of the soul defy gravity allowing the soul to follow the Gods who travel outside the vault of the universe to perceive the 'plain of truth' where resides the absolute reality of the Forms (248). Evil and ugliness perish the soul's wings, and it may eventually sink 'beneath its burden of forgetfulness' (*anamnesis*), and fall to earth to be incarnated in a human being. Although the soul forgets its pre-physical vision of ultimate truth, through a combination of reason, intellect, and the reminders of the Forms provided by the sensible world, it is possible to unconceal and re-collect this epiphany (*alethia*). It is by the 'right use' of 'aids to recollection, which form a continual initiation into the perfect mystic vision that a man can become perfect in the true sense of the word' (249). It is in this context that Weil's texts of genius should be understood as mediums for writing spiritual truths on the soul.

18. See IC, p.119 and Weil's list of images of Christ in FLN, pp.321-22.

19. See the essays 'God in Plato', 'The *Symposium* of Plato', and 'The *Republic*' in IC, pp.74-88, pp.106-31, pp.132-50.

20. The Book of Job is 'a mutilated and adapted translation of a sacred book concerning an incarnated God who suffered, was put to death, and resurrected', and 'Job is the suffering just man of Plato, so just that he appears unjust' SL, p.160, FLN, p.256.

21. For an excellent examination of Weil's prejudice towards Judaism, its causes and consequences see 'A Stranger unto Her People: Weil on Judaism', in Nevin, pp.235-59.

22. See Weil's comments on art, literature and music in her essay 'Forms of the Implicit Love of God', in WFG, pp.137-215.

23. See Weil's article 'Antigone' and her essays 'God's Quest for Man', 'Zeus and Prometheus' and 'Prometheus' in IC, pp.1-10, pp.18-23, pp.56-73. See also: Loades, 'Simone Weil and Antigone' in Bell, pp.277-94.

24. See IC, pp.24-55 for Weil's essay, and also Michael K. Ferber, 'Simone Weil's Iliad', and Joseph H. Summers, 'Notes on Simone Weil's Iliad', in *Simone Weil: Interpretations of a Life*, ed. by George Abbott White (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), pp.63-85, pp.87-93.

25. On this point see Rickman, pp.23-31 and 'Literature and Philosophy: A Conversation with Bryan Magee', in Iris Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics*:

Writings on Philosophy and Literature, ed. by Peter Conradi (London: Chatto and Windus, 1997), pp.3-30.

26. Perrin and Thibon, p.142. Mark Edmundson also recognises the relationship between philosophy and fiction. It 'is manifestly the case that philosophers, even those in the much-maligned metaphysical tradition, aren't always solidifying or developing key terms'. Often 'philosophers are propounding myths, fictions that are open to broad interpretation [...] They move away from definitions, from truth', ie. fact. Edmundson, p.14.

27. See 'Myth', in Williams, pp. 210-12, 'Myth', in Fowler, pp.153-55, and 'Concern and Myth', in Frye, *Words With Power*, pp.30-62.

28. However it is important to note that God is present within the universe and in what Weil terms the 'supernatural' part of man's soul. See the following brief discussion, and my more detailed analysis of Weil's concepts of necessity and the soul in Chapter Two, and her notion of the bridges between God and man within the universe in Chapter Three.

29. The highly complex nature of Christian concepts of grace prevents me from adequately defining my terminology here. See my discussion of Christian grace and its relevance to Weil and O'Connor's writings in Chapter Three.

30. NB, p. 376. On God's secret presence within the world, descent into the human soul, and seizure of the soul by violence, see Weil's important essays, 'Forms of the Implicit Love of God', in WFG, pp.137-215; and 'The Love of God and Affliction', in SWR, pp. 439-68. See also my examination of how Weil conceives both God and mankind's part in the action of grace, in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

31. NB, p.471. Weil's concepts of void and decreation are central to her understanding of how God and man are both separated and reconciled. See her comments in 'Void and Compensation', 'To Accept the Void', and 'Decreation', in GG, pp. 5-9, pp. 10-11, pp. 28-34.

32. MM p.189. O'Connor draws her concept of the interrelation between aesthetics and authorial morality from St. Thomas Aquinas, whose *Summa Theologica* she read regularly, and whose work she also studied via Jacques Maritain's *Art and Scholasticism With Other Essays*. See Aquinas' statement on beauty to which O'Connor refers (*Summa*: I q.39 art.8), and her marginal lining of the relevant point in her copy of *Art and Scholasticism*, trans. by J.F. Scanlan (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), p.20, in Kinney, *Library*, pp.93-94. See also: 'The Formal Criteria of Beauty' and 'The Theory of Art', in Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetics of*

Thomas Aquinas, trans. by Hugh Bredin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp.64-121, pp.163-89.

33. However it is necessary to make some distinction between Weil's personality and her work. Her brother André insists his sister 'had an excellent sense of humour', in Malcolm Muggeridge, 'André Weil, a Scientist, Discusses His Sister with Malcolm Muggeridge', *Listener*, 24 May 1973, pp.673-79 (p.674). See also Gustave Thibon's comment that Weil 'knew how to joke without bad taste and could be ironical without unkindness', in his 'Introduction' to GG p.x.

34. Robert D. Pelton, *The Trickster in West Africa: A Study of Mythic Irony and Sacred Delight* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p.259. Quoted in Ruthann Knechel Johansen, *The Narrative Secret of Flannery O'Connor: The Trickster as Interpreter* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994), p.152.

35. See Chapter Two of this thesis for an analysis of how O'Connor's use of irony provides incisive means of demonstrating a character's ontological fictionality, implicates the reader in the protagonist's subsequent humiliation, and in doing so aims to provoke her audience into re-viewing their own vision of what is fictional, what real.

36. See Robert Fitzgerald's observation that the 'true range of the stories is vertical and Dantesque in what is taken in, in scale of implication', 'Flannery O'Connor: A Memoir', in *The Third Kind of Knowledge: Memoirs and Selected Writings*, ed. by Penelope Fitzgerald Laurans (New York: New Directions, 1993), pp.105-24 (p.122) (first publ. as 'Introduction', in Flannery O'Connor, *Everything That Rises Must Converge* (New York: Noonday Press-Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966)). On O'Connor's medievalism see J.O. Tate, 'Flannery O'Connor's Counterplot', *Southern Review*, 16.4 (1980), 869-78. For discussions of her allegory see Thomas M. Lorch, 'Flannery O'Connor: Christian Allegorist', *Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction*, 10.2 (1968), 69-80; and J. Robert Baker, 'Flannery O'Connor's Four-Fold Method of Allegory', *FOCB*, 21 (1992), 84-96.

37. On the four levels of Medieval allegory see St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa*: I q.1 art. 10, and Dante's 'Letter to Can Grande', in *The Theory of Criticism: From Plato to the Present A Reader*, ed. by Raman Selden (London: Longman, 1988), pp.292-93.

38. MM, pp.71-72. See T. R. Wright on literary and theological symbolism:

There is always an element of mystery surrounding a symbol, an opacity, a surplus of meaning, an enigma which no interpretation should attempt to eradicate. The deeper meaning to which the symbol

points remains inexhaustible and ultimately inexpressible. In theology as in literature symbolism involves a rejection of the positivist belief that reality can be discovered, laid bare by language. (Wright, p. 140)

39. On this reconstruction of the cosmos see Mikhail Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968, 1984):

The Renaissance destroyed this hierarchical picture of the world; its elements were transferred to one single plane, and the higher and lower stratum became relative. The accent was placed on "forward" and "backward". This transfer of the world from the vertical to the horizontal was realized in the human body, which became the relative centre of the cosmos. And this cosmos was no longer moving from the bottom to the top but along the horizontal line of time, from the past to the future. In bodily man the hierarchy of the cosmos was reversed and canceled; he asserted himself outside it. (pp. 363-64).

40. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1959, 1987), p.178. See also: 'Modern nonreligious man assumes a new existential situation; he regards himself solely as the subject and agent of history, and he refuses all appeal to transcendence' p.203.

41. See 'Imagination' in Scruton, pp.341-54; and Weil's comments on imagination and perception in LPY, pp.49-57.

42. 'What comes to us from Satan is the imagination', Weil claims in NB, p.218. 'Men exercise their imaginations in order to stop up the holes through which grace might pass, and for this purpose, and at the cost of a lie, they make for themselves idols, that is to say, relative forms of good', *ibid.*, p.145. The imagination as fictional filler of voids 'does away with multiple relationships', *ibid.*, p.160.

43. 'Discernment and the Imagination', in Bell, pp.116-149 (p.139). See this article for a balanced analysis of both the negative and positive aspects of the imagination as conceived by Weil, and how they relate to her theory of literary fictions.

44. The most positive imaginative faculty is also an important part of spiritual genius, which provides the basis for moral action. See WFG, pp.148-149 for how imagination, attention and love combine on the rare occasions when the victim of affliction is assisted.

45. For helpful discussions of O'Connor's use of analogies see John F. Desmond, *Risen Sons: Flannery O'Connor's Vision of History* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), pp.16-31; and Shloss, pp.58-65. For a detailed discussion of the 'as if' construction, see 'The Virtue in As If', in Edward Kessler, *Flannery O'Connor and the Language of Apocalypse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp.51-73.

46. See Kessler, pp.7-17 and passim for O'Connor's use of metaphors.

47. 'Paradox', in J.A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 3rd edn (London: Penguin, 1992), p.677. For O'Connor's use of paradoxes and other figurative language see Robert Detweiler, 'The Curse of Christ in Flannery O'Connor's Fiction', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 3.2 (1966), 235-45.

48. See Asals:

The litotes of the plain style and the hyperbole of gesture and action, the containment implied by the craft and control and the unleashing dramatized in the rampant feelings and violent plots, the manners of the local, the everyday, the ordinary and the mystery of the devastating intrusions of psychic and cosmic forces, the laughter induced by the comic and the terror evoked by violence-out of all these dualities comes that vibrant tension that gives her work its disturbing power. (*Imagination*, p.131)

On O'Connor's irony see Judith F. Wynne, 'The Sacramental Irony of Flannery O'Connor', *Southern Literary Journal*, 7.2 (1975), 33-49

49. *Religion*, p.117. See also Fred R. Thiemann, 'Usurping the Logos: Clichés in O'Connor's "Good Country People"', *FOCB*, 24 (1995-96), 46-56.

50. The narrator's vocabulary, opinions, prejudices, situation in the text and relationship to O'Connor are a vital element of her ironic reversals of language and attempts to write on the soul and will be analyzed in Chapter Three.

51. See his 'Introduction', in Kreyling, pp. 1-24 (p.3).

52. *Wise Blood* (London: Faber, 1952, 1980). Further references to this edition (hereafter WB) are given in the text. No page reference is supplied for the 'Author's Note' in this edition.

53. See his article 'The Cage of Matter: The World as Zoo in Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood*', *American Literature*, 58.2 (1986), 256-70 (p. 257).
54. As John Burt observes, finally 'we cannot distinguish Haze's piety from his impiety, his experience of grace from his punishment'. See 'What You Can't Talk About', in *Modern Critical Views: Flannery O'Connor*, ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1986), pp.125-43 (p.143).
55. On the inversion of the Samaritan parable see WB, pp. 223-25. Referring to Haze's treatment by the patrolmen, Richard Giannone interestingly refers this episode to St. Paul: Romans 2: 12: 'All who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law'. In his *Flannery O'Connor and the Mystery of Love* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), p. 27.
56. As Irving Malin contends, O'Connor 'is torn by the "needs" of the grotesque and Christian faith. *She gives up one for the other, unable to hold both at the end of her novel*', and her 'ability to render the grotesque [...] is greater than her ability to capture Haze's conversion'. In 'Flannery O'Connor and the Grotesque', in *The Added Dimension: The Art and Mind of Flannery O'Connor*, ed. by Melvin J. Friedman and Lewis A. Lawson, 2nd edn, rev. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1977), pp. 108-122 (p.112, p.113).
57. For a useful discussion of O'Connor's use of language see Melody Graulich, "'They Ain't Nothing But Words": Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood*', *FOCB*, 7 (1978), 64-83.
58. 'There is one consciousness that subjects itself to the text and understands, and another that, so to speak, overstands'. *Words*, p. 83.
59. See 'The Acid of God's Grace': *Wise Blood* by Flannery O'Connor', in *The Landscape of Nightmare: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel* (New York: New York University Press, 1965), pp. 87-100 (p. 88).
60. *Flannery O'Connor* (New York: Twayne, 1973), p.158.
61. 'The Perfect Deformity': *Wise Blood*', in Bloom, pp.37-41 (p. 38) (first publ. as 'Flannery O'Connor and the Grotesque: *Wise Blood*', in *Renascence*, 17.2 (1965).

**CHAPTER TWO: INTERESTING MONSTROSITIES:
AFFLICTION, GROTESQUERIE, AND THE STRANGENESS
OF TRUTH**

If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, that man will save it.¹

This is the central Christian paradox which forms the core of both Simone Weil and Flannery O'Connor's theologies: loss of self as ultimate being founded on Christ's crucifixion as *logos alogos*. As I noted in Chapter One, such contradictory Christian statements are dependent on an irrational reason which offends secular notions of normality. The violation of reason, exorbitant demands made, and the incredulous or repulsed responses generated, qualify this and other Christian paradoxes as a kind of monstrosity.²

Simone Weil's infamous New York 'prayer' constitutes a horrifying version of the central Christian paradox.

Father, in the name of Christ grant me this. That I may be unable to will any bodily movement, or even any attempt at movement, like a total paralytic. That I may be incapable of receiving any sensation, like someone who is completely blind, deaf and deprived of all senses. That I may be unable to make the slightest connection between two thoughts, even the simplest, like one of those total idiots who not only cannot count or read but have never even learnt to speak. That I may be insensible to every kind of grief and joy, and incapable of any love for any being or thing, and not even for myself, like old people in the last stages of decrepitude [...] Father, since thou art the Good and I am mediocrity, rend this body and soul away from me to make them into things for your use, and let nothing remain of me, for ever, except this rending itself, or else nothingness.³

Apparently conscious of the monstrous nature of her plea Weil maintains 'One does not voluntarily ask for such things. One comes to it in spite of oneself' (FLN 244). Yet this notion of unfree will intensifies rather than dilutes the offensive content of her prayer.

In his essay 'Prophet Out of Israel' Leslie Fiedler identifies a connection between Christian and Weilean offensiveness:

The outrageous (from the natural point of view) ethics of Christianity, the paradoxes on which it is based, are a scandal to common sense; but we have protected ourselves against them by turning them imperceptibly into platitudes. It is Simone Weil's method to revivify them, by recreating them in all their pristine offensiveness. [...] Sometimes the primary function of her paradoxes is to remind us that we live in a world where the eternal values are reversed.⁴

Fiedler's observation is important to readings of both Weil and O'Connor's work because it encapsulates their motivation for, and method of writing on the soul. Each writer shares Fiedler's view that mankind shields itself from Christianity's unnatural and inherently horrifying paradoxes, and that writing Christian ethics on the soul requires reactivating their innate offensiveness.

Against this background, and motivation, of the fictional fallen world both writers are writing in and for, this chapter will analyse how Weil and O'Connor's theologies and forms startlingly converge. The starting point is their theology, interrogated in two major theological areas. First, is there a God? and is the universe benevolent or malevolent? Second, what is the nature of man and human existence? Both writers' answers to these questions lead by way of the crucifixion to loss of self as ultimate being. This is Weil and O'Connor's shared paradoxical Christian truth. Both writers attempt to revivify this truth, to write it on the soul. Chapter Two will examine the soul to be written on. The second part of this chapter will focus on how Weil's monstrous concept of affliction and O'Connor's use of the grotesque genre attempt to jolt secular man in the direction of the sacred. Finally, I will add a Weilean reading of O'Connor's short stories 'The Life You Save May Be Your Own' (1953), and 'Good Country People' (1955).

Weil and O'Connor both conduct a crusade against what they perceive as the monstrous desacralisation of contemporary society. 'Never since the dawn of history' has 'Christ been so absent as today' complains Weil, the 'separation of religion from the rest of social life, which seems natural even to the majority of Christians nowadays would have been judged monstrous by antiquity'.⁵ O'Connor concurs. In a lecture delivered in 1960 she envisions a monstrous audience hostile to her Catholic perspective. 'When I sit down to write, a monstrous reader looms up

who sits down beside me and continually mutters “I don’t get it, I don’t see it, I don’t want it”⁶.

To reinvigorate offensive Christian paradoxes and write them on the souls of their readers, both writers concentrate on the least acceptable and most unattractive elements of reality and the human condition. Weil’s core concept of *malheur*,⁷ arbitrary and appalling affliction suffered without consolation, and O’Connor’s grotesque fiction populated with incomplete bodies and tortured souls focus on man’s limitation. For each writer a realisation of mankind’s constrained and fragile form is vital to countermand the erroneous fictionalisation of reality by which humanity’s egocentrism precludes the sacred.

According to Weil ‘men can only appear to elevate themselves above human misery by disguising the rigours of destiny in their own eyes, by the help of illusion, of intoxication, or of fanaticism’ (IC 54). This tendency to be fictional is arrested by affliction, which ‘contains the truth about our condition’ and ‘compels us to recognise as real what we do not think possible’: that man is limited (SWR 463, GG 73). O’Connor shares this belief ‘that the basic experience of everyone is the experience of human limitation’, and as in Weil’s schema, the egocentric denial of this reality is itself part of man’s affliction: ‘we are afflicted with the doctrine of the perfectibility of human nature by its own efforts’ (MM 131, 133).

Finding that her stories are primarily ‘about people who are poor, who are afflicted in both mind and body, who have little-or at best a distorted-sense of spiritual purpose’ (32), O’Connor perceives her concentration on this grotesque physical and spiritual impoverishment as a consequence of her Christian beliefs. Writers ‘who see by the light of their Christian faith will have in these times, the sharpest eyes for the grotesque, for the perverse, and for the unacceptable’ she insists (33). Secular humanism’s monstrous inflation of man’s status at the expense of God’s, constitutes a grotesque deformation of reality which can only be remedied by an equally grotesque fictional form. Literary fictions can address, and to some extent redress, experiential fictionality by using distortion to jolt readers into recognising the existence of the sacred.

I have to bend the whole novel-its language, its structure, its action [...] Distortion in this case is an instrument; exaggeration has a purpose, and the whole structure of the story or novel has been made what it is because of belief. This is not the kind of distortion that destroys; it is the kind that reveals, or should reveal. (162)

To interrogate the relationship in Weil and O'Connor's work between distortion and spiritual revelation, offensiveness and the revivification of Christian truths I will analyse first, each writer's concepts of God and reality, and second, their theories of the nature of man and human existence. First, and most basic: is there a God? Second, what is the nature of reality: is the cosmos subject to a rational governing order which is benevolent, or is the universe under the jurisdiction of an arbitrary and malevolent force?

Weil's answer to the first question unites her concept of contradiction as a method of approaching truth, and her notion of being fictional.

A case of contradictories which are true. God exists: God does not exist. Where is the problem? I am quite sure there is a God in the sense that I am quite sure my love is not illusory. I am quite sure there is not a God in the sense that I am quite sure nothing real can be anything like what I am able to conceive when I pronounce this word. But that which I cannot conceive is not an illusion. (GG 103)

This contradictory concept of God is dependent on Weil's view that man's attempts to comprehend God's reality involve an element of fictionalisation. There 'is nothing real which bears a resemblance to what I am able to conceive when I pronounce that name, since I am unable to conceive God' she argues.⁸ Because attempts to define God's inexpressible reality culminate in distortion, knowledge of God is approached by apophatic description. 'We can only know one thing about God - that he is what we are not' (GG 110). Mankind must 'believe in a God who is like the true God in everything, except that he does not exist, since we have not reached the point where God exists' she concludes (103). This philosophical method of provisional negation ensures that Weil considers 'atheism is a purification' (104).

Her amalgamation of the contraries of atheism and theism, the assumption that God's existence can be refuted without denying his reality, provides Weil with a method of approaching the theological question: whether reality is benevolent or malevolent. Characteristically she insists on the equal power of both. Weil's creation theory allows the cosmos to be subject to both a rational governing order and an arbitrary force, because it is based on the paradoxes that God is simultaneously omnipotent and impotent in the world, personal and impersonal, Being and non-Being. This unification of incommensurates is possible, because

although God caused the universe to exist, he voluntarily consented not to rule it despite having the power to do so. 'The true God is the God we think of as almighty, but as not exercising his power everywhere' she contends (WFG 144). In this act of self-renunciation God abandons mankind's 'whole entire being-flesh, blood, sensibility, intelligence, love-to the pitiless necessity of matter and the cruelty of the devil'.⁹ But Weil's negative theodicy amounts to a religious atheism in which God's absence paradoxically testifies to his presence. 'The apparent absence of God in this world is the actual reality of God [...] This world, in so far as it is completely empty of God, is God himself' (NB 424). Consequently, as Susan Anima Taubes notes, 'Weil has universalised the historical experience of the death of God into a theological principle'.¹⁰

Weil's absence/presence theory is dependent on a redefinition of the Christian concept of Providence.¹¹ Finding absurd the notion of God's personal intervention in the world to achieve alterations to this original schema, Weil insists it is necessity itself which is providential.¹² The Christian theory of Providence is a fiction. 'What we call the design of designs, the plan or plans, of Providence, are only imaginings invented by ourselves' (IC 104). But it would be equally erroneous to consider the blind and brute forces of necessity which appear to govern the universe actually do so. There is a difference between appearance and reality: 'the infinite superabundance of the divine mercy [is] secretly present here below' (WFG 90). Therefore despite its ostensible dominance of temporal reality, necessity is actually constrained by its perfect obedience to external parameters imposed by God. 'What is sovereign in this world is determinateness, limit. Eternal Wisdom imprisons the universe in a network, a web of determinations. The universe accepts passively', and the 'truth which bites at our hearts' is that 'necessity, through obedience, is a mirror' of God's love (NR 272, SWR 463).

As if this were not sufficient it is essential to understand and love the superposed reality of necessity, which is both a horrifying and sovereign force in nature, yet equally a reflection of God's benevolence.¹³ Affliction makes this possible because 'it is in affliction that the splendour of God's mercy shines, from its very depths, in the heart of its inconsolable bitterness'.¹⁴ Weil's notion of the relationship between the apparent contraries of gravity and grace is reinforced by her unorthodox (to a Christian viewpoint) concept of the symbiotic connection between the creation and Christ's crucifixion. While Christian theology traditionally perceives the relationship between the Creation, Incarnation and Passion as a linear historical progression, Weil believes Christ's crucifixion coincides with the Creation and explains it. The Creation is itself a crucifixion because first, in the formation of the

universe God is agonisingly separated from himself - Father and Son are severed from the beginning of time not just at the Incarnation. 'The crucifixion of God is something eternal', God 'has abandoned God. God has emptied himself. This means that both the Creation and the Incarnation are included with the Passion'.¹⁵ Second, by permitting human autonomy God is lacerated. 'My existence crucifies God', she insists (NB 564).

Weil's concept of a linkage between the contraries of God and man, the necessary and the good, is predicated on her conviction that both God and humanity are afflicted, and that agonising suffering and love are integrally connected rather than mutually contradictory. The love between the different divine persons within the Trinity, and the love between God and man, their separation and movement towards union presupposes affliction.

Weil's central concept of affliction illuminates, and provides a framework for interrogating the second major area of her theology: the nature of man and human existence. Discussion of this section will be divided into three topics. First, an examination of her criteria for defining what affliction is. Second, Weil's theoretical response to the question of how to equate human affliction with an omnipotent and benevolent God. Third, Weilean affliction's relationship to the question, what is the self? will be analysed by relating it to initially the offence of being, and next the virtue of non-being.

Weil is careful to distinguish between mere suffering and her more intense notion of affliction.¹⁶ 'In the realm of suffering, affliction is something apart, specific and irreducible. It is quite a different thing from simple suffering' (SWR 439). Although the degree and type of affliction endured by its victim varies depending on individual sensibility and circumstances, Weil identifies four criteria which are crucial components. First, although physical pain is essential to affliction because 'nothing else has the power to chain down our thoughts' (440), what makes affliction distinct is that in addition to corporeal suffering and social humiliation there must be spiritual torment. Affliction is 'physical pain, distress of soul, and social degradation, all at the same time' (450) she insists. A 'corrosive force, a mutilation or leprosy of the soul', affliction 'takes possession of the soul and marks it through with its own particular mark, the mark of slavery' (332, 439). Second, affliction is randomly, arbitrarily inflicted and must be endured against the will. The 'pulverisation of the soul by the mechanical brutality of circumstances', it is 'the essence of affliction that it is suffered unwillingly' (462, 454). The third feature of affliction is that in addition to repelling the non-afflicted, it causes a terrible

self-loathing in its victim which is 'the very thing one must consent to' (462). What defines affliction 'is the horror, the revulsion of the whole being, which it inspires in its victim' who is 'transformed in his own eyes, into a sort of animal, almost paralysed and altogether repulsive' (462, 456). Fourthly, affliction must be borne entirely without consolation.

This final point is absolutely vital to Weil. In his agony the victim of affliction understandably pleads 'Why must I suffer?'. But the afflicted's

question "why?" does not mean "By what cause?" but "For what purpose?" And it is impossible, of course, to indicate any purposes to him; unless we invent some imaginary ones [...] There can be no answer to the "Why?" of the afflicted, because the world is necessity and not purpose. If there were finality in the world, the place of the good would not be in the other world. Whenever we look for final causes in this world, it refuses them. But to know that it refuses one has to ask. (466)

The silence of the afflicted's question, the reality that there is no answer to why human tribulations occur, is not considered evidence of humanity's futile and wretched condition. Rather, 'the contemplation of human misery wrenches us in the direction of God' (GG 70). Although there is neither a remedy nor purpose in it, affliction ultimately has a spiritual use as an 'ingenious device' to coerce man into experiencing the full horror of gravity, the 'immensity of force, blind, brutal, and cold', which dominates human reality.¹⁷ Only by feeling the horrifying force of necessity is man coerced into confronting his 'almost infinite fragility' (455). A reality he flees when unafflicted, but an acceptance of which is vital to spiritual development.¹⁸

Finding goodness and mercy in extreme suffering is an innately offensive idea, yet it is precisely this concept which forms the basis of the most difficult theological question: if there is a God who is both good and omnipotent, how can this be reconciled with the existence of suffering, and the problem of evil in the world? Consistent with her notion that the greatest mysteries are those in which incommensurates, whilst impossible to comprehend, demonstrate a mutual dependency; instead of attempting to solve the problem of how to equate ontic and moral evils with God's existence by negating one of the contraries, Weil changes the equation. Rather than considering either that human torment precludes the reality of an omnipotent and merciful God, or that the existence of God explains and offers

consolations for mankind's agonies, she insists on the simultaneous reality of both a benevolent God and inconsolable affliction. The mystery of human tribulation adheres not in its existence, or whether the harrowing traumas of the innocent prove God is dead.¹⁹ Instead the mystery resides in the capacity of ontic and moral evils to be man's primary route to the divine. In her seminal essay 'The Love of God and Affliction' Weil contends it is not astonishing

the innocent are killed, tortured, driven from their country, made destitute or reduced to slavery, put in concentration camps or prison cells, since there are criminals to perform such actions. It is not surprising either that disease is the cause of long sufferings, which paralyse life and make it into an image of death, since nature is at the mercy of the blind play of mechanical necessities. But it *is* surprising that God should have given affliction the power to seize the very souls of the innocent and to possess them as sovereign master. (SWR 441)

Her unconventional approach to humanity's distress disputes the notion affliction is a problem to be either overcome or justified. It is not affliction but man's perspective of it which is problematic. Reversing the assumption suffering is an obstacle to understanding the human condition and its relation to God permits man to perceive necessity and affliction as links between, rather than separations of mankind and the divine. Like Pascal, Weil believes man's misery is his greatness.²⁰ 'It is my misery itself that makes me the receptacle of the Holy Spirit. To become something divine I have no need to get away from my misery. I have only to adhere to it' she argues (FLN 83).

Weil's theory of affliction is integrally connected to her concept of what the human self is. 'Affliction contains the truth about our condition' she claims (463), and to answer the question 'What is a man?' in her theology, it is important to analyse how being human is offensive. Man's greatest and most common offence is being fictional, and this innate fictionality is a direct consequence of fleeing affliction and its shocking message that human life is essentially precarious because man is unable to prevent external circumstances from impinging on his interior being. When confronted with affliction man 'takes immediate refuge in lies, like a hunted animal dashing for cover' (457). Unless constrained by affliction humanity finds it

impossible to believe that everything in the soul - all its thoughts and feelings, its every attitude towards ideas, people, and the universe,

and above all, the most intimate attitude of the being towards itself-that all this is entirely at the mercy of circumstances. (457)

When unaffected by affliction, man's self-knowledge and awareness of his true relation to God and the world is blocked by an illusory self created by a combination of imagination and egocentrism. 'We play at imagining we have chosen what is forced upon us'; man mistakenly 'imagines he is situated in the center of the world' (456, WFG 158). Egoism is in fact 'not love of self, it is a defect of perspective' (IC 133), and this faulty solipsism and consequently warped view of self and world is the catalyst for the creation of an execrable *ersatz* divinity which, rather than suffering, is man's greatest affliction. 'Two conceptions of hell: the ordinary one (suffering without consolation); mine (false beatitude, mistakenly thinking oneself in paradise)' (GG 72).

It is 'affliction that reveals, suddenly and, to our very great surprise that we are totally mistaken' (SWR 462). Man's salvation from his monstrously defective viewpoint requires an assault on the three facets of the human being which only affliction can effect.

All three sides of our being are always exposed to it. Our flesh is fragile [...] Our soul is vulnerable [...] Our social personality upon which our sense of existence almost depends, is always and entirely exposed to every hazard. These three parts of us are linked with the very centre of our being in such a way that it bleeds for any wound of the slightest consequence which they suffer. Above all, anything which diminishes or destroys our social prestige, our right to consideration, seems to impair or abolish our very essence-so much is our whole substance an affair of illusion. (454)

Experiencing a 'shock of horror' at this revelation of the illusory self and revolted by his altered state, the afflicted's perspective of the world is poisoned by hatred and there is 'a privation of beauty, and an invasion of the soul by ugliness' (332, FLN 139). This is increased by a 'poison of inertia' in the soul, caused by affliction establishing itself 'like a parasite', ensuring that the afflicted, bizarrely, desire to plunge themselves further into affliction (SWR 443, 444). The self-loathing felt by the afflicted radiates outwards to contaminate the non-afflicted, who find it virtually impossible to voluntarily contemplate the hideous nature of affliction in a fellow human being. Like animals who attack a maimed member of their species, this 'law

of sensibility' ensures that society wounds the afflicted individual further by unreasonably directing all its revulsion onto its victim.²¹

Alienated from both the rest of the community and each other, the afflicted desire to communicate the intolerable distress they are experiencing. Yet due to a combination of society's indifference and the impossibility of articulating the awful reality of affliction to those who have not yet experienced it, they are ignored. The 'afflicted are not listened to. They are like someone whose tongue has been cut out and who occasionally forgets the fact. When they move their lips no ear perceives any sound' (332). In a terrible re-enactment of society's insouciance, affliction's victim, 'constrained by the general indifference, strives by means of self-forgetfulness to become deaf to his own self' (333). The afflicted becomes a non-person. Affliction is 'above all anonymous; it deprives its victims of their personality and turns them into things' (445). But paradoxically humanity's ultimate limitation is simultaneously its supreme possibility in Weil's schema, because non-being and impersonality is man's true self and source of contact with God.

After analysing affliction's relation to what constitutes the self via the offence of being, it is important to now examine its connection to the virtue of impersonality and non-being. A useful starting point is Weil's essay 'Human Personality',²² in which she identifies a significant distinction between the concept of the human person, and what is man's essential, sacred self. 'There is something sacred in every man, but it is not his person. Nor yet is it the human personality', which is 'the part of us which belongs to error and sin' (314, 318) she argues. In contrast to the fake divinity attained by man's egocentrism, it is everything which 'is impersonal in man that is sacred, and nothing else' (317). The good, true and beautiful exist at an anonymous level, and it is mankind's unquenchable desire for these realities despite its experience of affliction which constitutes its sacrality.

At the bottom of the heart of every human being, from earliest infancy until the tomb, there is something that goes on indomitably expecting, in the teeth of all experience of crimes committed, suffered, and witnessed, that good and not evil will be done to him. It is this above all that is sacred in every human being. (315)

But access to goodness and truth requires 'one's own annihilation; through dwelling a long time in a state of extreme and total humiliation' (331). This amounts to a 'death of the soul'. Although not literally made extinct, it is essential to recognise

the soul 'is a dead thing, some thing analagous to matter' (458). To accept this 'death' is impossible unless 'one possesses another life in addition to the soul's illusory life', which consists of placing the soul outside everything knowable (personality, thoughts and feelings) in God (458). Those who have successfully achieved this mystical relocation of the soul are 'no longer anything except a two-fold obedience-on the one side to the mechanical necessity in which their earthly condition involves them, and on the other to the divine inspiration' (458). This intersection of nature and grace is their vocation, made possible by non-being, in which there is 'nothing left in them which one could call their own will, their person, their "I"' (458). Affliction provides both the ability to annihilate the self and the humiliating knowledge that man is powerless to prevent it. 'To be aware of this in the depth of one's soul is to experience non-being' which is the condition for acquiring truth. For Weil the pinnacle of human existence constitutes annihilation of the self (including free will).

To fully comprehend Weil's position on affliction and the necessity of non-being it is essential to next analyse her complex concepts of the soul to be written on, good and evil, and the cross as *logos alogos* correlating affliction and God. In a letter written to Fr. Perrin in January 1942, Weil distinguishes 'three domains' (WFG 43). First, what is 'absolutely independent' of humanity and 'in accordance with the will of God': ontic and moral evils through which man must feel and love 'the reality and presence of God' in all external things (43, 44). The second domain comprises 'the rule of the will', what man's intelligence and imagination can understand and act upon, the natural duties he is obliged to perform and is capable of carrying out to achieve fixed and finite results. Finally, the third sphere is neither independent of, nor ruled by the human will. Instead man experiences 'the compulsion of God's pressure' (44) in direct proportion to the extent the soul concentrates its attention and love on God. It is essential to 'abandon ourselves to the pressure' yet 'we must do nothing more than we are irresistibly impelled to do' (45). Man is required to constantly increase his focus of attention and love on God, who responds by intensifying his pressure on, and possession of the soul. In the soul's spiritual development Weil acknowledges an 'oscillating progress' in which it rises and falls through its internal architecture (FLN 310).

External physical realities make a similar impression on man's interior, sacred self. 'The body is a lever for salvation', I 'can push my body further towards the good than the point my soul is at; so the body pulls the soul after it' (FLN 330, 289). This physical-spiritual connection extends to the soul's internal organisation, which Weil divides into carnal and spiritual elements. 'The body is a prison. The spiritual part of

the soul should use it to imprison the carnal part' (320). In her notebooks and major essay 'The Pythagorean Doctrine' she expands her theory of the will's triple domains, adopting her familiar hierarchical metaphor to describe the soul's infrastructure. In what she terms 'the soul's internal architecture' (122), Weil identifies three layers corresponding to the three domains. 'The idea of vertically superimposed levels in the life of the soul, the highest of them being above consciousness and the psychological-there is nothing more important' she claims (179). The lowest level constitutes the soul's natural or 'animal part' which is permanently and totally subjected to mechanical necessity (IC 194). Above this is the intermediate level in which 'the opposition of good and evil must have all possible force' (194). Obligations demanding virtuous action²³ raise the soul to a higher level. The superior plane in the soul consists of 'supernatural love', allowing the irrational, impulsive action necessary to realise moral obligations, and a parallel 'contemplative facility' required for intensive attention (194). The existence of supernatural love within the soul cannot alter the severe effects of necessity and affliction on the individual, but it does change the equation. It 'constitutes a new factor of the mechanism and transforms it', because this kernel of love and attention at the soul's core constitutes 'the Spirit of God in us'.²⁴

Weil describes the universe as 'a compact mass of obedience' which is 'sprinkled with points of light. Each one of these points is the supernatural part of the soul of a reasonable creature who loves God and who consents to obey' (IC 193). Weil's view of souls which contain no supernatural love and commit immoral actions is that

the beings gifted with reason who do not love God are only fragments of the compact and obscure mass. They are wholly obedient but only in the manner of a falling stone. Their soul is also matter, psychic matter, humbled to a mechanism as rigorous as that of gravity. Even their belief in their own free arbitration, the illusions of their pride, their defiance, their revolts, are all simply phenomena as rigorously determined as the refraction of light. Considered thus, as inert matter, the worst criminals make up a part of the order of the world and therefore of the beauty of the world. Everything obeys God, therefore everything is perfect beauty. (IC 193-94)

Both moral and immoral actions are apparently subject to necessity, and man's only freedom is to choose which form of determination to comply with. 'Men can never escape from obedience to God [...] The only choice given to men as intelligent and free creatures, is to desire obedience or not to desire it' she insists, men are 'like

plants which have the one choice of being in or out of the light' (SWR 448). Those who do not choose to obey the light of grace are perpetually consigned to submit to the laws of natural necessity. The man who does desire obedience is equally at the mercy of ontic and moral evils, but becomes susceptible to an additional, supernatural level of force.

He is still subject to mechanical necessity, but a new necessity is added to it, a necessity constituted by the laws pertaining to supernatural things. Certain actions become impossible for him; others are accomplished by means of him, sometimes almost in spite of himself. (448)

Apparently the pinnacle of man's freedom is to enjoy unfree will.

This blurring of obedience into determinism leads to a failure by Weil adequately to differentiate between ontic and moral evils. She considers that the interconnection of sin and suffering is part of humanity's wretched reality. Sin 'makes us suffer and suffering makes us evil, and this indissoluble complex of suffering and sin is the evil in which we are submerged against our will, and to our horror'.²⁵ As a symptom of, as well as a catalyst for suffering, moral evil is part of the fictionalisation process by which the illusory self attempts to evade the forces of necessity. The human mind takes 'refuge in lies, like a hunted animal dashing for cover' and this almost always generates immorality because 'the evil which is in a man is protection against the external evil which attacks him in the form of pain' (457, 467).

This contradictory yet finally reductive view of human life in which suffering and sin replicate themselves, unless via self-loss and unfree will grace intervenes, is evident in Weil's theories of good and evil. Her innate Platonic dualism ensures that she conceives a vertical hierarchy which divides good and evil into two types: natural and supernatural. In *The Need for Roots* Weil claims

above the earthly, carnal sphere in which our thoughts habitually move, and which on every side is an inextricable mixture of good and evil, there is another, spiritual sphere, where good is only good, and even at the inferior level, produces only good; where evil is only evil and can produce nothing but evil.²⁶

Although in the natural world good and evil are opposed they are also connected, earthly good is both 'the opposite and correlative of evil', according to Weil,²⁷ because absolute good only exists outside the world. 'God alone is pure good. Creation being both God and other than God is essentially good and evil' (NB 414). But Weil identifies a significant linkage between the natural and supernatural realms. The transcendent good is not merely superior to its earthly counterparts, it includes them, being 'the unique, total good, which comprises within itself in a superlative degree all forms of the good' (NR 192). Because all goods, truths and beauties in the natural realm are fragments of, and participate in this ultimate good, it is important that they are arranged in the correct order and perceived as a related structure. 'Taken all together, viewed from the right point and rightly related, they make an architecture. Through this architecture the unique good, which cannot be grasped, becomes apprehensible' (FLN 98).

Similarly, when Weil's fragmentary observations are structured, her concept of the good/evil relationship is recognisably both more inclusive and finally more positive than her isolated comments suggest. Despite its fundamental opposition to the pure good, supreme evil is itself circumscribed by absolute goodness. 'Evil is limitless but it is not infinite. Only the infinite limits the limitless' (GG 62) she argues. Just as the apparently arbitrary mechanism of necessity is ultimately under God's domain, despite 'its being the opposite of good, evil is constrained to include its image. For everything witnesses to the good'.²⁸ The 'supreme consolation for evil' is no evil 'does harm to God' (IC 147), because it 'is not good which evil violates, for good is inviolate: only a degraded good can be violated' (GG 63).

In her complex theory of good and evil Weil is torn between a Manichean dualism, or Protestant Fundamentalism which polarises these contraries, and a Catholic impulse to consider them symbiotically related. In 'Human Personality' she maintains in 'all the crucial problems of human existence the only choice is between supernatural good on the one hand and evil on the other' (SWR 327), and in her London notebook she criticises St. Augustine's 'blasphemy' in 'asserting that evil can produce pure good, or that pure good can produce evil'.²⁹ But in accordance with her theory that legitimate mysteries are those which display a mutual dependency between incommensurates, Weil perceives a vertical hierarchy of evils which allows the potential, at its highest level, to transform evil into good. '*Perhaps everything which is evil has another aspect, which is a purification in the course of progress towards good, and a third one which is the higher good (cf. higher up)*'; yet she insists it is '*very dangerous for thought and for the effective conduct of life to confuse them*' (NB 126-127). Both Fundamentalist and Catholic, Weil's natural

and supernatural good and evil are opposed, but ultimately evil is circumscribed by, and forced to testify to the good.

Her impoverished view of mankind, ensures that Weil believes humanity to be reliant on supernatural intervention to effect good in the natural world.

A necessity as strong as gravity condemns man to evil and forbids him any good, or only within the narrowest limits and laboriously obtained and soiled and adulterated with evil; except when the supernatural appears on earth, which suspends the operation of terrestrial necessity. (SWR 291)

This phenomenon is apparent on the extremely rare occasions when the non-afflicted have compassion for the victim of affliction. Such moments of charity are 'instinctive and immediate' (459), involuntary actions devoid of conscious intent. Constituting an unnatural act of self-sacrifice (the impossibility of compassion for the afflicted at the expense of the fictional, egocentric self), when it occurs this pity is 'a more astounding miracle than walking on water, healing the sick, or even raising the dead' (441). One 'becomes capable under God of establishing someone else by a creative affirmation. One gives oneself in ransom for another. It is a redemptive act' (WFG 147-148). This requires 'a point of eternity' in the non-afflicted's soul 'which is proof against any contagion by affliction' (FLN 97). Significantly it is not human goodness but God in man that makes this redemptive action possible. Each act of mercy for the afflicted is truly selfless, a re-enactment of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, an intervention of supernatural love, of saving grace in the profane world. 'Every moment of pure compassion in a soul is a new descent of Christ upon earth to be crucified' (97).

It is Christ's cross and humanity's participation in it which Weil offers as the solution to the fundamental dilemma of how to reconcile human affliction and evil with a merciful God. Uniting nature and grace, temporal and spatial dimensions, the Cross constitutes the supreme *logos alogos*. Weil's crucified Christ is the scandalously irrational mediator who through the paradoxical force of weakness,³⁰ acts as a fulcrum, raising man from the gravity of human misery to God's grace. 'When the whole universe weighs upon us there is no other counterweight possible but God himself', she contends, explaining how 'on the balance of the cross a body which was frail and light but which was God, lifted up the whole world' (85). By enduring the agonies of necessity the crucified Christ is like man, at the furthest

distance from God the Father. But as a perfectly pure being who consents to his suffering whilst continuing to love God he triumphs over the separation and is reunited with God in the Trinity. Vitality for man, by absorbing evil Christ is an exemplar of how humanity may break the destructive cycle by which affliction generates immorality.

On one level the cross is a paradigm of how mankind may resist being corrupted by its wretched condition and consent to its sufferings. There is 'only one thing that enables us to accept real affliction, and that is the contemplation of Christ's Cross. There is nothing else. That one thing suffices' (SWR 464). But what makes man's affliction bearable is not merely this intellectual meditation on Christ's cross, but the recognition that humanity shares it. More than a historically specific event, and constituting part of the eternal nature of reality, the cross is the 'supreme and secret truth' of all human activity (465). 'Our country is the Cross', that 'is the whole of that necessity by which the infinity of space and time is filled and which, in given circumstances, can be concentrated upon the atom that any one of us is, and totally pulverize it' (457, 455). This knowledge of humanity's precarious state only becomes acceptable when human tribulations are considered as man's kinship with God, a participation in the perpetual crucifixion.

The effects of misfortune upon innocent souls are really unintelligible unless we remember that we have been created as the brothers of the crucified Christ. The absolute domination throughout the whole universe of a mechanical, mathematical, absolutely deaf and blind necessity is unintelligible, unless one believes that the whole universe, in the totality of space and time, has been created as the Cross of Christ. (IC 198)

Weil here veers towards a Fundamentalist perspective in which individuals are confronted by their innate weakness while it is demanded that they commit themselves to Christ. But to be the brother of a humanity made wretched by its sufferings requires an agonised Christ, and Weil's Christ is not glorious but afflicted; physically stricken, spiritually traumatised, and socially humiliated. Acknowledging this reality is crucial, because perceiving the crucified Christ resplendent is another of man's damaging fictionalisations. 'It was not the body of Christ, hanging on the wood, which was accursed, it was his whole soul' she controversially asserts, and it is this 'absence of prestige, and not the physical suffering, which is the very essence of the Passion' (137).

A serious error made by the Christian Church is to efface the degrading reality of the crucifixion and replace it with Christ as triumphant martyr. Only focusing on the unpalatable reality of the cross prevents mankind worshipping the fictionalised appearance rather than the reality of Christ, a glorious impostor 'who veils from us the Christ who was made a malediction' (143). But does Weil's emphasis on the cross, not the Resurrection, the horrifying affliction of both God and man, and the equation of love and grace with violent annihilation of the individual self, amount to the type of distortion which reveals Christian paradoxes or destroys their impact due to monstrous masochism? Horrifying statements claiming relentless 'necessity, wretchedness, distress, the crushing burden of poverty and of labour which wears us out, cruelty, torture, violent death, constraint, disease - all these constitute divine love'; the insistence that affliction is 'the face of love' and 'the most precious evidence of God's tenderness', and that affliction must be borne entirely without consolation, ensure the question of whether Weilean theology is masochistic must be addressed, and is by Weil herself (GG 28, SWR 463).

Although she maintains one must love 'what is intolerable. Embrace what is made of iron, press one's flesh against the metallic harshness and chill' Weil insists that this 'is not any kind of masochism. What excites masochists is only the semblance of cruelty, because they do not know what cruelty is. In any case what one has to embrace is not cruelty, it is blind indifference and brutality' (FLN 260). Although an important element of Weilean theology is concerned with the implicit love of God through less horrifying means (see Chapter Three), this distinction remains unconvincing and difficult to accept due to the disproportionate emphasis on pain and suffering in the rest of her work. In 'The Love of God and Affliction', after a prolonged argument using imagery dominated by nails, prison cells and chains to argue the necessity of loving both God and affliction, Weil somewhat belatedly asks her readers to accept that it 'is wrong to desire affliction; it is against nature, and it is a perversion' (SWR 454). What is legitimate to long for is the possibility of affliction, and that when encountered 'it may be a participation in the Cross of Christ' (454). Yet as we have seen, the offensiveness of Weil's pathological New York 'prayer' provides ample evidence of a morbid gratification in, as well as desire for affliction. While she argues that suffering has a value 'so long as one makes every (legitimate) effort to escape it', the only purpose of this avoidance is to ensure 'the affliction we do meet with may be absolutely pure and absolutely bitter' (FLN 3, NB 294).

It is this uncompromising refusal to search for an antidote to affliction which Weil considers to be Christianity's finest asset. 'The extreme greatness of Christianity lies

in the fact that it does not seek a supernatural remedy for suffering but a supernatural use for it' (GG 73). Rather than representing an unhealthy preoccupation with suffering, the centrality of affliction in Christianity is what enables the accomplishment of the two-fold commandment to love God and our neighbour. 'What we are commanded to love first of all is affliction: the affliction of man, the affliction of God' (SWR 462). But Weil's innate masochism ensures that she overstates the requirement to love affliction rather than its transcendence. This distortion of Christian doctrine is evident in her emphasis on Christ's cross rather than the Resurrection.³¹ 'If the Gospel omitted all mention of Christ's resurrection, faith would be easier for me. The cross by itself suffices me' she insists, the 'death on the Cross is something more divine than the Resurrection, it is the point where Christ's divinity is concentrated' (LP 55). By concentrating on the Cross without balancing it with the Resurrection, Weil demonstrates a failure to achieve the type of superposed reading which is a crucial element of her philosophical rationale, and vital to Christianity's sacramentalism.

However as Flannery O'Connor observes, 'Ideal Christianity does not exist because anything the human being touches, even Christian truth, he deforms slightly in his own image' (HB 516). And although Weilean notions of God and man are warped by her morbidity, it is exactly this monstrousness, the excessiveness and distortion, rather than the objectively balanced aspects of her thinking, through which Weil most unforgettably writes her ideas on the souls of her readers. As Susan Sontag notes some writers 'have their authority with us precisely because of their air of unhealthiness. Their unhealthiness is their soundness, and is what carries conviction'.³² Distortion plays its part in the revelation of truth. According to Sontag:

an idea which is a distortion may have a greater intellectual thrust than the truth; it may better serve the needs of the spirit, which vary. The truth is balance, but the opposite of truth, which is unbalance, may not be a lie. (92)

In 1963 O'Connor wrote to her friend 'A', 'Simone Weil is a trifle monstrous, but the kind of monstrosity that interests me' (HB 522). Weil's unbalanced concentration on affliction and the crucifixion epitomises the type of monstrosity that fascinates O'Connor and is equally vital to her own efforts to reveal truth through distortion.

Before examining the integral connection in each writer's work between distortion, exaggeration, spiritual beliefs and their revelation, it is important to clarify briefly my vocabulary regarding 'distortion', 'monstrosity' and the 'grotesque'. Throughout this chapter I use 'distortion' as an umbrella term to encompass discussion of both monstrosity and the grotesque. As both literary genre and fictional character the grotesque is defined in detail later. But to prevent any misrepresentation by over-generalisation with 'monstrosity' it is necessary at this point to note a major difference between the two terms, and how this is relevant to a comparative analysis of Weil and O'Connor's writings.

The three criteria for monstrosity: unnatural or abnormal structure, excessiveness, and horrified reactions generated, are all equally part of the grotesque. But crucially the grotesque amalgamates the monstrous with the comic. Essentially more ambivalent than monstrosity in its forms and the responses it provokes, as Philip Thomson observes, in the grotesque we find 'the comic inexplicably combined with the monstrous, the interweaving of totally disparate elements, producing a strange and often unpleasant and unsettling conflict of emotions'.³³ Offensive in both horrifying and humorous ways, as Mikhail Bakhtin affirms, the grotesque genre's 'comic monsters' constitute an essential element of its ability to be revelatory (*Rabelais*, 39).

This concept of comic monstrosity is important to a study of Weil and O'Connor because it highlights both a connection and a difference between them. As the Introduction to this thesis demonstrates it is precisely this type of humorous monstrosity, the combination of the comic and terrible, which O'Connor finds both fascinating in Weil, and equally important to her fictions. 'Simone Weil's life is the most comical life I have ever read about and the most truly tragic and terrible' she maintains (HB 105). Acknowledging a link between her wish to write a comic novel about such a grotesque woman's reluctant journey towards God and her Weilean-type fictional philosopher Hulga Hopewell in 'Good Country People', O'Connor notes 'My heroine already is, and is Hulga', but Weil's existence 'parallels what I have in mind' (106). Anthony Di Renzo rightly perceives that 'O'Connor's ambivalence toward Weil, her ability to see the agnostic saint as both admirable and laughable, is a key to understanding her strange fiction', in which she 'applauds the religious convictions of her characters but also shows how their flaws, obsessions, and prejudices distort and compromise those convictions'.³⁴ It is this kind of distortion which Weil unintentionally displays, yet which is an important part of the revelation of her monstrous and never deliberately comic theology. In

contrast to O'Connor, comedy is not a vital part of her world view or the form of her work.

Before analysing in detail the relationship between Weil and O'Connor's various forms of distortion and the revelation of their theologies, it is important initially to contextualise their writings by examining some precedents for using distortion and monstrosity as revelation in first their aesthetic, and second, moral manifestations. As Chapter One demonstrated, in classical, and especially Platonic notions of form, unity and proportion are regularly equated to beauty and goodness in both human and textual bodies. At this point I propose to explore some examples of considering deformity beautiful, and perceiving physiological monstrosity as either a warning of the consequences of human immorality, or conversely, as a sign of the divine. Etymologically derived from the words *monitum* (to warn) and more obviously *monstrum* (monster), monstrosity retains its significance as a demonstration or admonition.³⁵ In its aesthetic connotation, as Baldick notes, monstrosity uses 'the directly physical notion of deformity to illustrate certain problems of the relation of parts to the whole in works of art'.³⁶ This concept of aesthetic (dis)unity is considerably influenced by medieval linkages of aesthetic wholeness with the conceptual form of the human body. As Umberto Eco notes in *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*:

The aesthetic experience of a thing is regulated by the concept of the thing; it involves a judgement regarding the degree of conformity between thing and concept. In the case of a mutilated person the judgement is instantaneous, because the concept of bodily integrity is so familiar to us. (Eco 101)

Yet as Aquinas himself observes we 'notice that an image is called beautiful if it represents a thing, even an ugly thing, faithfully' (125). Fidelity to offensive forms renders the object's violation of natural laws less offensive, the graceless can achieve a kind of grace.

Analysing monstrosity's ethical implications reveals a theological history of interpreting transgressive physical forms as warnings of the consequences of moral gracelessness. 'In a world created by a reasonable God, the freak or lunatic must have a purpose: to reveal visibly the results of vice, folly, and unreason, as a warning' to an errant humanity.³⁷ Such medieval and Reformation usages of monstrosity are primarily concerned with moral rather than corporeal aberration,

and by the Renaissance this shift of emphasis is intensified. The monstrous figure embodies a particular vice and becomes 'a moral advertizement' (Baldick 12).

But physical malformation can be more than a moral warning, it can positively manifest the divine. As Mircea Eliade argues, alienation from the norm 'does not merely isolate, it elevates. Thus ugliness and deformities while marking out those who possess them, at the same time make them sacred'.³⁸ It is the essential Otherness of the abnormal that is frightful, and this includes the unnaturalness of perfection, which whilst apparently opposite to the monstrous, generates similar rather than contrasting responses. 'Perfection in any sphere is frightening' because this 'same fear, this same scrupulous reserve, applies to everything alien, strange, new - that such astonishing things should be present is the sign of a force that, however much it is to be venerated, may be dangerous' (Kinney 77). Therefore the unknown and extraordinary 'are disturbing epiphanies' because they 'indicate the presence of something *other* than the natural', or 'at least the call of that something' (77).

Weil recognises the dual fear of Otherness identified by Eliade. 'When the soul flies from anything it is always trying to get away, either from the horror of ugliness, or contact with what is truly pure' she maintains (WFG 174). Dominated by a repulsion for, and attraction to the absolute, the ugliness of moral vices is linked to a desire to manifest beauty and purity. In 'the search for carnal pleasure [...] the movement of running toward pure beauty and the movement of flying from it are indistinguishably tangled' (175). Immoral actions are part of the world's beauty in Weil's schema, and as such are themselves made dreadfully attractive. The 'universe is beautiful, even including evil, which, as part of the order of the world, has a sort of terrible beauty. We feel it' she argues (FLN 329). Like Aquinas, Weil acknowledges a linkage between mutilation and concepts of aesthetic unity and believes ontic evils can be rendered beautiful when accurately depicted. 'Our first idea of unity comes from ourselves. The idea of mutilation [...] goes together with that of unity' she maintains, and 'in proportion to the hideousness of affliction is the supreme beauty of its true representation' (LPY 52, SWR 333).

The redefinition of what is monstrous, what beautiful, and its representation in art, the relationship between physical and spiritual ugliness and writing on the soul are crucial to O'Connor as writer-prophet. In her copy of Jacques Maritain's *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* she underlined the passage:

Art endeavours to imitate in its own way the conditions peculiar to the pure spirits: it draws beauty from ugly things and monsters, it tries to overcome the division between beautiful and ugly by absorbing ugliness in a superior species of beauty, and by transferring us *beyond* the (aesthetic) beautiful and ugly.³⁹

Discussing *The Violent Bear It Away*, O'Connor acknowledges her own preference for a kind of virtuous abnormality which she associates with truth. Observing she is 'much more interested in the nobility of unnaturalness than in the nobility of naturalness', she contends 'it is the business of the artist to uncover the strangeness of truth' (HB 343). The incomplete nature of goodness in human affairs is part of this noble unnaturalness and strange truth. Few people have observed goodness 'long enough to accept the fact that its face too is grotesque, that in us the good is something under construction' O'Connor contends (MM 226). In a fallen world the good is disturbing because it indicates an alternative reality, the Otherness of the sacred. Agreeing with Eliade that moral and physical irregularity is disturbing because it is alien, O'Connor claims 'the grotesque is naturally the bearer of mystery' and consequently 'is dangerous'.⁴⁰

Maintaining she is 'interested in making up a good case for distortion, as I am coming to believe that it is the only way to make people see' (HB 79), O'Connor's use of the offensiveness of the grotesque genre is founded like Weil's concept of affliction, on the strange truth that Christ voluntarily died for a grotesque humanity disfigured by its ontic and moral impairment. The Catholic writer 'will feel life from the standpoint of the central Christian mystery: that it has, for all its horror, been found by God to be worth dying for' she insists (MM 146). Significantly O'Connor also shares with Weil the central ideas that first, a constituent part of man's affliction is to be unable to understand why he suffers and second, both mankind's affliction and God's intersect through the cross.

There is certainly no reason why the effects of redemption must be made plain to us and I think they usually are not. This is where we share Christ's agony when he was about to die and cried out 'My God, why have you forsaken me?'. (HB 118)

Applying Weil's concepts of God and reality, the nature of man and human existence to O'Connor's work reveals both similarities and distinctions between each writer's theologies. The Weilean approach to the questions 'Is there a God?'

and 'How can this be known?' provides a useful perspective to analyse O'Connor's response to the same theological problems.

Both writers agree that God cannot be comprehended, but they place a different emphasis on how the mystery of God's existence may be approached. O'Connor accepts that man is unable to conceive the reality of God: 'how incomprehensible God must necessarily be to be the God of heaven and earth. You can't fit the almighty into your intellectual categories', a 'God you understood would be less than yourself' (HB 477, 354). She also approaches God apophatically: 'I measure God by everything that I am not. I begin with that' (430). But unlike Weil's rational dialectic and use of contradiction, she considers faith the means of approaching the mystery of God's existence. Believing like Pascal in 'the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and not of the philosophers and scholars"', O'Connor insists faith 'is what you have in the absence of knowledge', requiring 'trust not certainty' (HB 477, 354). Yet there is a crossover point in that Weil acknowledges gnosis is only achievable after the limits of intellectual reasoning have been exceeded, and despite her stress on faith, O'Connor admits the uses of questioning belief via disbelief. 'Peter said "Lord I believe. Help my unbelief."' It is the most natural and most human and most agonising prayer in the gospels, and I think it is the foundation prayer of faith' she argues (476). But whereas Weil insists that the attainment of truth relies on intellectual freedom which is itself dependent on the ability to reject Christian precepts and Church doctrines when required, O'Connor considers disbelief is only constructive within the limits of Christian faith. 'Christian scepticism will set you free - not free to do anything you please, but free to be formed by something larger than your own intellect' (HB 478). While both writers agree that the nature of God is essentially mysterious, O'Connor's notion of who and what God is has no room for Weil's philosophical ambiguity. Distinct from the Weilean concept of God as simultaneously omnipotent and impotent, personal and impersonal, Being and non-Being, O'Connor's God, while mysterious, is a more identifiable, personal entity.

This is an unlimited God and one who has revealed himself specifically. It is one who became man and rose from the dead. It is one who confounds the senses and sensibilities, one known early on as a stumbling block. There is no way to gloss over this specification or to make it more acceptable to modern thought. This God is the object of ultimate concern and he has a name. (MM 161)

Despite their differences, God is the ultimate concern of both writers, and they provide similar answers to the major theological question on how it is possible to reconcile suffering and evil with a merciful God, and whether reality is malevolent or benevolent. O'Connor agrees with Weil that ontic and moral evils do not discredit the actuality of a good and merciful God. 'One of the tendencies of our age is to use the suffering of children to discredit the goodness of God, and once you have discredited his goodness, you are done with him' she complains.⁴¹ This inability to accept both God's goodness and the affliction of the innocent amounts to a loss of the prophetic vision which faith generates. 'If other ages felt less, they saw more, even though they saw with the blind, prophetic, unsentimental eye of acceptance, which is to say of faith' (227). Clearly Weil's distinctly unsentimental acceptance of suffering and the superposed perspective which allows her (at least theoretically) to balance the contraries of affliction and love demonstrates the type of prophetic vision O'Connor conceives here.

Weil's uncompromising insistence that the awful reality of affliction must not be avoided or fictionalised, that the cosmos is both malevolent and benevolent, is shared by O'Connor, although she reaches her conclusion from a diametrically opposite starting point. In contrast to Weil's absent God, who except for rare occasions abstains from intervening in the brutal mechanism of necessity, O'Connor's notion of God as omnipotent, and her Catholic concept of Providence ensures that she considers God is much more actively engaged in governing the world. Consequently the relatively mechanistic, inevitable forces that dominate Weil's creation are less evident in O'Connor's world view, in which arbitrary interventions of grace are more frequent, ensuring a less predictable, more mysterious environment. The creation is 'made and sustained by God', ensuring that while subject to the tribulations of necessity and affliction the 'physical, sensible world is good because it proceeds from a divine source' (HB 126, MM 157). Because of this providential divine input, moral evils are not evidence of God's non-existence, and may themselves contribute to the creation's good. 'God can make any indifferent thing, as well as evil itself, an instrument for good' (174). Yet although O'Connor's concept of the cosmos is based on her 'ultimate faith that the universe is meaningful' (178), this same faith reveals the monstrous truths which are equally part of the cosmic order. 'The truth does not change according to our ability to stomach it emotionally', she contends, 'there are long periods in the lives of all of us, and of the saints, when the truth as revealed by faith is hideous, emotionally disturbing, downright repulsive' (HB 100).

Accepting the reality of both the suffering of the innocent and God's love constitutes a particularly monstrous truth, and equally disturbing is the notion that this consent is gained by belief in the crucified Christ's divinity and sharing in his cross. Christ enables mankind to accept both the beauty and horror of the universe. If 'you believe in the divinity of Christ you have to cherish the world at the same time you struggle to endure it' O'Connor argues (90). Like Weil's *logos alogos* O'Connor's Christ is abased rather than glorious, an irrational mediator between gravity and grace, man's misery and God's love. She also acknowledges a link between man's affliction and God's, and the necessity for an 'acceptance of the crucifixion, Christ's and our own' as the key to man's kinship with God (124). 'We lost our innocence in the Fall, and our return to it is through the Redemption which was brought about by Christ's death and by our slow participation in it' she claims (MM 148). Approaching Weil's notion that man's country is the cross, O'Connor also demands that as brothers of a crucified Christ mankind must make a radical commitment to him: 'personal loyalty to the person of Christ is imperative, is the structure of man's nature, his necessary direction' (HB 290).

But there are two important differences between O'Connor's concept of Christ and Weil's. First, O'Connor links the importance of Christ as *logos alogos* with his solitary rather than multiple intervention in history, and second, although she emphasises Christ's suffering and degradation, it is the Resurrection rather than the crucifixion which is most vital to O'Connor and her fictions. The scandalous reality of the Word made flesh inheres in 'the fact that there has been a unique intervention in history' (290). Equally important, the Resurrection of Christ is 'the high point in nature' (100), because her view of a linkage between the cross and the creation is based not on Weil's concept of a cyclic, perpetual crucifixion, but on a Catholic, linear model of eschatological hope beyond the afflictions of human life.

Both Weil's concept of affliction and O'Connor's notion of human grotesquerie and its representation in fiction are dependent on the theory that mankind's limitation is a bearer of divine mystery, the medium through which contact with God can be made. If for Weil all humanity is afflicted, O'Connor insists 'We're all grotesque' (MM 233). Yet while both writers agree that all men are physically and spiritually debilitated, due to the differences between their creation theories they differ on the causes of ontic and moral evils. Weilean affliction is ultimately caused by the absence of God allowing the indifferent mechanism of necessity to ensure that all suffer, but for O'Connor it is humanity, not God, that is responsible for mankind's grotesque state. Human weakness is a direct consequence of original sin, and the 'serious writer has always taken the flaw in human nature for his starting point [...]

Drama usually bases itself on the bedrock of original sin, whether the writer thinks in theological terms or not' she claims (167).

O'Connor does think in specifically theological terms and maintains that because what the Catholic novelist 'sees at all times is fallen man perverted by fallen philosophies', this involves writing 'about people in a world where something is obviously lacking, where there is the general mystery of incompleteness' (177, 167). Such a profound writer 'tries to give you, within the form of the book, a total experience of human nature at any time' (167). For the Christian writer man is both fallen and redeemed, subject to both gravity and grace, and consequently if fictional microcosms are accurately to depict human life they must represent the dramatic extremes in which the soul's eternal fate pivots: 'the greatest dramas naturally involve the salvation or loss of the soul' (167).

Such an apocalyptic theological view suits the requirements of fiction to be dramatic and entertaining. But to consider such narratives both interesting fictions and profound depictions of man's actual existence requires some kind of religious perspective, a recognition that man has a soul and its fate is crucial. 'Where there is no belief in the soul there is very little drama' O'Connor observes, acknowledging she does not 'believe we shall have great religious fiction until we have again that happy combination of believing artist and believing society' (167, 168).

To communicate with the monstrous unbelieving reader and produce profound yet entertaining fiction by revealing religious truths via the distortions of the grotesque genre is O'Connor's primary concern. I now want to examine this strategy in detail by first, establishing a critical consensus on what the main features of the genre are, before second, comparing O'Connor's version to it, and third, analysing how Weil's theological concepts and philosophical forms help to illuminate O'Connor's work.

Although the 'grotesque' does not possess a fixed and stable meaning there is critical agreement on the recurring elements which distinguish the genre, and I will analyse these by dividing my discussion into three sections. First, the aesthetics of the grotesque, second, how it is experienced by its audience, and third, its functions, purposes, and effects.

The grotesque's aesthetic is an anti-aesthetic. Distinguished by an unresolved collision of incommensurates, as Philip Thomson maintains it is marked by a 'flinging together of disparate and irreconcilable things'.⁴² Essentially contradictory and ambivalent, the grotesque holds incommensurates in tension, transgressing

logical and generic boundaries. Animate and inanimate, beautiful and monstrous, comic and terrible co-exist. Yet to appreciate the 'abnormality' of the grotesque requires a concept of 'normality'. Grotesque forms are only recognisable as irrational, deformed, transgressional, within the context of what is perceived reasonable, beautiful, proportioned and limited. It is precisely the trace of form within the deformed which is the catalyst for its offensiveness. Although the warping of established categories verges on the fantastic,⁴³ if grotesque forms are so unprecedented that they become unintelligible they present no threat to the audience's frame of reference, losing their ability to be truly shocking. As Geoffrey Galt Harpham observes, they 'are grotesque not because they are hideous [...] but because, in the midst of an overwhelming impression of monstrousness there is much we can recognise, much corrupted, or shuffled familiarity'.⁴⁴

The jolt induced by this perception of deviancy as deranged normality, the interweaving of the ordinary and extraordinary, reassuring and alienating, leads to a parallel unresolved clash of contradictory emotions experienced by the reader or viewer of the grotesque. As 'a species of confusion' that is 'defined and recognised in common usage by a certain set of obstacles to structured thought' (xxi), the grotesque disorients thought processes by several essential features: distortion, abnormality, disharmony, exaggeration and the confluence of the terrifying and comic, leading to incongruous yet simultaneous feelings of horror, disgust and laughter. Such an initially ambiguous reaction is followed by either a gleeful fascination in perceiving the unnatural, or alternatively moral outrage and aesthetic condemnation, which constitutes a psychological defence-mechanism created as protection against the disturbing effects of confronting the grotesque.⁴⁵

The two major critical discourses on the grotesque: first 'carnival', best expounded by Mikhail Bakhtin, and second, the 'uncanny', defined by Sigmund Freud and applied to the grotesque by Wolfgang Kayser,⁴⁶ demonstrate markedly different approaches to grotesque forms. The medieval and Renaissance carnival grotesque form stresses the comic potential of the grotesque, emphasising its capacity to renew society by liberating it from terror through communal laughter.⁴⁷ Grotesque 'realism' is based on the debasement of ideal forms, a 'bringing down to earth' which actively celebrates the physical. According to Bakhtin, the 'essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body and their indissoluble unity' (19-20). The sacred is irreverently parodied, travestied and profaned in a kind of 'inverted transubstantiation' in which the spiritual is transformed into the corporeal (379). These abuses do not involve merely a negation

of the ideal, but rather a regenerative ambivalence: 'while humiliating and mortifying they at the same time revived and renewed'.⁴⁸ This combination of disparate competing elements amounts to 'moral amorality',⁴⁹ liberation from 'the prevailing point of view of the world, from conventions and established truths, from clichés, from all that is humdrum and universally accepted' (34). Acting as a catalyst for a new perspective, according to Bakhtin the carnival grotesque 'liberates the world from all that is dark and terrifying; it takes away all fears and is therefore completely gay and bright. All that was frightening in ordinary life is turned into amusing or ludicrous monstrosities' (47)

While Bakhtin maintains 'the id is uncrowned and transformed into a "funny monster"' by the communal laughter generated by medieval grotesquerie (49), in contrast the second major discourse on the grotesque emphasises its psychological dimension, focussing on the interior, individual, alienating and alarming. Monstrosity is here not tempered by comedy. Freud's concept of experiencing the 'uncanny', which emphasises fear, alienation, repression, and the connection between the at once familiar and terrifyingly other,⁵⁰ opens up an alternative method of interpreting the experience of grotesque forms which has dominated nineteenth and twentieth century readings of the genre, and is epitomised by the work of Wolfgang Kayser. The main factors in contemporary receptions of the grotesque are a kind of existential angst which merges fear and alienation. Kayser argues that we are 'so strongly affected and terrified because it is our world which ceases to be reliable, and we feel that we would be unable to live in this changed world' (184-185). The liberating function of genial, bawdy comedy is replaced by a satirical world view. 'Laughter originates on the comic and caricatural fringe of the grotesque. Filled with bitterness, it takes on characteristics of the mocking, cynical, and ultimately satanic laughter' (187).

Satirical and ironic uses of the grotesque rely on largely intellectual responses which conflict with the genre's primarily emotional impact. As Thomson notes

the satirist who uses the grotesque as a tool, a shock-weapon, must be careful. There is a danger that the didactic point he wishes to make may be obscured for the reader by the nonplussing, disorienting and generally overwhelming effect of the grotesque. (Thomson 42)

There are two connected points which are important here. First, the innate ambivalence and emotive effects of the grotesque resist the imposition of any single

viewpoint, including those of either the two major discourses on the grotesque. The grotesque consists of 'the unresolved clash of incompatibles in [both] work and response' (Thomson 27). Second, subjectivity is an essential feature in the creation of grotesque forms and responses to them. Despite identifiable and recurring categories, the grotesque is constructed by its audience. As Lewis A. Lawson observes, 'the viewer must proclaim that the object is grotesque. The grotesque is not objectively verifiable'.⁵¹ Ultimately what is grotesque depends on individual perspectives which are themselves influenced by cultural hegemonies. It 'is up to the culture to provide the conventions and assumptions that determine its particular forms. Culture does this by specifying which categories are logically and generically incompatible with which others' (Harpham xx). This leads to inconsistencies and confused terminology due to the fact the label 'grotesque' is 'often applied by members of one cultural group to the work of another cultural group, which is a sub-culture, if not a distinct culture' (Lawson 173).

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the grotesque genre's central concept of the grotesque body or 'freak'.⁵² 'Often referred to as a "freak of nature", the freak, it must be emphasised, is a freak of culture' as Susan Stewart argues.⁵³ The freak is defined by cultural and political categories of what is Other, abject, abnormal (via sexual, racial and religious criteria) which are themselves dependent on notions of 'normality'.⁵⁴ Subjective cultural categories of what is freakish are central to interpretations of the physiological freak, which as a site of contradictions problematises the boundaries between self and other, male and female, animal and human. As we noted in our earlier discussion of monstrosity, medieval concepts of the grotesque body celebrate the transgression of classical aesthetics of what is beautiful (unity, closure, separation), and celebrate carnality. Freakishness is part of a positive communal experience, abnormality is considered within a religious context. As Howard Bloch observes, 'bodily mutilation was almost always treated in larger than physical terms and is linked implicitly to the field of sacramental theology and its relation of each Christian to the Church and to the body of Christ'.⁵⁵

In contrast to this concept of the freak as sacred mediator and participant in the communal body, nineteenth century freak shows separated the freak from the rest of society which viewed it as a spectacle, an object of Otherness. Yet simultaneously the metaphors used to describe the freak's difference operate to render it more familiar and therefore less threatening. As Stewart argues:

the body of the cultural other is by means of this metaphor both naturalised and domesticated in a process we might consider to be characteristic of colonisation in general [...] On display, the freak represents the naming of the frontier and the assurance that the wilderness, the outside, is now territory. (Stewart, Russo 80)

This naturalisation process is intensified via twentieth century medical discourses in which the freak becomes genetically explicable, a diseased and therefore real rather than sacred monstrosity. Yet as Leslie Fiedler contends, art may function to change perspectives of what is monstrous or grotesque, and in doing so retrieve the freak from its contemporary desacralization. Discussing the 1970s counter-culture cinema audience for *Freaks* (1932) he claims the film provides 'creatures capable of providing the thrill our forebears felt in the presence of an equivocal and sacred unity we have since learned to secularize and divide' (Fiedler, *Freaks* 19).

Altering viewpoints through the shock induced by depicting offensive forms is agreed to be one of the primary functions of the grotesque genre, which is 'used to bewilder and disorient, to bring the reader up short, jolt him out of accustomed ways of perceiving the world and confront him with a radically different, disturbing perspective' (Thomson 58). By foregrounding the marginalised and transforming the object into the dominant image, the freak, and more generally the grotesque genre, forces a re-cognition of what is beautiful and ugly, normal and abnormal. What this new perspective is depends on emotive responses which are either comic, horrifying, or most frequently both. Thomson claims that the most profound meaning of the grotesque is to merge comedy and tragedy, while Di Renzo accords with Bakhtin's notion of the carnival grotesque, maintaining its 'ultimate purpose is therapeutic: it is a comic shock treatment. Even at its most menacing, it seeks to liberate (Di Renzo 5). Kayser perceives this liberation in artistic representations of the grotesque, insisting 'thus we arrive at a final interpretation of the grotesque: AN ATTEMPT TO INVOKE AND SUBDUE THE DEMONIC ASPECTS OF THE WORLD' (Kayser 188).

The implied moral judgement in Kayser's notion of controlling the 'demonic' is important because it highlights the problem of whether the grotesque should, and can, be successfully used for moral instruction. As we noted earlier, satirical and ironical uses of the grotesque risk having their intellectual didacticism obstructed by the emotive power of grotesque forms. Bakhtin makes this point in arguing that the grotesque is essentially contradictory and is therefore warped by the imposition of abstract ideals. 'The abstract distorts this [ambivalent] nature of the grotesque

image. It transforms the center of gravity to a “moral” meaning. Moreover it submits the substratum of the image to the negative element’ (Bakhtin 62). He insists on the ultimate power of the grotesque to escape such authorial control. ‘The grotesque images selected to serve an abstract idea are still too powerful; they preserve their nature and pursue their own logic, independently from the author’s intentions, and sometimes contrary to them’ (63).

Bakhtin’s argument has important implications for O’Connor’s attempts to use the grotesque to write Christian truths on the soul. Although aware of the tension between abstract ideals and the grotesque’s innately emotive power, she is insistent that ‘when the grotesque is used in a legitimate way, the intellectual and moral judgements implicit in it will have the ascendancy over feeling’ (MM 43). O’Connor’s attempt to circumscribe what is the ‘legitimate’ way to interpret her grotesque fictions is dependent on outlining (in non-fictional forms) the corrective beliefs which justify her use of distortion as revelation.

I am not and never have been interested in the grotesque for its own sake or in freaks and abnormal people because of their freakishness or their abnormalities. It seems to me that the grotesque can have no meaning at all in fiction unless it is seen or felt in relation to what is right and normal. My own belief about what is (morally) right and normal comes from Christian orthodoxy; comes from believing that Christ should be the center of life and the individual soul. Writers who do believe in religious realities and propose to get them across in fiction have to cope with a deaf, dumb, and blind reader; and the grotesque may be one of our desperate answers.⁵⁶

O’Connor’s defensive justification for her use of the grotesque as a necessary strategy in her dialogue with the monstrous reader reveals the extent to which theology and form are interconnected in her work. Fictional grotesquerie is considered a consequence of experiential grotesquerie, which in O’Connor’s moral universe constitutes being secular. But despite her clarification of her own concept of normality and abnormality, if O’Connor’s audience do not share her Christocentric concept of rightness, can they perceive the ‘religious realities’ she attempts to communicate? Will her use of distortion prove destructive rather than revelatory? To analyse O’Connor’s ‘desperate answer’ to this problem I will now examine how her concept of the grotesque compares to the typical features of the genre.

Aware of the gap between her own notions of reality and those of her non-Christian readers, O'Connor insists that the Christian writer 'may well be forced to take ever more violent means to get his vision across to this hostile audience' (33-34). The recalcitrance of such monstrous readers ensures 'you have to make your vision apparent by shock - to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost blind you draw large and startling figures' (34). Such exaggerated and distorted forms are a prerequisite for an aesthetic founded on balancing contradictions. The appearance of grotesque fiction 'is going to be wild' and 'it is almost of necessity going to be violent and comic, because of the discrepancies it seeks to combine' O'Connor claims. (43). The grotesque genre's ability to connect contraries: religious and secular, comic and terrible, facilitates access to 'deeper kinds of realism' which 'do not hesitate to distort appearances in order to show a hidden truth' (39, 70). Her literary and religious perspectives converge here. O'Connor's Catholic sacramentalism is evident in her notion that successful grotesque narratives use 'the concrete in a more drastic way', allowing 'strange skips and gaps' which provide intimations of mysteries beyond surface realities (42, 40).

But what type of grotesque realism does O'Connor employ in this drastic use of the concrete: that exemplified by the uncanny, the carnivalesque, or both discourses? Her concept of the prophetic Christian writer penetrating physical reality and forcibly recalling an irreligious audience to known but neglected sacred truths ensures that her work involves two essential features of the uncanny grotesque. First, a connection between the familiar and terrifyingly Other, and second, the notion that the fear and dread associated with this dual experience is connected to the recurrence, or recollection of repressed, in this case religious knowledge.⁵⁷ O'Connor's central concept of the interconnection of the concrete and mystery ensures she considers fiction 'should be both canny and uncanny' (79). This strategy involves her utilising two other features of the uncanny grotesque discourse: first, several of her major characters demonstrate the type of existential angst, the combination of fear and alienation which Kayser attributes to the problem of living in a world at once familiar and unfamiliar.⁵⁸ Second, O'Connor's fictions provide evidence of a satirical world view, with narrators who apparently encourage the kind of cynical, mocking, and debatably satanic laughter which Kayser identifies as an integral element of the contemporary uncanny.⁵⁹ However, the uncanny grotesque's most important feature, focussing on a psychological dimension, exploring the individual and interior, is not well developed in her work. O'Connor offers no in-depth explorations of her character's psyches, their inner life remains largely uninvestigated. Instead her protagonists subsist as types, the sort of medieval exemplars which the carnival grotesque employs in fabliaux.

O'Connor's version of the grotesque genre demonstrates greater similarities with the carnivalesque than the uncanny because first, her notion of grotesque realism conforms to the carnival grotesque's central principle of degradation: the debasement of ideal forms and simultaneous celebration of the physical. In 'Catholic Novelists and Their Readers' she quotes from Baron von Hugel: 'The highest realities and deepest responses are experienced by us within, or in contact with, the lower and lowliest' (176). Christ's Incarnation in the physical, the Church's mediation of sacred truths within human history are all evidence to O'Connor of this principle, and relevant to the fiction writer whose primary concern is 'with mystery as it is incarnated in human life' (176). Her links to the carnival grotesque are also demonstrated in the fact that second, an important part of her narrative strategy includes using parody, travesty, and profanity of the sacred typical of the bawdy moral amorality of the genre (see my later discussion of 'Good Country People'). Third, because in her schema it is both comic and terrible that man sees himself at the centre of the universe, O'Connor uses her own type of ludicrous monstrosities: agnostic, atheist, and cliché-ridden protagonists, in an attempt to 'jar the reader', to make him 'feel in his bones if nowhere else' a sense of the sacred (162).

O'Connor is in harmony with critical consensus on the major purpose of the grotesque, when she considers that generating a radically different and disturbing perspective constitutes the genre's primary function. The aesthetic features of the carnival grotesque theoretically provide her with the form she requires to reconcile the physical and mystical realities essential to her prophetic vision, and jolt her readers into both recognising and ultimately accepting this superposed perspective. Yet the inherent equivocality of fictional narratives and the grotesque genre's reliance on conflicting emotional responses, ensures her ambiguous fictions generate the subjective, sharply divided critical opinion typical of audience reactions to grotesque forms.⁶⁰ O'Connor's own subjectivity, her insistence on a Christian and specifically Catholic world-view, and her obsession with the 'demands' of her monstrous secular reader is vital to her creative impulse.⁶¹ These religious and authorial preconceptions, and audience reactions to them, intersect in O'Connor's notion of the 'freak', and I will now examine how this crucial central concept compares to the genre's established criteria and responses to it.

As we noted earlier, the subjectivity essential to the creation and experience of grotesque forms is concentrated on the freak, with notions of what is 'freakish' dependent on individual perspectives and political categories influenced by cultural hegemonies. As O'Connor's personal notion of normality is dependent on Christian

orthodoxy, abnormality consists of an inability to acknowledge the sacred, the monstrosity she associates with her recalcitrant readers. Her fictional freaks with their physiological, moral, and psychological aberrations, are intended to be synecdoches for secular man's dislocation from the divine. The 'writer who produces grotesque fiction may not consider his characters any more freakish than ordinary fallen man usually is', she argues, yet it 'is when the freak can be sensed as a figure for our essential displacement that he attains some depth in literature' (43, 45). O'Connor claims 'to be able to recognize a freak, you have to have some conception of the whole man' (44), which for her includes a spiritual as well as physical dimension. While she believes this is possible in the South, because the Southerner's concept of humanity remains predominantly theological, the otherwise prevailing secular humanist hegemony ensures that the rest of her readers are incapable of recognising the religious function of her fictional freaks. 'I have found that anything that comes out of the South is going to be called grotesque by the Northern reader, unless it is grotesque, in which case it is going to be called realistic' she complains (40). It is difficult enough for such a 'modern reader' to 'suspend his disbelief and accept an anagogical level of action at all, harder still for him to accept its action in an obviously grotesque character', because he 'has the mistaken notion that a concern with grace is a concern with exalted human behavior' (204).

In placing her concept of the grotesque so firmly within a religious context, O'Connor marks her difference from twentieth century notions of the freak as a real rather than sacred monstrosity, aligning herself instead with medieval concepts of human grotesquerie. She too celebrates the transgression of classical aesthetics of what is beautiful and celebrates carnality. But as a site of contradictions her freaks are intended to be not merely physiologically ambiguous, problematising notions of male and female, animal and human, but also Fallen and redeemed, holding in tension the physical and mystical, sacred and profane. Because her concept of wholeness is both spiritual and physical, O'Connor's corporeal freaks, tricksters and prophets are intended to function as the type of moral advertisements, the warnings of the consequences of moral gracelessness yet simultaneously signs of the divine favoured by the medievalists. 'The freak in modern fiction is usually disturbing to us because he keeps us from forgetting that we share in his state. The only time he should be disturbing to us is when he is held up as a whole man' she insists (133).

Interestingly O'Connor expands this notion of identification with the freak to include herself as writer-prophet, maintaining that when the religious writer 'has a freak for his hero, he is not simply showing us what we are, but what we have been

and what we could become. His prophet-freak is an image of himself' (117-118). 'The writer has to judge himself with a stranger's eye and a stranger's severity. The prophet in him has to see the freak' she claims (81-82). O'Connor's comments are perplexingly unclear here. Is her perception of her freakishness a reference to her own experiential limitation, her limitations as writer of prophetic fictions, or the limits of her audience - does being a religious writer in a monstrously secular world make her both prophet and freak? O'Connor's concept of freakishness is clearly complex, demonstrating the typical subjectivity and balancing of incommensurates such as self and Other which is characteristic of the freak's role in the grotesque genre. It is significant that O'Connor's freaks also demonstrate the characteristic quality of grotesque forms to generate irresolvably contradictory critical responses of either gleeful fascination or aesthetic condemnation and moral outrage,⁶² illustrating Bakhtin's assertion that imposing authorial value systems on the grotesque is extremely problematic.

O'Connor's use of the grotesque genre uncompromisingly to link the apparent contraries of physical monstrosity and immorality with God's grace, and the often horrified reactions that this produces in her audience, parallels Weil's attempts to connect what she perceives as a hideously afflicted humanity with God's benevolence via the philosophical form of balancing incommensurates - and her readership's reactions to them.

A comparison of Weil's criteria for affliction with O'Connor's notion of human grotesquerie is informative in both its differences and similarities. Weil's first point, that what distinguishes affliction is its terrible, lacerating spiritual and social torment, manages to explain with greater clarity than O'Connor's own comments the predicament of the 'maimed souls' (43) which it is O'Connor's primary effort to explore in her fictions. Yet Weil's view that physical pain and loss of social prestige must co-exist with spiritual agony to qualify as affliction is not shared by O'Connor. Disfigurement of body and soul without prolonged pain is what differentiates O'Connor's notion of man's grotesquerie, and whilst many of her characters experience permanent or temporary social humiliation, their very disabilities frequently increase their social prestige. Weil's second element of affliction, that it is arbitrarily inflicted and must be endured against the will, closely corresponds to O'Connor's plot structures and protagonists, which frequently bring to life Weil's concept of the terrifying and indifferent force of gravity more persuasively than Weil's philosophical rationales, and O'Connor's own concept of Providence.

Where the two writers differ most markedly is in their ideas on the impact of human suffering on inter-personal relationships. Weil's third criteria for affliction, that its attack on the individual's body, soul, and social status leads to a shock of horror causing an invasion of the soul by ugliness, a consequent hatred of others, self-loathing, complicity, and the repelling of the non-afflicted, is only partially attributable to O'Connor's vision. Her maimed souls are in most cases steeped in an ugly resentment if not hatred for others, and are to a certain extent accomplices in their own fate. But rather than self-loathing they demonstrate self-absorption. In a major difference to Weil's afflicted, O'Connor's grotesques glory in their disfigurement, and instead of provoking a disgusted reaction from the other characters which increases their alienation and anonymity, their impairment actively attracts interest, even admiration from the rest of the community. However, ambivalent responses to grotesque fictions ensures that O'Connor's community of critics is divided between a Weilean type loathing for her afflicted characters, and an O'Connoresque attraction to them.⁶³

O'Connor's carnivalesque concept of comic grotesquerie ensures that unlike Weil's fourth criterion for affliction - that it must be borne entirely without consolation - she does allow a degree of mitigation. Although she too provides no answer to the question posited by her most philosophical protagonists: 'Why must man suffer?', and the consolatory epiphanies O'Connor claims for her fictional characters in her non-fictional writings are at best equivocal in the stories, at least some of her protagonists are compensated for their sufferings by an absurd pride in either their physical deformity or sinfulness. (See my following readings of 'Good Country People' and 'The Life You Save May Be Your Own'.) Like Weil, O'Connor believes in the power of suffering to force man into an acknowledgement of his fragility and limitation. Yet in contrast to Weil's uncompromisingly severe notion of affliction as an intolerable, isolating and repulsive agony, she considers that humanity's suffering is as ridiculous as it is horrifying. As a fiction writer interested in entertainment not just moral instruction, the horrors she envisions in human life are at least partially moderated by her perception of man's ludicrous monstrosity. Indeed it is the undeniably comic elements in O'Connor's fictional freak shows rather than their debatable moments of grace which provide the most consolation for the dehumanising effects of necessity and affliction she unleashes.

To examine what O'Connor's notion of the human self is, and its connection to necessity and affliction, I will proceed to apply Weil's theories of man and his need for roots to O'Connor's equivalent concepts. As we have seen, Weil considers there are three different but connected dimensions of the human being: first, the physical

body, second, the soul, and third, a social personality, which she believes is the primary source of mankind's fictionality, a fake persona distinct from man's sacred, impersonal self. In Weil's schema this creation of a false personality through illusion, intoxication, fanaticism, constitutes an attempt to escape the brutal reality of necessity and affliction and is a consequence of modern humanity's deracination, the absence of social and spiritual roots. The consequences of such rootlessness are spiritually and socially damaging.

For people who are really uprooted there remain only two possible sorts of behaviour: either to fall into spiritual lethargy resembling death [...] or to hurl themselves into some form of activity necessarily designed to uproot, often by the most violent methods, those who are not yet uprooted, or only partially so. (NR 45)

Rootedness 'is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul' she contends (41). 'Every human being needs to have multiple roots. It is necessary for him to draw well-nigh the whole of his moral, intellectual and spiritual life by way of the environment of which he forms a natural part' (41). In *The Need for Roots* she considers the primary causes of deracination to be the separation of the physical and spiritual in human experience. Industrial technology and its oppression of the factory worker, and agricultural work devoid of any relevance to the beauty of the world, neither provide nor encourage a connection between man's daily labour and his essential spiritual life, when what 'is required is that this world, and the world beyond, in their double beauty, should be present and associated in the act of work'.⁶⁴

Although O'Connor does not share this stress on the importance of spiritualising labour,⁶⁵ Weil's theories constitute a demand to integrate what in O'Connor's terminology amounts to mystery and manners, and both writers overlap in their concern to examine how the need for roots and the consequences of rootlessness are connected to distinguishing between man's real and fictional self.

As a fiction writer interested in 'mystery that is lived', with 'ultimate mystery as we find it embodied in the concrete world of sense experience', O'Connor is 'concerned with the mystery of personality' (MM 125, 198). She insists identity

is not to be found on the surface; it is not accessible to the poll-taker; it is not something that *can* become a cliché. It is not made from the mean average or the typical, but from the hidden and often the most extreme [...] It lies very deep. In its entirety, it is known only to God. (58)

In accordance with Weil she believes that man's essential self is closely bound up in his need for roots. As her frequent non-fictional statements maintain, O'Connor constructs her own sense of identity from her association with specific cultural groups: Catholic, Southerner, fiction writer, and she derides the celebration of modern man's existential rootlessness she perceives in contemporary fiction.

Alienation was once a diagnosis, but in much of the fiction of our time it has become an ideal. The modern hero is the outsider. His experience is rootless. He can go anywhere. He belongs nowhere. Being alien to nothing, he ends up being alienated from any kind of community based on common tastes and interests. (199-200)

As my readings of 'Good Country People' and 'The Life You Save May Be Your Own' will show, O'Connor's fictions more graphically demonstrate the consequences of the Weilean concept of deracination: the fictional social personalities, spiritual lethargy and violence, than Weil's philosophical arguments. But as each writer's emphasis on the necessity to lose either (or both) one's fictional or physical life in order to gain spiritual life is offensive, I will first analyse to what extent Weil's concepts of the soul and unfree will can highlight O'Connor's equivalent theories and their depiction in her fictions, and whether O'Connor's work can illuminate these Weilean concepts.

Initially I want to compare Weil's concepts of the three domains and the soul's internal architecture to O'Connor's notions of free will, and the extent to which man can approach the sacred via the physical. O'Connor's fictions, packed with human deformity, accidents, immorality and bizarre events, aptly demonstrate the first of Weil's domains and the lowest level of the soul, which are concerned with man's subjection to the ontic and moral evils of mechanical necessity, and are beyond the control of humanity yet (apparently) are in accordance with God's will. But it is Weil's concepts of the second and third domains and intermediate and highest levels of the soul which offer the most valuable insights into O'Connor's work, by providing a philosophical framework for how to analyse O'Connor's

primary concern: to demonstrate the mechanics of how mystery operates through manners, grace through nature.

At the second stage in Weil's hierarchy of free will and the soul, man must feel the full force of the good/evil opposition, yet is able to have a beneficial impact on his environment and achieve specific results through obligations to perform virtuous actions. O'Connor theoretically shares Weil's belief in this process by which the body acts as a lever for the soul, and can pull the soul after it to a higher spiritual level. 'Our salvation is worked out on earth according as we love one another, see Christ in one another, etc., by works' (HB 336). She too acknowledges that such virtuous actions can be compelled, and operate in a world coexistent with evil. Influenced by St. Thomas Aquinas on this point, she insists in some instances 'an act proceeds from Charity in the sense of being commanded by it', but recognises that this type of 'natural grace [...] operates surrounded by evil' (335, 144). Yet her fictions are marked by the absence of virtuous actions, first, due to her concern with depicting man as deeply flawed by original sin, and second, because of the difficulties inherent in representing the action of grace in fictional form. It is therefore necessary 'to approach it [grace] negatively', she insists (144). Consequently frequently in O'Connor's fictions the body acts as a lever for the soul through the impact of violence rather than charity, through immoral rather than virtuous actions. This process is intended to demonstrate a positive reawakening of the soul to at least the possibility of an alternative (sacred) reality. O'Connor is adamant that the apparent disparity between her Catholic beliefs and the content of her fictions is evidence of her acceptance of man's free will rather than his depravity. Admonishing the critic who demands a more positive fiction that corresponds to her theological credo, she maintains that the Catholic novelist 'does not write about general beliefs but about men with free will, and that there is nothing in our faith that implies a foregone optimism for man so free that with his last breath he can say *No*' (MM 182).

O'Connor is considerably more interested in the impact of good and evil on the soul, and the dramatic moment when its fate is decided than she is in understanding and developing the type of capacity for virtuous action which preoccupies Weil (see Chapter Three). But importantly both writers share the opinion that a hazardous environment is vital to humanity's spiritual development. 'Risk is an essential need of the soul' according to Weil.⁶⁶ As 'a form of danger which provokes a deliberate reaction' it does not

go beyond the soul's resources to the point of crushing the soul beneath a load of fear. In some cases, there is a gambling aspect to it; in others, where some obligation forces a man to face it, it represents the finest possible stimulant. (NR 32)

The 'permanent presence of a certain amount of risk in all aspects of social life' is essential because the absence of such hazards 'produces a type of boredom which paralyses' (33, 32). Both theologically and fictionally O'Connor is interested in replacing this kind of paralysis with risk, and her fictions bring to life this Weilean concept, which is an integral part of the broader notion that the body may act as a lever for the soul. Preoccupied as she is with free will and the drama of the soul, which presupposes an element of risk in man's potential for salvation or damnation, O'Connor believes it 'is the extreme situation that best reveals what we are essentially'; and she acknowledges as fiction writer her 'dramatic need is to know manners under stress' (MM 113, 208).

Both in her theology and fiction free will is essential and determinism unacceptable because first, her view of the reality of human liberty ensures that she considers man's salvation is not inevitable and actively open to hazard, and second, her obligation as fiction writer to entertain her audience precludes obviously predestined actions and requires the high drama of risk, the most hazardous moment when grace is accepted or rejected. According to O'Connor her

view of free will follows the traditional Catholic teaching. I don't think any genuine novelist is interested in writing about a world of people who are strictly determined. Even if he writes about characters who are mostly unfree, it is the sudden free action, the open possibility, which he knows will illuminate the picture and give it life. So that while predictable, predetermined actions have a comic interest for me, it is the free act, the acceptance of grace particularly, that I always have my eye on as the thing which will make the story work. (115)

It is in Weil's examination of this mysterious interaction between nature and grace, human freedom and God's action in the soul that her concepts of the three domains and the soul's internal architecture are most illuminating in analysing O'Connor's equivalent ideas here.

Weil's third domain is neither independent of nor ruled by the human will. Vivaly man experiences the compulsion of God's pressure, in proportion to the amount of love and attention he concentrates on God. The highest level in the soul enables this contemplative faculty because existing above consciousness, it consists of supernatural love, which allows the irrational impulsive action required to realise moral obligations. Again Weil is much more concerned with promoting the qualities of intellectual attention and virtuous action than O'Connor, whose fictions only demonstrate these attributes obliquely via inversion: inattention, and at best a sub-conscious love of God. Yet as my examination of her non-fictional work has already shown, O'Connor's use of distortion is primarily designed to reorientate the attention of her monstrous readers towards God.

Crucially Weil's notion of God's pressure on the soul, man's requirement to abandon himself to it, and the irrational impulsive action this makes possible parallels O'Connor's core concept of the anagogical gesture, the sudden pivotal action which mysteriously unites nature and grace and forms the heart of every great story.⁶⁷ The writer who acknowledges the mystery in human life

will be interested in what we don't understand rather than in what we do. He will be interested in possibility rather than in probability. He will be interested in characters who are forced out to meet evil and grace and who act on a trust beyond themselves - whether they know very clearly what it is they act upon or not. (42)

Because Catholic fiction assumes that man is prone to sin but redeemable when his own efforts are assisted by grace, 'it will see this grace as working through nature, but as entirely transcending it, so that a door is always open to possibility and the unexpected in the human soul' (197). A story 'does not begin except at a depth where adequate motivation and adequate psychology and the various determinations have been exhausted', she claims. (41-42)

As my analysis of O'Connor's stories will examine, her fiction does display various determinisms. The unfree will apparent in Weil's theories stems from her stress on the divine at the expense of the human: human autonomy is offensive because it places a barrier between the persons of God and God, the highest level of human attainment is to enjoy the unfree will generated by God's presence in man's soul. Even this highest level of God's compulsion on the soul is at least partly predictable, part of the process in the soul's hierarchy. O'Connor is theoretically not as

schematic as Weil: there are not necessarily three stages to go through in the soul's development, the process by which the soul attains salvation is neither as rigid nor predictable. Because she is interested in possibility rather than probability, human identity, the soul, the action of grace are more mysterious. Although she believes man is a temple of the Holy Spirit and 'is created in the image and likeness of God' (HB 104), because O'Connor actively celebrates the physical not just the divine, she at least conceptually achieves a greater integration of nature and grace than Weil. Human liberty plays a more active role in man's relationship with the external world. Although she maintains free will 'has to be understood within its limits; possibly we all have some hindrances to free action', O'Connor is insistent that this is 'not enough to be able to call the world determined', and humanity lives 'as beings existing in a created order to whose laws we freely respond' (488, MM 41). While the intervention of grace in the physical world and God's compulsion on the soul are as vital to O'Connor as to Weil, her greater emphasis on human freedom ensures that these incommensurates are more balanced, a crucial part of the action of grace is its free-willed acceptance: 'God rescues us from ourselves if we want him to' (HB 118).

But interestingly O'Connor's concept of the integrity of man's complex free will to some extent intersects with, and is useful in illuminating Weil's theory of man's obedience to supernatural necessity. The Weilean notion that those souls who choose to obey God, although they remain at the mercy of mechanical necessity also become susceptible to supernatural laws, and consequently some actions become impossible and others are achieved against the will, finds an echo in O'Connor's 'Author's Note' to the second edition of *Wise Blood* (1962)

Does one's integrity ever lie in what he is not able to do? I think that usually it does, for free will does not mean one will but many wills conflicting in one man. Freedom cannot be conceived simply. It is a mystery and one which a novel, even a comic novel, can only be asked to deepen.

Although more complex, mysterious and unpredictable than Weil's concept of a kind of virtuous unfree will, O'Connor's notion of human liberty also acknowledges that the inability to fulfil one's own desires is paradoxically part of man's dignity rather than antithetical to it, because positive actions can be achieved in spite of the self.⁶⁸ This concept is vital to both O'Connor's theology and fiction. But due to O'Connor's greater stress on human freedom and its mystery, her version of man's

capacity for exposure to a supernatural necessity is permanently available despite man's consistent choice to disobey God; and the immoral behaviour this generates is frequently a crucial part of the process by which grace intervenes in human life.⁶⁹

Comparing O'Connor's notions of good and evil with Weil's theories reveals interesting differences and similarities between them. First, due to their different creation theories and O'Connor's more developed concept of free will, she considers sin a consequence of human liberty and not part of the mechanical forces of necessity in which suffering and sin are connected.

The Christian novelist is distinguished from his pagan colleagues by recognizing sin as sin. According to his heritage he sees it not as sickness or an accident of environment, but as a responsible choice of offence against God which involves his eternal future. Either one is serious about salvation or one is not. (167)

O'Connor is very serious about salvation, which she envisions as 'a drama played out with the devil, a devil who is not just generalized evil, but an evil intelligence determined on its own supremacy' (168). She claims 'we need a sense of evil which sees the devil as a real spirit who must be made to name himself, and not simply to name himself as vague evil' (117).

O'Connor insists that her 'Devil has a name, a history and a definite plan. His name is Lucifer, he's a fallen angel, his sin is pride, and his aim is the destruction of the Divine plan' (HB 456). She acknowledges the distinction between natural and supernatural evils which Weil considers important. Such an evil intelligence bent on destroying the highest good is different to the habitual but comparatively minor sins committed by man. 'Sin is interesting but evil is not. Sin is the result of an individual's free choice, but evil is something else' she argues.⁷⁰ But ultimately O'Connor's notion of evil is more mysterious, less capable of being clarified and explained than in Weil's philosophy: 'evil is not simply a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be endured' (MM 209).

There is consensus between the two writers in their belief that despite the necessity to endure evil the natural world is finally good. In fact 'only when the natural world is seen as good does evil become intelligible as a destructive force and a necessary result of our freedom' according to O'Connor (157). But because like Weil, O'Connor thinks in ultimates: gravity and grace, sacred and profane, with each of

these elements frequently conceived in antithetical pairings, she too is torn between a Manichean dualism, or Protestant Fundamentalist urge to consider good and evil radically opposed; and a Catholic desire to perceive them symbiotically related. However the emphasis is different in each writer. Although Weil is convinced that evil is ultimately circumscribed by good, she appears more attracted to, and is more convincing in her arguments concerning their distinctions. Conversely, while O'Connor is obviously drawn to the concept of a radical opposition between good and evil, she is finally convinced by the Catholic notion of their linkage.

'I think evil is the defective use of good' she maintains (HB 129), and equally, the good and specifically grace can make use of the defective. 'Grace, to the Catholic way of thinking, can and does use as its medium the imperfect, purely human, and even hypocritical' (389). The positive uses of evil include the devil's inadvertent assistance in the action of grace. According to O'Connor 'the devil teaches most of the lessons that lead to self-knowledge', and in her narratives 'the reader will find that the devil accomplishes a good deal of groundwork that seems to be necessary before grace is effective' (349, MM 117). While this is important spiritually and increases the dramatic nature of the fictions, in a combination of the kind of ludicrous monstrosity which Bakhtin identifies, and the integrity of unfree will both she and Weil acknowledge; O'Connor insists that the devil's unwitting contribution to goodness is also comic. 'In general the Devil can always be a subject for my kind of comedy one way or another. I suppose this is because he is always accomplishing ends other than his own' she concludes (HB 367).

But is it part of O'Connor's own integrity as a fiction writer that she manages to accomplish other ends in her narratives than she too intends? Torn between her theological beliefs and the requirements of fictional form, does her work demonstrate a kind of Weilean dualism, with two sets of ethics, one for her theology and one for her fiction? There is some evidence for this in that despite believing humanity is both fallen and redeemable, O'Connor's fictions more successfully depict Weil's impoverished view of man than her own more optimistic concept of human liberty. Her characters appear subject to the machinations of a Weilean type necessity which condemns them to evil and forbids them anything but the most limited goods, and therefore these indifferent or disobedient souls provide minimal evidence of the free will and permanent capacity for grace which O'Connor considers so important. None of her characters escape gravity, but most appear to escape grace. Some of her protagonists do manage to show the compulsion of God's pressure on, and the impulsive actions available to the soul, but despite her stress on the mysterious interaction between nature and grace, within the context of her

oeuvre these events are themselves as predictable and schematised as Weil's conceptual hierarchies. Repetitive themes, character types, plots and narrative structures become probabilities rather than possibilities, diluting their shock effect. Consequently after the weight of determined and grotesque characters and events which precede them, O'Connor's climactic denouements, which she insists represent epiphanic moments of grace, the intervention of a supernatural necessity in human affairs, are frequently difficult to accept.

Both writers agree that such supernatural interventions actually occur, and have the crucial capacity to alter the mechanism of natural necessity. Maintaining that successful fictions represent this experiential reality, O'Connor claims 'all good stories are about conversion, about a character's changing', insisting the 'action of grace changes a character' (275). But while all her 'stories are about the action of grace on a character who is not very willing to support it', she complains that due to the inability of her audience to recognise grace when they see it, 'most people think of these stories as hard, hopeless, brutal' (275). Yet rather than her reader's monstrous incapacity to recognise grace, the problem of accepting O'Connor's proclaimed moments of supernatural intervention in the fictions stems from their reliance on minor, inconclusive, or non-existent evidence of altered behaviour in her characters, and the resultant difficulty in accepting that such well delineated fallen characters can be, have been, redeemed. The Weilean notion that such rare moments of grace are accompanied by compassionate and instinctive acts of charity for the afflicted, a redemptive self-sacrificing of the self which amounts to a new descent of Christ on earth is barely visible within the fictions.

At the core of both writers' theologies is the monstrous Christian paradox that man must lose his life to save it by sharing in Christ's cross. As writer-prophet O'Connor attempts to revivify its central Christian truth and write it on the souls of her secular audience in her short stories 'Good Country People' and 'The Life You Save May Be Your Own'. Both texts draw the reader's attention to the biblical reference, but ultimately revivify the paradox in different ways in the narratives. Each story also demonstrates how fictional beings can analyse the problem of being fictional and its consequences - the egocentrism and immorality, fake identity and distorted worship - that both Weil and O'Connor associate with spiritual deracination, and which they consider affliction and the grotesque have the capacity to expose. My analysis of 'Good Country People' will focus on how Weil's central concept of affliction and the afflicted body as a lever for salvation offers useful new interrogations of O'Connor's attempt to revivify the Christian paradox that man must lose his life to save it. The important Weilean notion of being fictional, and its links to social and

spiritual deracination, shall be used to offer productive insights into the character of Mr Tom T. Shiftlet and his response to the question what is a man? in 'The Life You Save May Be Your Own'. How successfully O'Connor writes the Christian paradox on the souls of her readers in this story will be examined, and my reading of both narratives will conclude with a brief examination of to what extent both stories demonstrate Weil's first two criteria for texts of genius.

Weil's concept of affliction is central to her notion that external physical realities have an impact on the soul, that the body is a lever for salvation. Her analysis of how affliction annihilates the fictional self, returns man to the reality of his fragile condition, and through such redemptive suffering offers access to grace, helps interrogate O'Connor's attempt, in 'Good Country People', to revivify the paradox that man must lose his life to save it, through the central character of Joy-Hulga Hopewell.

Applying Weil's philosophical criteria for affliction to the fictional character of Joy-Hulga reveals how closely Weil and O'Connor's thinking converges on how the grotesquely afflicted human body can be a mediator for salvation. Weil's core point, that the three facets of the human being: body, soul, and social personality, are permanently exposed to affliction, corresponds closely with the characterisation of Joy-Hulga. Physically diseased through her 'weak heart', and mutilated after having her leg 'literally blasted off' in a hunting accident (CS 276, 275), Joy-Hulga embodies Weil's claim that man's flesh is fragile due to its susceptibility to being 'pierced or torn or crushed', or having 'one of its internal mechanisms [...] permanently deranged' (SWR 454). Weil's theory that the soul is vulnerable because it is 'pitifully dependent upon all sorts of objects, inanimate and animate, which are themselves fragile and capricious' (454), equates to Joy-Hulga taking care of her artificial leg 'as someone else would his soul' (CS 287), and its eventual theft by Manley Pointer. Finally, Weil's idea that the 'social personality' upon which man's fictional self is almost totally dependent, and which when its prestige is diminished or destroyed seems to abolish man's essential self, is evident at the end of the narrative, when the self-created identity on which Joy-Hulga bases her belief in her difference to the rest of the community has been humiliatingly dismantled by Pointer.

Weil's emphasis on affliction being distinguished from mere suffering by its degradation of the social personality (the fictional self), and a necessary spiritual torment that mutilates the soul, offers insights into Joy-Hulga, who takes refuge from the reality of her limited and precarious condition by recreating herself, and

who constitutes one of O'Connor's 'maimed souls'.⁷¹ Joy-Hulga's fictional self is founded on her absurd pride in what she believes is her uniqueness through first, her physical deformity, second, her assumption of an alternative identity by renaming herself, and third, the atheism through which she assumes intellectual superiority. In a secular version of the Christian paradox that man must lose his life to save it, she tries to lose her life as Joy and to redeem herself through her new existence as Hulga. Initially, her social prestige is increased rather than decreased, thanks to Pointer and Mrs Freeman's fascination with the three elements of her new identity. Pointer informs Joy-Hulga that the artificial leg 'is what makes you different. You ain't like anybody else' (288). Although his later revelation that he has stolen other prostheses demonstrates he does not think she is unique, and consequently at this point he is probably cynically pandering to Joy-Hulga's own sense of difference and linkage of her physical abnormality with her mystical self, Pointer is genuinely devoted to her deformity. He is 'entirely reverent' as he uncovers the 'ugly jointure' where the prosthesis is attached to the stump, and pays homage to Joy-Hulga's physical abnormality in a pseudo-religious ritual. The profane sacraments of obscene playing cards, whiskey, and condoms which he produces from his counterfeit bible are laid out in front of Joy-Hulga 'like one presenting offerings at the shrine of a goddess' (289). He clandestinely thinks that she is 'some girl!' because he admires her nihilism, and Freeman's relish for furtively calling Joy-Hulga by her adoptive name, and similar fascination with the younger woman's deformity, amounts to another form of distorted adulation which associates Joy-Hulga's ugliness with her inner being. Freeman's secretive use of the 'Hulga' name disturbs Joy-Hulga 'as if her privacy had been intruded upon', because she senses Freeman's potential to delve 'far enough behind her face to reach some secret fact' (282, 275).

Joy-Hulga's own reverence for this 'secret' connection between her external ugliness and notion of her inner mystery is the motivation for her name change. 'One of her major triumphs was that her mother had not been able to turn her dust into Joy, but the greater one was that she had been able to turn it herself into Hulga', and this parody of God's creation of humanity ensures that Joy-Hulga's 'highest creative act' is to become her own profane deity (275). Literally idolising 'the full genius' of her self-created *ersatz* divinity, she envisions her new name 'working like the ugly sweating Vulcan [...] to whom presumably, the Goddess had to come when called' (275). That Joy-Hulga conceives her self in pseudo-religious terms is significant. The passionate nature of her nihilism could be indicative of the spiritual torment, the distressed soul, which Weil considers an essential element of the afflicted's trauma. It is noticeable that when she imagines seducing Pointer

Joy-Hulga envisions redeeming him, taking 'all his shame away', and instead of negating the meaning of experiential existence, changing his remorse 'into a deeper understanding of life' (284). Her insistence that she has attained her own salvation through nihilism: 'We are all damned [...] but some of us have taken off our blindfolds and see there's nothing to see. It's a kind of salvation'; is subverted by her implicit acknowledgement that some sort of salvation is required, and the Christian terminology she uses to express this (288). Her outburst that 'God! [...] Malebranche was right: we are not our own light. We are not our own light!' ironically undermines her notion of secular salvation, as does the narrator's description of Joy-Hulga having 'the look of someone who has achieved blindness by an act of will and means to keep it' (276, 273).

Weil's second criteria for affliction, that it is randomly, arbitrarily inflicted and endured against the will, corresponds closely to the plot and protagonists of 'Good Country People'. The unexpected arrival of Pointer, who uses 'a different name at every house [he] calls at and don't stay nowhere long', and his unpredictable theft of the leg, forces Joy-Hulga to submit to yet another indiscriminate infliction of physical limitation. In addition to the hunting accident, her heart defect has thwarted Joy-Hulga's desire to leave the farm, and she 'had made it plain' that if it had not been for her heart condition, 'she would be far from these red hills and good country people' (276). Although this resentment of others demonstrates that Joy-Hulga's perspective of the world has been to some extent poisoned by her unwanted experience of affliction, and that her soul has been invaded by ugliness, at this point she only partially qualifies for the third of Weil's constituent features of affliction. Her egocentrism and self-idolisation, the worship and fascination Joy-Hulga incites in Pointer and Freeman, are markedly different to the self-loathing and the repelling of the non-afflicted that Weil identifies. However, even at this point of greatest difference between O'Connor's carnivalesque grotesquerie - the celebration of the physical, and depiction of ludicrous monstrosity which contrasts with Weil's notion of the terrible alienating agony of affliction - there is some evidence of consensus between the writers provided by the characters depicted in the story. Despite their attraction to Joy-Hulga, Freeman's voyeurism and Pointer's fetishism exploit her affliction, and in doing so approach the type of cruelty of the non-afflicted towards the afflicted which Weil specifies.

There is also some scope for considering that Pointer's annihilation of the props which support Joy-Hulga's fictional self lead to the shock of horror which is the initiator of the afflicted's self-revulsion in Weil's schema. His removal of the earlier solaces for her subjection to necessity, force her to feel the full horror of her

exposure to gravity and qualify Joy-Hulga for Weil's definitive characteristic of affliction, that it must be borne entirely without consolation. Despite her previously absurd pride in her deformity, the 'cry of alarm' and 'pleading sound' which accompany Joy-Hulga's realisation of her predicament, and her 'churning face' when she is left motionless in the barn without her leg (289, 290, 291), offer some indication that she has now been transformed in her own eyes into the paralysed and detestable victim of affliction that Weil envisions. Pointer's final gaze at his victim 'with a look that no longer had any admiration in it', negates the previous glances with which he had regarded her as 'the fantastic animal at the zoo' (291, 286); and his concluding verbal assault demonstrates the law of sensibility by which, like animals who attack a maimed member of the species, the revulsion of the non-afflicted is directed towards the victim of affliction. At the end of the story he totally destroys each facet of Joy-Hulga's fictional being, and she suffers the crippling loss of prestige that Weil considers pivotal. By stealing her artificial leg Pointer exposes both Joy-Hulga's physical fragility and the vulnerability caused by her soul's reliance on precarious objects. When he informs her he has obtained 'a lot of interesting things', in the same manner, uses her new name 'as if he didn't think much of it', and reveals she 'ain't so smart' because he has 'been believing in nothing ever since [he] was born!' (291), Pointer annihilates Joy-Hulga's social personality and the assurance of mystical uniqueness on which it was based.⁷²

Pointer provides the form of danger, the element of risk, which both Weil and O'Connor consider essential to attack spiritual paralysis, reveal what a human being is essentially, and in a vital drama of the soul, provoke a deliberate reaction that stimulates the soul's development. Joy-Hulga's consent to the removal of the prosthesis likened to a 'soul', constitutes just such an elicited response. Her reaction to Pointer's request 'was like surrendering to him completely. It was like losing her own life and finding it again, miraculously, in his' (289). His refusal to reattach the artificial leg, his disclosure of the contents of his counterfeit bible, and disassembly of every facet of her illusory person, the egocentric 'I', leaves Joy-Hulga's assurance of secular salvation shattered, and forces her to experience non-being. As Asals notes, O'Connor's stories end 'either in literal death or in that violent purging of the ego that is the death of the self' (*Imagination*, 205), and it is this elimination of her fictional self that provides the opportunity for Joy-Hulga's spiritual development. When she sees her artificial leg 'slanted forlornly' across the inside of Pointer's suitcase between the genuine and fake Bibles (CS 290), her afflicted body has the potential for leverage towards salvation through the total humiliation of perceiving her 'soul' as a dead thing, a piece of matter. Joy-Hulga is now physically rather than just emotionally 'moved' by Pointer, who literally pulls her artificial leg/fictional

'soul' after him through violence not charity, immoral, rather than moral action. It is in this sense that Pointer, who Joy-Hulga apparently sees 'struggling successfully over the green speckled lake' (291), may as pseudo-Christ become her scandalous saviour, the *logos alogos* who is the agent of her grace and redemption.

'Matter, which was man's undoing, also procures salvation', according to Weil (FLN 230). But while the text plainly supports the interpretation that the undoing of Joy-Hulga's artificial leg leads to the enforced loss of her fictional life, has she really saved her spiritual life? Is it possible to read her position at the end of the narrative as more than a revelation of the limitations of her body and fictional self, and consider that she is in some way levered towards grace and salvation? Does O'Connor manage to revivify the central Christian paradox that man must lose his life in order to save it in this text?

Ralph C. Wood insists that at the end of the story Joy-Hulga 'is free, if only potentially, to hear the call of the Cross, to enter upon the true life of self-losing and self-finding', she 'has suffered a blessed loss, a saving devastation'.⁷³ But although O'Connor rightly maintains Pointer's theft of the leg 'has taken away part of the girl's personality and has revealed her deeper affliction to her for the first time' (MM 99); to accept that Joy-Hulga's final (mis)sighting of him as a Christ-like figure indicates that she has in some way attained salvation, is dependent on ratifying last-minute and insufficient evidence. As William Burke maintains, this story 'really presents no Christian or theistic alternative; there is no situation in which theistic values are set against the nihilism'.⁷⁴ Joy-Hulga's final words in the text do not support the interpretation that she is saved. 'Give me my leg!' (CS 290), does not demonstrate an altered viewpoint which suggests she is capable of making contact with mystery and accepting an epiphanic moment of grace. Equally, although her 'churning face' registers the trauma generated by her humiliating predicament, the fact that she 'saw' Pointer struggling 'successfully' over the field/lake is at best an ambiguous endorsement of a changed perspective, given the earlier theft of her spectacles (291, 287). While O'Connor insists that all good stories are about conversion and grace changes a character, no further evidence of altered behaviour is permitted Joy-Hulga, and she is allowed no verbal response to Pointer's concluding diatribe. Consequently, O'Connor's tendency not to adequately differentiate between the shocking aftermath of violence and the advent of redemption, whether her protagonists are merely devastated by the destruction of their fictional personalities or do achieve salvation, damages her ability to convey sacred mystery through manners.

But 'even if it does not breathe the air of salvation, the story at least gasps after it' (Wood, 'Heidegger', 114), and O'Connor's use of the carnival grotesque genre does go some way towards assisting her to 'bend' the text, and jolt her readers into an acknowledgement of deeper levels of meaning. She admits that when paraphrased the story constitutes 'a low joke' for the 'average reader' (MM 98). But it is precisely through using the degradation of ideal forms, the inverted transubstantiation and ludicrous monstrosities, that as fabliau, 'Good Country People' is most successful in disturbing the reader and suggesting alternative perspectives. O'Connor's comic vision of human grotesquerie contrasts with Weil's uncompromisingly terrible notion of man's ontic and moral affliction. In the comic absurdity of the reciprocal seduction scene, O'Connor debases the ideals of courtly love,⁷⁵ and in Pointer's perverted worship at the shrine of his goddess, she provides a brilliant example of the parody, travesty, and profanity of the sacred typical of the carnival grotesque genre's moral amorality. Via the ludicrous monstrosity of Joy-Hulga, O'Connor celebrates the physical, yet manages to suggest the physiological and psychological aberrations of her comic monsters are at least partially connected to their maimed souls. As Bleikasten observes, the 'derangement of minds and deformity of bodies point to a deeper sickness, invisible but more irredeemably tragic, the sickness of the soul. Gracelessness in all its forms indicates the absence of grace in the theological sense of the term' ('Heresy', 141).

O'Connor's narratives do provide conventionally explicable reasons for the grotesquerie of her fictional characters.⁷⁶ But as Bernard McElroy rightly argues, she 'always offers the reader an escape hatch while trying to persuade him not to use it',⁷⁷ and through the core symbol of the artificial leg, O'Connor does prompt the reader into acknowledging some connection between the physical, psychological, and spiritual deficiencies of her characters, a linkage between the sacred and profane. Discussing the narrative, O'Connor maintains 'we're presented with the fact that the Ph.D is spiritually as well as physically crippled' and 'we perceive that there is a wooden part of her soul that corresponds to her wooden leg', and by 'letting the wooden leg accumulate meaning' this story 'does manage to operate at another level of experience' (MM 99). I would agree with O'Connor's comments here. In the narrator's stress on the prosthesis' relationship to Joy-Hulga's soul and the worship it inspires, the artificial leg does function as an anagogical symbol, by being successfully invested with mystical connotations. This connection between body and soul is vitally reinforced by the narrator's significant allusion to the Christian paradox that man must lose his life in order to save it, when describing Joy-Hulga's surrender of her leg to Pointer. This secular rendition of the biblical scripture recalls the reader to the earlier reference quoted by Pointer (CS 289, 280),

and the juxtaposition and connection of the two versions offensively revivifies the original meaning, retrieving it from platitude.

Although Pointer may not be convincing as the 'missionary' who saves Joy-Hulga's soul, his comic yet terrible assault on her fictionality does 'do most' (280), for O'Connor's attempt to write the Christian ideals of loss of self and redemptive suffering on the souls of her readers through the carnival grotesque. In the complex mutual deception of the sham courtship and its outcome, the freakish figure of Joy-Hulga becomes a moral advertisement, a warning of moral gracelessness. And while she seems more fallen than redeemed, her shocking debasement levers the narrative from low joke to moral fable. Yet precisely because 'Good Country People' is a grotesque fiction and not a theological treatise, the narrative is not 'that simple' and 'never could' be (291), and offers multiple truths, not merely the Christian reading that O'Connor as writer-prophet intends.⁷⁸ The narrative structure, and specifically the characterisation of Joy-Hulga, brings to grotesque life the Weilean concept of affliction, and the philosophical framework of Weil's criteria for affliction assists in exposing Joy-Hulga as the type of maimed soul it is O'Connor's primary effort to explore in her fictions, and how through such characters, O'Connor attempts to offensively revivify the Christian paradox that man must lose his profane life in order to save his spiritual life.

Bleikasten claims that O'Connor's work 'is not content with illustrating Christian paradoxes. It stretches them to the breaking point leaving us with Christian truths gone mad, the still incandescent fragments of a shattered system of belief' ('Heresy', 157). But I would argue that, in the same way that Weil's horrifying concepts have most impact on the reader through their excessiveness, it is precisely because O'Connor stretches Christian paradoxes to their limits through grotesque distortion, that they are offensively revivified, and written on the souls of her readers. By entitling her short story 'The Life You Save May Be Your Own', O'Connor deliberately foregrounds the Christian paradox, and challenges the reader to interrogate the meaning of the story by comparing the disparity between the biblical scripture and the fictional narrative. In 'Good Country People' the Christian paradox is offensively revivified by the loss of Joy-Hulga's fictional life. But in this text, I will argue that the paradox is offensively reanimated quite differently, by Shiftlet's retention of his fictional life. My reading will focus on first, how Weil's crucial concept of being fictional and its relation to social and spiritual deracination illuminates the character of Mr Shiftlet, and his response to the question what is a man? Second, I will interrogate how O'Connor revivifies the Christian paradox through inversion.

'The Life You Save May Be Your Own' provides further evidence of how the central preoccupations of Weil and O'Connor coincide. The problem of ontological fictionality and its causation by spiritual deracination is central to the story, and is embodied by Mr Tom T. Shiftlet, who brings to life the Weilean notion of secular man's offensiveness, the egocentrism and immorality by which man strives to escape the reality of his affliction and limitation by placing himself at the centre of the universe. The issue of being fictional and its links to the ego is explicitly foregrounded early in the story by the narrator, who draws attention to Shiftlet's self-centred 'pose', when he forms his mutilated body into 'a crooked cross' against the sunset, and holds the position 'for almost fifty seconds' (CS 146). The subject of ontological fictionality and its consequences is explicitly raised by Shiftlet himself. He informs Mrs Crater they live in a world where 'people'll do anything', and 'people don't care how they lie', and he highlights his own potential fictionality by asking her how she can 'know' he 'ain't lying' about his identity and using a false name and place of birth (147, 148). This deliberate ambiguity about himself, combined with the narrator's reportage of how Shiftlet evades answering questions about his identity and his motives through elaborate gestures, silences, and the stories he tells to Crater, establish Shiftlet as counterfeit. He forms his theatrical cross posture rather than respond to Crater's initial greeting, and he does not reply when the old woman questions where he comes from, but protractedly holds a burning match 'as if he were studying the mystery of flame' (147). When she asks 'What you doing around here Mr Shiftlet?', he again ignores her (147). Relating how an Atlanta heart surgeon has cut out a human heart, Shiftlet leans forward and holds 'his hand out, arm up, as if it were weighted with the human heart', allowing 'a long significant pause', before he continues (147).

Shiftlet's fictionality is linked to his social and spiritual deracination. As Mrs Crater claims, 'there ain't any place in the world for a poor disabled friendless drifting man', and as an itinerant 'tramp' with 'only half an arm' who has apparently 'visited every foreign land', he personifies the type of deracination that Weil identifies (145, 148). Rootedness is the most important need of the soul in her schema, because man's moral, intellectual, and spiritual life is developed through his environment. The primary cause of deracination is the separation of the physical and sacred in human experience. Contemporary man is estranged from the natural world and its links to the supernatural, and in a culture in which religion and science are separated, man desires material rather than spiritual gain.⁷⁹ Shiftlet's moral, intellectual, and spiritual development appears to have been stunted by his experience of a desecralised world in which man is alienated from nature and its connection to sacred mystery. Man has to 'escape to the country to see the world

whole' and see the sunset 'as God made it to do', because due to mass production and consumerism, humanity has lost the capacity to perceive mystery through manners. Men have become anonymous and mechanised because no-one takes 'a personal interest' in their environment, each other, their work, and consequently 'it's a man for a bolt' (150).

Shiftlet's pseudo-philosophical observations on the nature of human existence are themselves manufactured, and are undoubtedly part of the trickster's spiel through which he aims to, and does, fulfil his own desire for material gain by acquiring Mrs Crater's money and stealing the car. But these statements do appear linked to Shiftlet's genuine perplexity at man's spiritual deracination, his instinctive awareness that man is 'made for' more than the profane world of ontic and moral evils that he has himself experienced (148). Shiftlet is acutely aware that in a spiritually rootless world 'a man is made for money', yet he consistently stresses the gap between man's secular valuation and what he considers his indefinable inner mystery (148). Like Weil, he acknowledges a distinction between the human person and man's essential self. After his marriage to Lucynell, Shiftlet looked 'morose and bitter as if he had been insulted', because he resents the assumption that who he is essentially can be ascertained by purely profane indicators (153). He insists that there is a difference between the 'paper work and blood tests' by which the 'Ordinary's office' defines him, and the mystery of who he is, the inner self which escapes such easy definition (153). It is the Ordinary, profane law 'that don't satisfy' Shiftlet 'at all', because he considers that there is more to a man than his physical body (153). 'What do they know about my blood? If they was to take my heart and cut it out [...] they wouldn't know a thing about me' he maintains (153). Shiftlet's 'look of composed dissatisfaction as if he understood life thoroughly' (146), stems from his awareness of a frame of reference beyond the physical: man is greater and more mysterious than his blood, than his heart, yet Shiftlet's inability to perceive the connection between the physical and spiritual, man's body and his spirit, leaves him bitter.

Shiftlet's answer to his question 'what is a man?' (148), is dependent on the Manichean vision of humanity with which he rejects the Pauline notion of the body as a temple of the spirit. 'Lady, a man is divided into two parts, body and spirit', he insists, the body 'is like a house: it don't go anywhere; but the spirit, lady, is like a automobile; always on the move' (152). Weil's concept of spiritual rootlessness and its connection to fictionality and immorality is useful here in analysing Shiftlet and his notion of what a man is. Her contention that secular man, deracinated from the sacred, takes refuge from affliction and avoids the brutal reality of his limited and

precarious condition through lies and sin, offers insights into both Shiftlet's claim for a moral capacity, and his distinctly immoral actions.

Resentful of his bodily affliction and low social status, Shiftlet maintains that despite being a 'one-arm jackleg' who 'ain't a whole' man, he possesses 'a moral intelligence!' (149). But although he is apparently aware that man has the potential for moral action, as Kessler argues, 'one is capable of possessing a "moral intelligence" without a morality' (Kessler, 145). The typically counterfeit gesture in which he taps 'his knuckles on the floor to emphasise the immensity of what he was going to say', the narrator's description of Shiftlet's apparent astonishment 'at this impossible truth', and his subsequent actions: bartering for a wedding settlement, deserting the afflicted Lucynell, and stealing the car, deny Shiftlet's claim for a moral faculty.

A 'man's spirit means more to him than anything else' he contends (CS 153), but Shiftlet's spiritual deracination ensures that it is the car which means most to him because as John F. Desmond argues, 'Shiftlet converts the car into an idolatrous object, a false icon that mirrors his own dualistic sensibility' (*Risen Sons*, 48). It is not merely a car but 'the image of his riven self', which Shiftlet sees 'as an emblem of his disincarnated spirit' (48). 'I got to follow where my spirit says to go' Shiftlet insists, and rather than his body acting as a lever for his soul, it is his (car)nal spirit which pulls his body after it when he steals the automobile and abandons Lucynell. Shiftlet shows no evidence that he contains the spirit of God within him, the element of supernatural love inside his soul, which in Weil's schema would enable him to have a moral intelligence and accomplish moral obligations at the expense of his egocentric fictional self. Instead of the redemptive attention towards the afflicted Lucynell that would through self-loss save his soul, and constitute a new entrance of Christ on earth, this pseudo-Christ's behaviour towards the deaf and dumb moron is motivated by his 'personal interest' in the car, through which he saves his own fictional rather than spiritual self.

In his discourse on the body/spirit dichotomy and assertion of his moral intelligence Shiftlet has 'mastered the rhetoric of morality' (Kessler, 142), but he is as fictional and egocentric at the end of the narrative as he was at the beginning. His lie to the boy behind the counter of The Hot Spot claiming Lucynell is a hitchhiker, his fake sentimental eulogy about his mother and how he abandoned her, accompanied as it is by 'a mist of tears' which 'instantly' appears, indicates his continuing dishonesty and insincerity, which are most apparent in Shiftlet's final action of the story (CS 155, 156). That he ostentatiously 'raised his arm and let it fall again to his breast'

before he 'prayed': 'Oh Lord! [...] Break forth and wash the slime from this earth!', suggests that Shiftlet's 'depression' after stealing the car was only temporary, and despite being 'so shocked' by the hitchhiker's insult, he saves his fictional rather than spiritual life when he races towards his appropriately rootless 'Mobile' destination (154, 156).

Shiftlet provides a definitive example of how none of O'Connor's characters escape gravity but most escape grace. He represents Weil's impoverished view of man more cogently than O'Connor's more optimistic concept of humanity. Shiftlet shows minimal evidence of a capacity for conversion, the acceptance of changing grace that O'Connor considers essential to both her theology and fictions. As a Weilean-type disobedient soul he appears condemned to evil and forbidden good, wholly obedient to gravity rather than supernatural necessity. To consider, as Hegarty does, that Shiftlet is 'a man unwittingly in the process of being saved'; or that his 'prayer', as Quinn claims, may 'be an act of genuine repentance', and that grace 'is treated here with an ambiguity proper to its mystery',⁸⁰ requires the distinctively uncritical conviction of the insider reader. Such assurances are neither supported by textual evidence nor O'Connor's own comment on Shiftlet's character. If he is in the process of being saved and accepts a moment of grace he must show, in O'Connor's own criteria, some evidence of altered behaviour, of losing his fictional self. But 'O'Connor abandons him before he can begin the process of becoming more than his appearances' (Kessler, 144). There is too much invested in a single phrase to consider that Shiftlet's subsequent 'prayer' signifies his acquirement of a moral intelligence or a capacity to accept grace. If he had attained a moral faculty this entreaty would constitute an awareness that he is the slime that should be washed away. But Shiftlet flees contact with the numinous, indicated by the 'guffawing' peal of thunder and 'fantastic' raindrops, when 'Very quickly he stepped on the gas' and 'raced' the shower into Mobile (CS 156). With the raised arm gesture that accompanies his 'prayer' and with 'his stump sticking out the window' of the automobile, Shiftlet appears as fictional, egotistical and spiritually incomplete as when he formed a crooked cross against the setting sun at the beginning of the narrative.

Crucially, unlike Joy-Hulga, Shiftlet is not forced to lose the object which symbolises his fictionality and false worship. Joy-Hulga's enforced loss of her artificial leg/soul and with it her fictional self, makes her potential salvation if not probable, possible. But in 'The Life You Save May Be Your Own' there is no convincing evidence that Shiftlet has either lost his fictional life or saved his spiritual life. He keeps the false icon he has stolen and with it his fictionality.

O'Connor, as Shiftlet's fictional creator, makes no claim for his salvation in her comment on his character. Discussing Shiftlet's similarity with the copper-flue salesman in *The Violent Bear It Away*, she insists Meeks is 'like Mr Shiftlet of the Devil because nothing in him resists the Devil' (HB 367). But if Shiftlet is damned rather than redeemed, if he retains his fictional life and does not save his spiritual life, is it possible for O'Connor to successfully revivify this crucial Christian paradox and write it on the souls of her readers? I would argue that in this story the paradox is revivified, arguably more effectively than in 'Good Country People', precisely because Shiftlet is not saved. The story jolts the reader in the direction of the sacred by inversion, and is successful in Fielder's sense, that it uncompromisingly reminds the reader of the reversal of eternal values in an 'almost rotten' desacralised world, and in this way the paradox is retrieved from platitude and revivified in all its pristine offensiveness.

This works primarily in two ways that are themselves connected. First, the cross and car symbolism which marks out Shiftlet's status as a pseudo-Christ figure draws attention to the inversion of the Christian truths of self-loss and redemptive suffering on which the paradox is based. Second, the road sign combines with this imagery to reinforce the relevance of the story's title, and this successfully recalls the original meaning of the biblical text, which is retrieved from platitude. When Shiftlet forms his incomplete body into a crooked cross, this gesture, established as blatantly fictional, both recalls the reader to the paragon of Christ's cross, and draws attention to Shiftlet's deviation from it. As Robert Drake contends, 'always in Miss O'Connor's fiction, behind the grotesque, as she herself intimated, lies the ultimate concept of straightness or "oughtness", without which the grotesque is meaningless'.⁸¹ What is behind Shiftlet, what is 'indicated' by his cruciform gesture is more than 'an expanse of sky' (CS 146), it is the disparity between Christ as perfect, 'whole' man, with his cross as icon of self-renunciation and sacrificial love, and Shiftlet's negation of these ideals. His fictional cross, a cross devoid of its sacred meaning, introduces Shiftlet to the reader as a form without content, a fake Christ, and Shiftlet's physical incompleteness, his unwholesome immoral intelligence, egocentrism and (car)nal spirit are stressed as the story progresses. The notion of Shiftlet as a pseudo-saviour is developed by the narrator, when after Shiftlet has started the car he is described as having 'an expression of serious modesty on his face as if he had just raised the dead' (151). This juxtaposition of sacred and profane symbols, and parodying of orthodox Christian doctrine and its discourse, highlights Shiftlet's diversion from the Christian truths of self-loss and redemptive suffering. O'Connor's audience is steered towards seeing first, the car as a vehicle for Shiftlet's salvation of his fictional self, and second, the 'sign' that

'warned: "Drive carefully. The life you save may be your own"' (CS 155), as an anagogical symbol whose caution is directed towards both fictional character and reader. Although the road sign symbol is not as well developed in the text as the artificial leg is in 'Good Country People', together with the crooked cross and pseudo-Christ imagery it does remind the reader that the Christian paradox is the focus of the story. The grotesque inversion of the biblical scripture jolts the reader into recalling the offensive Christian truth which it signifies.

Weil insists that fictions actively participate in, and contribute to, man's redemption when readers re-cognise spiritual truths, and her criteria for texts of genius, the philosophical framework through which she analyses the spiritual value of fictions, provides an original, and more objective test through which to judge O'Connor's aims and success as Christian writer-prophet, than O'Connor's own comments in her non-fictional writings. Interpreting 'The Life You Save May Be Your Own' and 'Good Country People' using Weil's formula reveals that O'Connor depicts the reality of a world dominated by gravity and affliction, a major requirement of Weil's first criteria for texts of genius. But there is little evidence that the force of gravity is obedient to the good in these narratives. Consequently the stories do not display the adequate balance between gravity and grace, the fallen and the redeemed, that Weil considers so essential. The second specification that she advocates for texts of genius: the necessity for a superposed structure that represents ontic and moral evils and how they are linked, and through which all men are both victims and agents of gravity, is evident in both texts. O'Connor adds an extra dimension to Weil's superposed framework through her comic vision, which balances Weil's overemphasis on brutal force, the monstrous horrors of necessity and affliction. The ludicrous monstrosities of Joy-Hulga and Shiftlet provide a deeper, more profound architecture of the abyss, a greater density of the real, through their comic yet terrible exploits.

'Good Country People' and 'The Life You Save May Be Your Own' are not, finally, fictions of redemptive genius in the Weilean sense. But despite, and even because O'Connor's comic monsters escape grace (if not gravity), these texts are successful as Christian prophecy, due to their offensive revivification of the core Christian paradox on which they are based. Yet as complex fictions they are 'made for' more than religious propaganda, and my readings of the stories would be as 'strained' as Shiftlet's voice (156), if I were to argue that the narratives constitute merely '*a theology in graphic representation*'.⁸² But it is what makes these and O'Connor's other stories so graphic, the offensive distortion and exaggeration of the grotesque, which undoubtedly accounts for their ability to write on the soul. In Chapter Three I

will interrogate how both Weil and O'Connor's most graphically offensive concepts, their theories of violent grace, are essential to their efforts to be prophetic; and I will investigate how each writer considers that an encounter between the incommensurates of God and man is possible.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. Luke 9: 23-25, *The Jerusalem Bible*, p.132.

2. 'Monstrous: 1. Deviating greatly from the natural or normal; unnatural in form or structure. 2. Of extraordinary size or number; excessive; huge: a *monstrous* beast or multitude. 3. Inspiring abhorrence, hate, incredulity, etc., in a remarkable degree; hateful; hideous; incredible; intolerable: a *monstrous* cruelty.' In *The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language: Deluxe Encyclopedic Edition*, ed. by S. Stephenson Smith and others (Naples, Florida: Trident Press International, 1996), p.824. See also: 'monstrous: out of the common course of nature: enormous: wonderful: horrible: outrageous: preposterous.' In *Chambers English Dictionary*, ed. by Catherine Schwarz and others (Edinburgh: W & R Chambers; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.927.

3. FLN, pp.243-44. Weil's monstrous masochism is an essential component of her theology and well documented throughout her writings. For example 'every time I think of the crucifixion of Christ I commit the sin of envy', WFG, p.83. See also:

even if I believed in the possibility of God's consenting to repair the mutilations of my nature, I could not bring myself to ask it of him. Even if I were sure of his consenting, I could not. Such a request would seem to me an offense against the infinitely tender Love which has made me the gift of affliction. (Ibid., p.100)

4. 'Introduction' to WFG, pp.3-39 (pp.29-30).

5. SWR, p.465. See also: 'The errors of our time come from Christianity without the supernatural. Secularization is the cause-and primarily humanism' GG, p.104.

6. Quoted in Kathleen Feeley, S.S.N.D., *Flannery O'Connor: Voice of the Peacock* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1972), p.45.

7. As Weil herself notes: '*Malheur*, admirable word, without its equivalent in other languages. We haven't got all we could out of it' NB, p.3. Its closest translatable equivalent in English is: 'affliction: 1. The state of being afflicted; sore distress of body or mind. 2. That which causes great suffering or distress; misfortune; calamity.' *Websters*, p. 25. 'Affliction: state or cause of grievous distress', *Chambers*, p.22.

8. NB, p.127. The fictionalisation of God is linked in Weil's philosophy to the problem of how to talk about God via a human vocabulary. On this subject see Rowan Williams, 'The Necessary Non-Existence of God', in Bell, pp.52-76, and D. Z. Phillips, 'God and Concept-Formation in Simone Weil', in *ibid.*, pp.77-92.
9. FLN, p.103. This abandonment excludes the eternal and supernatural part of the soul. See my later discussion of Weil's hierarchical concept of the soul for an explanation of how this distinction operates.
10. 'The Absent God', *Journal of Religion*, 35.1 (1955), 6-16, (p.6). Paul Ricoeur's contention that if 'atheism is to have some *religious* meaning, however, then the death of the God of Providence should point toward a new kind of faith, a tragic faith' is applicable to Weil's theology. See his article 'Religion, Atheism, and Faith' in *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. by Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), pp.440-67.
11. Encompassing the relationship between nature and grace, divine sovereignty and human liberty, Providence is a central Christian concept. See John H. Wright, S.J., 'Providence', in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. by Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins and Dermot A. Lane (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), pp.815-18. See also: M. J. Lamgford, 'Providence', in *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. by Alan Richardson and John Bowden (London: SCM, 1983), pp.478-79, and Richard P. McBrien, 'Divine Providence', in *Catholicism*, 3rd edn (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), pp.333-38.
12. 'The ridiculous conception of Providence as being a personal and particular intervention on the part of God for certain particular ends is incompatible with true faith' she insists NR, p.269. 'Divine Providence is not a disturbing influence, an anomaly in the ordering of the world; it is itself the order of the world; or rather it is the regulating principle of this universe', *ibid.*, p.272. This governing principle is dependent on neutrality and indifference, and does not prove 'that God's Providence is absent; it is by his Providence that God willed necessity as a blind mechanism' SWR, p.445.
13. 'One must tenderly love the harshness of that necessity which is like a coin with two faces, the one turned towards us being domination, and the one turned towards God, obedience' *ibid.*, p.455. The beauty of the world inheres in the fact horrifying necessity is 'obedience to a perfectly wise Love', *ibid.*, p.456.
14. WFG, p.89. Weil's narcissistic God 'can only love himself. His love for us is love for himself through us' GG, p.28. But man can love God when he recognizes God's love in the horrors of necessity. 'Relentless necessity, wretchedness, distress, the crushing burden of poverty and of labour which wears us out, cruelty, torture,

violent death, constraint, disease—all these constitute divine love. It is God who in love withdraws from us so that we can love him', Weil contends, *ibid.*

15. NB, p.564, FLN, p.120. Weil's cyclical concept of the interconnectedness of Christ's crucifixion and the Creation derives from two sources: first, St. John's reference in Apocalypse 8:8 to the 'Lamb slain from the foundation of the world', and second, Plato's notion of a Soul of the World. It is the Platonic concept from which Weil's own theory most clearly originates, and which is important to her theories of the providential nature of necessity. See her essay 'Divine Love in Creation', IC, pp.89-105.

16. To place Weil's notion of man's redemptive misery and her concept of affliction in some relevant philosophical and theological contexts see: John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1977, 1985), on pain and suffering, pp.292-336; Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams, eds., *The Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), and Daniel Howard-Snyder, ed., *The Evidential Argument From Evil* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996). For the relation of physical pain to religious belief, the destruction of language, and political power see Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985). See Ian Bradley, *The Power of Sacrifice* (London: Dartman, Longman & Todd, 1995), and Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994) for Judaeo-Christian approaches to suffering, sin and redemption. For mystic responses to suffering see Saint John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*, trans. by E. Allison Peers, 3rd edn (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1953, 1976); and Søren Kierkegaard, *Gospel of Sufferings*, trans. by A. S. Aldworth and W. S. Ferrie, paperback edn (Cambridge: James Clark, 1955, 1982). See Maurice Friedman, ed., *The Worlds of Existentialism: A Critical Reader*, paperback edn (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1964, 1991) for atheist, humanist, and religious existentialist approaches to man's misery.

17. SWR, p.452. Despite her insistence affliction must be endured entirely without consolation, its very excessiveness and ability to affect the soul are themselves a form of mitigation. As Nevin observes 'Although she writes against all consolation or compensation in suffering, it seems that the absolutes she seeks and would have us seek amount themselves to a consolation, however recondit'. Nevin, pp.145-46.

18. The Weilean notion that accepting human limitation is paradoxically the means of transcending it and attaining a sense of the sacred includes surmounting the ego. Diogenes Allen describes this process:

To accept to any degree our status as a piece of matter is, paradoxically, to transcend to that extent being merely a piece of matter [...] Our spirituality is found and is affirmed precisely in and

with the fact that we are material-subject to the grinding wear and tear of matter. In facing the material facts of illness, accident, decay, and death we can rise above our egotism and discover that we are spiritual beings.

See his article 'Natural Evil and the Love of God', in *The Problem of Evil*, pp. 189-208 (first publ. in *Religious Studies*, 16 (1980), 439-56), p.194.

19. Weil's views on the suffering of the innocent take two forms. First, she maintains the majority of human beings are not innocent, and so their affliction is deserved. Before 'being reduced to impotence by affliction one has been an accomplice, through cowardice, inertia, indifference, or culpable ignorance, in crimes which have plunged other human beings into an affliction at least as great', she claims, SWR, p.453. Second, while the suffering of the truly innocent, i.e. children, is unacceptable to the rational mind, it is possible to consent to via supernatural love. Agreeing with Dostoyevski's Ivan Karamazov Weil insists there is no 'reason whatever which anyone could produce to compensate for a child's tear. Absolutely none which would make me consent to that tear' GG, p.68. Yet in contrast to Dostoyevski, Weil considers such unacceptable affliction does not negate God's existence, instead God's existence provides the only vindication. Because "God willed it" is the sole reason Weil can accept the unacceptable, and 'would consent to a world which was nothing but evil as readily as to a child's tear' *ibid*.

20. Pascal insists on the hiddenness of God, and that knowledge of God is little use unless it is combined with both an awareness of human affliction and the potential for redemption in Christ. 'It is equally as dangerous for someone to know God without knowing their misery as it is for someone to know their misery without knowing the Redeemer who can heal them', the first 'leads to the pride of the philosophers, who have known God but not their misery, the other to the despair of the atheists, who know their misery without a redeemer'. *Pensées* 449, in *Pensées* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1962), pp.196-97. Quoted in *The Christian Theology Reader*, ed. by Alister E. McGrath (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1995), p.19.

21. SWR, p.443. Weil claimed to have experienced this phenomenon. Writing to Perrin she insists, 'all those human beings for whom I have made it easy to hurt me through my friendship have amused themselves by doing so [...] They did not behave like this from malice, but as a result of the well-known phenomenon that makes hens rush upon one of their number if it is wounded, attacking and pecking it' WFG, p.92. Weil's pessimistic view of human nature is apparent here. She overstates affliction's negative, isolating impact on man rather than its ability to create communal compassion and moral action in the non-afflicted. As John Hick claims, it is the knowledge that affliction is apparently so unmerited and pointless, yet common to all mankind 'that creates sympathy between man and man and evokes the unselfish kindness and goodwill which are among the highest values of

personal life. No undeserved need would mean no uncalculating outpouring to meet that need.' Hick, pp.334-35.

22. Written in late winter and early spring 1942-43 Weil's essay was first published in *La Table Ronde* (décembre 1950), pp. 9-33. Translations of the title vary, but the title intended by Weil appears in *Londres et dernières lettres* as 'La Personne et le sacré. Collectivité-Personne-Impersonnel-Droit-Justice', an indication of the significance of this essay, which covers several major areas of her philosophy. Weil's division between person and sacred self links her to St. Thomas Aquinas' dualism between ontological and moral being. See Nevin, pp.347-49.

23. For explanations of the Christian concept of virtues see the pertinent references in the theological works already referred to, and John A. Hardon, S.J., *The Catholic Catechism* (New York: Image, Doubleday, 1981), pp. 193-205.

24. IC, p.195. Catholicism perceives man as a greater mixture of nature and grace. But see the similarity of Weil's concept to that of St. Paul's notion of sanctifying grace in Corinthians 3: 16-18:

Didn't you realise that you were God's temple and that the Spirit of God was living among you? If anybody should destroy the temple of God, God will destroy him, because the temple of God is sacred; and you are that temple.

O'Connor bases her short story 'A Temple of the Holy Ghost' (1954) on this text, and the hermaphrodite's sermon in the carnival tent. See my discussion of Weil and O'Connor's theories of grace in Chapter Three.

25. In Simone Weil, *Gateway to God*, ed. by D. Raper (Glasgow: Collins, 1974), p.76.

26. NR, p.192. See Weil's discussion of Plato's *Thaetetus* (176a) in her essay 'God in Plato' for a source of her notion of the division between natural and supernatural morality. The Greeks 'knew two sets of ethics, one external, which is human, the other, the real one, which is supernatural, being from God, and interchangeable with the knowledge [...] of the most exalted truth' IC, pp.74-88 (p.78).

27. See 'A War of Religions', in Simone Weil, *Selected Essays, 1934-1943*, trans. by Richard Rees (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp.211-18 (p.214). Further references to this edition (hereafter SE) are given after quotations in the text. See this essay for an interesting discussion of her hierarchy of good and evil.

28. Quoted in Gabriella Fiori, *Simone Weil: An Intellectual Biography*, trans. by Joseph R. Berrigan (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1989), p.249. See also:

We should be indifferent to good and evil but, when we are indifferent, that is to say when we project the light of our attention equally on both, the good gains the day. This phenomenon comes about automatically. There lies the essential grace. And it is the definition, the criterion of good. (GG, p. 107)

29. FLN, p.340. Weil here appears to misunderstand Augustine's concept of evil as the privation of good. Although he considers good can be derived from evil, good does not produce evil, rather evil constitutes the absence of good. God 'can bring good even out of evil. For what is that which we call evil but the absence of good' he contends. See *Enchiridion*, 12, in *The Essential Augustine*, p.65. Despite Weil's antipathy to Augustine it is interesting to note there are significant similarities between both writers on the subject of good and evil. Weil's insistence that individual evils are part of a larger totality in which God made all things good is found in Augustine's *Confessions*, VII, xii (18) - xiii (19), pp.124-25. Also Weil's claim for the terrible beauty of evil, and her notion that no evil harms God is also part of Augustine's schema: 'the restless and wicked [...] even with them everything is beautiful, though they are vile. What injury have they done you?', *Confessions*, V, ii (2), p.72. For a detailed discussion of the relationship between good and evil in Augustine see John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.256-289.

30. Weil rightly identifies the paradoxical concept of a force of weakness as Christian, with the crucified Christ its supreme example. 'It is the Christian idea itself, and the Cross is the illustration of it. But it has to do with a force of quite a different kind from that wielded by the strong; it is a force that is not of this world, that is supernatural', and it is this divine element 'which alone renders the contradiction valid', separating it from secular versions of the concept such as Marxism. OL, pp.194-95.

31. For a detailed analysis of Weil's distortion of Christian doctrine see Frénaud, O.S.B., pp.349-376. For an extensive examination of the relation between Christ's cross and Christian theology, see Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1974, 1991, 1993).

32. See her essay 'Simone Weil', in *A Susan Sontag Reader* (London: Penguin, 1983), pp.91-92.

33. *The Grotesque* (London: Methuen, 1972), p.14. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
34. *American Gargoyles: Flannery O'Connor and the Medieval Grotesque* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), p.100. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
35. See Chris Baldick: 'a "monster" is something or someone to be *shown*. (Cf. Latin, *monstrare*; French, *montrer*; English, demonstrate.)', *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-Century Writing* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p.10.
36. *Ibid.*, p.14. For excellent discussions of artistic, theological and biological interpretations of monstrosity, see David Williams, *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Mediaeval Thought and Literature* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996); and Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self* (London: Penguin, 1981).
37. Baldick, p.18. The notion of unreason as a kind of intellectual and spiritual monstrosity is expressed in Saint Augustine's *Literal Commentary on Genesis*, IV, 3.7. Proportion is required not only by the body but 'the dispositions and powers of the soul, whereby it is properly gathered in from the deformity of unwisdom to the form of wisdom'. Quoted in *The Essential Augustine*, selected by Vernon J. Bourke, 2nd edn (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett, 1974), p.104.
38. *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, trans. by Rosemary Sheed (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1958), p.18. The importance of the connection between deformity and the divine to O'Connor is evident in her marking of this passage (and those which immediately follow it in my text) in her own copy of Eliade's book. Quoted in Kinney, *Library*, p.77
39. *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (New York: Meridian M8, 1955 (1953)), p.126. See *ibid.*, pp.20-21.
40. O'Connor wrote this comment in the margin of her edition of Eliade's *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, p.14. Quoted in *ibid.*, p.77.
41. *MM*, pp.226-27. O'Connor echoes Weil's acceptance of the suffering of the innocent here. Rayber's views on Bishop in *The Violent Bear It Away* present the opposite view. See Chapter Three for how both writers' theories of the connection between suffering and love provide interesting insights into O'Connor's novel.

42. Thomson, p.59. Wolfgang Kayser agrees the grotesque is identified by a 'fusion of spheres, the monstrous nature of ingredients, and the subversion of order and proportion which characterizes them', in *The Grotesque in Art and Literature*, trans. by Ulrich Weisstein (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), p.29.

43. For a helpful analysis of the fantastic, its links to and differences from the grotesque see Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. by Richard Howard (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1973, 1975). See also Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London and New York: Routledge, 1981).

44. *On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p.5.

45. As Thomson notes, these secondary responses are psychologically interesting: 'both involve rationalization and defence-mechanisms, suggesting that the grotesque [...] is hard to take, and that we tend to try to escape the discomfort it causes', Thomson, p.3. This uneasiness stems from the grotesque's powerful presentation of abnormality which is responsible

perhaps more than anything else for the not infrequent condemnation of the grotesque as offensive and uncivilized, as an affront to decency and an outrage to "reality" and "normality" - or expressed in the less obviously moralistic language of aesthetic criticism, as tasteless and gratuitous distortion or forced, meaningless exaggeration. (Ibid., p.26)

46. See Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny', in *Art and Literature*, ed. by Albert Dickson, trans. by Angela Richards, The Penguin Freud Library, 15 vols (London: Penguin, 1990), XIV, pp. 339-76. See also Jackson, pp.63-72 and Todorov, pp. 41-57 on the 'uncanny', and also Mary Russo on the 'uncanny', Freud and Kayser, in her *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp.7-10.

47. According to Bakhtin, medieval and Renaissance culture was 'familiar with the element of terror only as represented by comic monsters, who were defeated by laughter', and such laughter 'is not an individual reaction to some isolated "comic" event. Carnival laughter is the laughter of all the people'. Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, p.39, p.11.

48. Ibid., p.16. This regenerative ambivalence is typical of the medieval fabiaux in which sacred and profane are interconnected. 'Religion takes on a bawdy dimension, but bawdiness takes on a religious dimension', Di Renzo, p.80.

49. Jürgen Beyer, 'The Morality of the Amoral', *The Humor of the Fables: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Thomas D. Cooke and Benjamin L. Honeycutt (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1974), pp.15-42 (p.37). Quoted in Di Renzo, p.80.
50. The uncanny 'is undoubtedly related to what is frightening - to what arouses dread and horror', and 'is that class of frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar'. The recurrence of this repressed knowledge is an important factor in experiencing the uncanny, which is 'in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated if only through the process of repression'. Freud, 'The Uncanny', p.339, p.340, pp.363-64.
51. 'The Grotesque in Recent Southern Fiction', in *Patterns of Commitment in American Literature*, ed. by Marston La France (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), pp.165-79 (p.165).
52. For useful discussions of the history of the freak and its representation see Fiedler's *Freaks* passim, and Mary Russo, Chapter Three: 'Freaks, Freak Orlando, Orlando', pp.75-106. On the female body as grotesque see Margaret R. Miles, *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1989, 1992), pp.145-68.
53. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), p.109. Quoted in Russo, p.79.
54. The subjectivity inherent in the classification of what is 'normal', what 'freakish' ensures these terms are continually redefined and appropriated by different cultural groups. As Russo observes on the reappropriation of the term 'freak' by the 1960's counter-culture: 'Anyone could march in some guise under the freak flag', *ibid.*, p.76.
55. *The Scandal of Fables* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p.61. Quoted in Di Renzo, p.80. The scandalous nature of the fables, as Di Renzo notes derives from their frequent 'use of theological language to talk about the body and its functions', the 'grotesqueness of this language challenges not only the way we perceive the body but the way we perceive theology. [...] Theology is like pornography. God talk is body talk', *ibid.*, p.81. For a useful analysis of the links between the human body and theological discourse see Paula M. Coe, *Religious Imagination and the Body: A Feminist Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

56. William Van O'Connor cites this passage in *Esprit's* commemorative edition on Flannery O'Connor, 8.1 (1964), re-issued with additional material as *Flannery O'Connor: A Memorial*, ed. by J. J. Quinn, S.J. (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 1964, 1995), p.67.

57. As I have already observed O'Connor's underlinings of Mircea Eliade's *Patterns in Comparative Religion* demonstrate her interest in the connection between familiar human deformity and the Otherness of the sacred. In his *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Co, 1987), Eliade analyses the forgetting or repression of religious knowledge and its unconscious resurfacing in secular man. The 'religious sense' has fallen 'into the depths of the unconscious; it has been "forgotten"', he argues, p.213. Non-religious man has lost the capacity to live a consciously religious life but 'in his deepest being, he still retains a memory of it', and 'continues to be haunted by the realities that he has refused and denied', *ibid.*, p.213, p.204. Therefore 'profane man cannot help preserving some vestiges of the behaviour of religious man, though they are emptied of religious meaning', *ibid.*, p.204. O'Connor apparently agrees with this point. While discussing the 'Christ-haunted', and the Death of God controversy, the collision between religious and secular senses, she notes that belief in God has 'gone underneath and come out in distorted forms' in Southern Fiction. See 'Recent Southern Fiction: A Panel Discussion', in *CFO*, pp.61-78 (p.72) (first publ. in *Bulletin of Wesleyan College*, January 1961). Fear of the sacred Other, repression of religious knowledge, and its resurfacing in distorted, grotesque forms in secular man is demonstrated throughout O'Connor's two novels and the short stories. See O'Connor's fictional characters: Haze, Shiftlet, Hulga, Pointer, Francis Tarwater, Rayber et al.

58. See for example the Misfit's dialogue with the grandmother in 'A Good Man Is Hard to Find' (1953), *CS*, pp.131-132.

59. See Hawkes, 'Flannery O'Connor's Devil' in *Reiter*, pp. 25-37 for an analysis of how in his view O'Connor employs 'the devil's voice as vehicle' for her satire or what may be termed her 'vision of our godless actuality', p.26. See also Brainard Cheney's refutation of Hawkes' position in 'Miss O'Connor Creates Unusual Humor Out of Ordinary Sin', *Sewanee Review*, 71 (1963), 644-652.

60. See for example the difference between Martha Stephens' disgusted response to O'Connor's use of the grotesque genre and the contrasting reaction of Anthony Di Renzo. Stephens: 'The point, I think is clear. Human beings are ugly in every way; the human form itself is distinctly unpleasant to behold; human life is a sordid, almost unrelievedly hideous affair'; which leads her to conclude: 'O'Connor's Christian faith was as grim and literalistic, as joyless and loveless a faith, at least as we confront it in her fiction, as we have ever seen in American letters - even, perhaps, in American theology', Stephens, p.10, p.41. However Di Renzo finds both comedy and sanctity in the very ugliness which repels Stephens. 'For all its pain and horror' O'Connor's 'vision of the world remains comic, not tragic', he argues,

Di Renzo, p.161. She can joke about the human body, 'its bulk, its unwieldiness, its being subject to disease and decay, because to her it is holy even when it is ugly', and therefore he maintains human 'incongruity always serves a religious function in O'Connor's satire'. Ibid., p. 92, p.122.

61. 'I feel that if I were not a Catholic I would have no reason to write, no reason to see, no reason ever to feel horrified or even to enjoy anything' she insists, HB, p.114. In a significantly preoccupied and defensive statement about her response to the monstrous reader O'Connor maintains:

Some writers can ignore this presence, but I have never learned how. I know that I must never let him affect my vision, must never let him gain control over my thinking, must never listen to his demands unless they accord with my conscience; yet I feel I must make him see what I have to show, even if my means of making him see have to be extreme. (Quoted in Feeley, p. 45)

62. According to Paulson, 'her work encourages readers to laugh at themselves and thus to sympathize with her "prophet-freaks" by identifying with them', *Short Fiction*, p. x. Yet André Bleikasten maintains nothing 'suggests "spirituality": the word is too smooth, too polished, too blandly civilized to apply to the compulsions and convulsions of these savage souls', and wonders 'whether her Catholicism was not, to some extent, an alibi for misanthropy'. See his essay 'The Heresy of Flannery O'Connor', in *Critical Essays on Flannery O'Connor*, ed. by Melvin J. Friedman and Beverly Lyon Clark (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1985), pp.138-58 (p. 144, p.142) (first publ. in *Les Américanistes*, ed. by Ira D. and Christine Johnson (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1979), pp. 53-70).

63. Isaac Rosenfeld considers Haze Motes 'is nothing more than the poor, sick, ugly, raving lunatic that he happens to be', in his review of *Wise Blood*, 'To Win by Default', *New Republic*, July 7 1952, 19-20 (p.19). But Robert H. Brinkmeyer Jr. believes that 'in O'Connor's fiction, wounding and bodily hurt announce and make known the divine'. See his essay "'Jesus, Stab Me in the Heart!": *Wise Blood*, Wounding, and Sacramental Aesthetics', in Kreyling, pp.71-89 (p.85).

64. NR, p.91. Weil believes this dissonance between mankind's physical and spiritual life is part of a wider problem in which science and religion are distanced from each other, and both of them are starved of truth. 'The modern phenomenon of irreligion among the population can be explained almost entirely by the incompatibility between science and religion' she claims, *ibid.* p. 248.

The spirit of truth is almost absent from religion and from science and from the whole of thought. The appalling evils in the midst of

which we struggle, without even managing to understand quite how tragic they are, are due entirely to that. (Ibid.)

This need to reconcile religion and science preoccupied Weil. See 'Fragments, London 1943' in OL, pp. 156-168 (p.168).

65. However she is concerned with the effects of technological developments and materialism on society, which she considers part of the desacralisation process Weil identifies. See O'Connor's vigorous response to the *Life* editorial 'Who speaks for America today?' in her essay 'The Fiction Writer and His Country'. Replying to the demand for a more positive literature to represent America's 'unparalleled prosperity' and status as 'the strongest nation in the world' she maintains both Christian and non-Christian writers:

will begin to wonder at this point if there could not be some ugly correlation between our unparalleled prosperity and the stridency of these demands for a literature that shows us the joy of life. He may at least be permitted to ask if these screams for joy would be quite so piercing if joy were really more abundant in our prosperous society. (MM, p. 30)

66. NR, p.32. The other needs of the soul she identifies are order, liberty, obedience, responsibility, equality, hierarchism, honour, punishment, freedom of opinion, security, private property, collective property, and truth. See Weil's analysis of these needs in *ibid.*, pp.3-38. Note the typical balancing of contraries, which Weil acknowledges as vital:

Needs are arranged in antithetical pairs and have to combine together to form a balance. Man requires food, but also an interval between his meals; he requires warmth and coolness, rest and exercise. Like wise in the case of the soul's needs. (*ibid.*, p. 12).

67. See my analysis of Weil's concept of God's compulsion on the soul, and how it offers valuable insights into O'Connor's theology and readings of *The Violent Bear It Away* in Chapter Three of this thesis.

68. O'Connor's concept of complex, conflicting free will(s) is distinctively Augustinian. Augustine's thought is based on the dualities of spirit/body, grace/sin, God/man, earthly/spiritual cities. See his *Confessions* Book VIII: 'my two wills, one old, the other new, one carnal, the other spiritual, were in conflict with one another, and their discord robbed my soul of all concentration'; and his conclusion that 'in the process of deliberation a single soul is wavering between different wills'. (10) and (23), in *Confessions*, pp. 140, p.149.

69. O'Connor's belief in the uses of sin as an instigator or preparation for grace and revelation are apparent if not convincingly rendered throughout her fictional narratives. See Manley Pointer's theft of Joy/Hulga Hopewell's leg, Francis Tarwater as murderer of Bishop and victim of homosexual rape, CS, pp. 289-291, VB, pp.214-216, *ibid.*, pp.230-232. In considering immorality can have a paradoxically moral result O'Connor is distinctively Catholic. See Hardon: 'God permits evils in order that he may bring good out of them. Take away all evil and much good would go with it', *Catechism*, p.81. This notion of the utility of evils is linked to the Catholic concept of Providence. St. Thomas Aquinas explains this connection in his *Summa Contra Gentiles* Chapter LXXI:

If evil were taken away from certain parts of the universe, the perfection of the universe would be much diminished, since its beauty results from the ordered unity of good and evil things seeing that evil arises from the failure of the good, and yet certain goods are occasioned from those very evils through the providence of the governor, even as the silent pause gives sweetness to the chant. Therefore, evil should not be excluded from things by the divine providence.

Quoted in Nelson Pike, 'Hume on Evil' in Adams, *The Problem of Evil*, pp.38-52 (p.45) (first publ. in *The Philosophical Review*, 72 (1963), pp.180-197).

70. HB, p.199. Adopting a kind of Weilean hierarchy of evils in a letter to John Hawkes O'Connor distinguishes between different types of devils. 'He's one of those devils who go about piercing pretensions, not the devil who goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. There is a hierarchy of devils surely' (CW 1151).

71. When discussing Joy-Hulga in a letter to 'A' (24 August 1956), O'Connor insists that she shares Allen Tate's assessment of her fictional character as a 'maimed soul': 'I stick neither with you nor with that gent here but with Mr Allen Tate. A maimed soul is a maimed soul'. HB, p. 171.

72. An important way in which Pointer reveals Joy-Hulga is not unique is through his own clichéd nihilism, when he responds to her bitter accusation that he is a Christian hypocrite. As Asals notes:

if the values here are the nihilistic ones the girl has professed, the idiom is the folk cliché so dear to Mrs Hopewell, and the wedding of the two exposes with resonant finality how closely identified mother and daughter in truth are. (*Imagination*, p.53)

Fred R. Thiemann agrees, observing that Joy-Hulga ‘suffers the additional humiliation of being shown how close her language and thought are to her mother’s simplistic views, which she has despised’. See Thiemann, p.53.

73. See ‘Flannery O’Connor, Martin Heidegger, and Modern Nihilism: A Reading of “Good Country People”’, *FOCB*, 21 (1992), 100-18 (p.113, p.114).

74. In ‘Protagonists and Antagonists in the Fiction of Flannery O’Connor’, *Southern Literary Journal*, 20.2 (1988), 99-111 (p.106)

75. See ‘Courtly Love’ in Cuddon, pp.202-04.

76. This is primarily due to the fact that as Melvin J. Friedman argues, ‘O’Connor is always patient enough to explain the source of the moral, physical or spiritual discomfort and has a way of building her story upon it [...] the grotesqueness and oddity of character are not suspended in a vacuum’. See his ‘Introduction’, in Friedman and Lawson, pp.1-31 (p.17). The ambiguity this generates makes O’Connor’s attempt to write specifically Christian truths on the souls of her readers more difficult. For example, ‘Good Country People’ supplies fertile ground for psychological interpretations, and as Inez Martinez notes when discussing her own reading of the story: ‘a psychological perspective can free readers from acceding to particular religious interpretations, such as the idea that God’s grace is carried through symbolic rape’. See her article ‘Flannery O’Connor and the Hidden Struggle of the Self’, *FOCB*, 16 (1987), 52-59 (p.59). For a helpful survey of the major critical responses applicable to O’Connor’s fictions, including interpretations of the characters in ‘Good Country People’ and ‘The Life You Save May Be Your Own’, see Morrow Paulson, pp.151-223.

77. In *Fiction of the Modern Grotesque* (London: Macmillan, 1989), p.139.

78. Bacon argues that O’Connor was herself intent on suggesting more than a Christian reading in this narrative. ‘O’Connor does make a political statement with this story, though in the form of political allegory’, he claims, “‘Good Country People’ translates the debate between O’Connor and the author of the *Life* editorial into the struggle between the characters of Joy-Hulga and her mother’. See Bacon, pp. 46-60 (p. 54, p. 46).

79. See my previous discussion of Weil’s concept of the need for roots and its connection to the disparity she perceives between religion and science. Weil’s comments on contemporary man’s alienation from the natural world and desire for material gain are especially relevant to the character of Shiftlet, and his concept of what a man is, and what a man is made for. According to Weil, in a culture ‘very strongly directed towards and influenced by technical science’, man is ‘entirely

deprived both of contact with this world and, at the same time, of any window opening on to the world beyond' (NR 43). In a society in which 'piece-work obliges each workman to have his attention continually taken up with the subject of his pay' the 'disease of uprootedness is most acute', and one of the 'major poisons at work spreading this disease' is money (42, 43, 42). 'Money destroys human roots wherever it is able to penetrate, by turning desire for gain into the sole motive. It easily manages to outweigh all other motives' (42).

80. See Charles M. Hegarty, S.J., 'A Man Though Not Yet A Whole One: Mr Shiftlet's Genesis', FOCB, 1 (1972), 19-30 (p. 29), and M. Bernetta Quinn, O.S.F., 'Flannery O'Connor, a Realist of Distances', in Friedman and Lawson, pp.157-183 (p. 170).

81. In *Flannery O'Connor: A Critical Essay* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1966), p. 23.

82. Jacques Maritain contends that the two conditions necessary to religious art are first, it must be intelligible: *it is there above all for the instruction of the people, it is a theology in graphic representation*'. Second, the 'work must be finished [...] It is in the highest degree fitting that nothing shall enter the house of God but work which is well done, accomplished, clean, permanent and honest'. In *Art and Scholasticism*, p. 144.

CHAPTER THREE: DARK AND DISRUPTIVE GRACE: SPIRITUAL MECHANICS AND THE VIOLENT SEED

Critical of the inability of her monstrous readers to develop the anagogical vision which would enable them to see profound spiritual levels beyond the surface of her grotesque texts, Flannery O'Connor complains 'what you find is a misunderstanding of what the operation of grace *can* look like in fiction. The reader wants his grace warm and binding, not dark and disruptive' (CW 862). In her second novel, *The Violent Bear It Away*, O'Connor attempts to convey this type of grace, asking her readers to believe that arson, child murder, and homosexual rape prepare Francis Marion Tarwater to recognise and accept a climactic moment when grace is proffered to him, and consent to his prophetic mission. Commenting on the controversial rape scene, she insists in her narratives that the action of grace is prepared for by the intensity of the evil which precedes it. 'It is the violation in the woods that brings home to Tarwater the real nature of his rejection. I couldn't have brought off the final vision without it' (HB 368). Simone Weil shares O'Connor's vision of dark and disruptive grace, and uses parallel imagery to express it. 'Death and rape - two metaphors for describing the action of the Holy Spirit on the soul' she claims (NB 390). 'If our present suffering ever leads to a [moral] revival', Weil writes in her essay 'The Responsibility of Writers'; 'this will not be brought about through slogans but in silence and moral loneliness, through pain, misery, and terror, in the profoundest depths of each man's spirit' (SWR 289).

My discussion of Weil and O'Connor's concepts of the nature of God, reality, and man in Chapter Two demonstrated how each writer considers that the horrors of necessity and the human condition do not preclude the existence of a good and merciful God. Chapter One established how both writers maintain the linkage of the apparent contraries of violence, affliction and grace is vital if narratives are to successfully write spiritual truths on the soul. In this chapter I will bring together and expand on the issues discussed previously by interrogating first, how each writer considers a relationship, specifically an explicit encounter between the incommensurates of God and man is possible, primarily through violent grace. Second, by analysing the language, imagery, symbolism and narrative forms used by Weil and O'Connor to express this concept, especially their use of the biblical parable of the sower, I will investigate how successfully they manage to write these ideas on the souls of their audience. My reading of *The Violent Bear It Away* will

also analyse to what extent Weil's final criteria for texts of genius are achieved: whether O'Connor's violent grace successfully prepares fictional character and her monstrous readers for brief moments of epiphany in which men find their souls. Finally, Tarwater's wrestling with his prophetic vocation within the text will be compared to O'Connor's mission as writer-prophet.

However before beginning my comparative study of how Weil and O'Connor consider an encounter between God and man is possible through the action of grace, it is important to briefly analyse the concept of theological 'grace' and my own terminology regarding it. I use the term 'grace' restricted to its Christian, New Testament sense of God's gratuitous self-communication of himself to man, which enables a relationship between them, by permitting a transformation, or deification of humanity. Grace: 'consists of God giving himself to men, so that they can know him and love him, so entering into a relationship with him which totally exceeds the relationship of creature to Creator, and is therefore totally undeserved'.¹ At the core of Christian theology, grace is an extremely complex concept, and is inter-connected with seven significant notions of how the incommensurates of God and man are reconciled.² To understand both the Christian theory of grace and how Weil and O'Connor's concepts relate to it, it is necessary to provide a concise explication of these seven areas of Christian theology.

First, 'justification': if sinful man is to be reunited with God after the Fall and the original sin which resulted from it, man must be made just. This justification is made possible by second, the 'redemption', in which God's compassion for sinful man ensured humanity was rescued, or literally bought back from the bondage of sin into the grace of God through Christ's Incarnation and crucifixion. Justification makes possible third, 'sanctification': 'the state of holiness by reason of the presence of God within oneself' (*Catholicism*, 250). Sanctification allows humanity to progress towards fourth, its 'salvation': mankind's ultimate reunification with God after death. 'To be saved is to be "made whole" and eternally united with God and one another in God' (1250). Linked to this progression from sin to salvation are the notions of 'conversion', 'revelation', and 'prophecy'. Conversion is the 'fundamental change of heart (*metanoia*) by which a person turns away from a former mode of life and accepts Jesus as the Christ and orients his or her whole life around Christ and the Kingdom of God'.³ Revelation, as 'the disclosure of what was previously unknown, or only uncertainly apprehended' is in theological terms the action by which God makes 'known hidden aspects of the character of God, of humanity in its relationship with God and of what is to occur in the future through

the providence of God'.⁴ This unveiling of God's purpose to man is connected to prophecy, which

is a kind of communication from the world of the supernatural to the world of the human. It presumes that these two worlds are quite distinct and separate from each other and require some kind of intermediary to bring them together.⁵

While these seven concepts form the essential framework within which Christianity conceives the relationship between man and God operates, because Weil and O'Connor's theologies demonstrate both Catholic and Protestant features, it is necessary briefly to point out the most significant distinction between Catholic and Protestant approaches to the nature/grace relationship.⁶

Specifically Catholic doctrines of grace derive predominantly from St. Augustine's response to Pelagianism, the doctrine in which human nature is considered sufficient to acquire salvation itself, without the further gift of God's grace.⁷ Augustine's reply stressed man's depravity due to original sin, and need for gratuitous grace to achieve justification and salvation.⁸ But although Augustine considers both the offer of grace and its operation within the sinner is reliant on God not man, he does believe after man's initial conversion he is permitted to cooperate with God in the soul's progression towards salvation.

Having achieved the conversion of the sinner, God now collaborates with the renewed human will in achieving regeneration and growth in holiness. Having liberated the human will from its bondage to sin, God is now able to cooperate with that liberated will (McGrath, *Introduction*, 379)

Augustine understood 'grace as the real and redeeming presence of God in Christ within us, transforming us; something that was internal and active' (375-376), and St. Thomas Aquinas develops this notion of grace as both God in man and man's cooperation with God, in his theories of 'actual' and 'habitual grace', and the axiom very influential to Catholic doctrines of grace: 'Grace builds on nature'.⁹

The Protestant position on the nature/grace connection differs from its Catholic counterpart in two ways. First, it places more stress on the human corruption caused by sin. According to McBrien, Protestantism 'so emphasized the depravity of the natural human condition apart from the grace of God that the natural order could only be viewed in thoroughly negative terms' (*Catholicism*, 169). Consequently second, Protestantism emphasises that justification is entirely due to God - the passive acceptance of a gift that is external to man's nature, rather than a process in which an internal righteousness allows humanity to cooperate with grace through good works and sacraments.¹⁰

Luther insists that God provides everything necessary for justification, so that all that the sinner needs to do is to receive it. God is active and humans are passive [...] even faith itself is a gift of God, rather than a human action. God himself meets the precondition for justification. (McGrath, *Introduction*, 385)

Unmediated faith, rather than human actions and Church dogma is vital to Protestant ideas of how man's relationship with God - a radical union between believer and Christ - and ultimately humanity's salvation, is achieved.¹¹

The central concern of Weil's mystical philosophy is to enquire how a relationship between the contraries of God and man can be forged, and constitutes part of her immense struggle to understand and actualise the connection she believes exists between the natural and supernatural realms, the necessary and the good, gravity and grace. 'Harmony is the union of opposites. The primary pair of opposites, and the one between which lies the most unfathomable gulf, is that separating the Creator from the creature' she observes (NB 460). It is the enormity of this distance which ensures that contact between God and man is only effectively possible by God's gratuitous grace.

The infinity of space and time separates us from God. How can we seek for him? How can we go towards him? Even if we were to walk for endless centuries we should do no more than go round and round the world. Even in an aeroplane we could do nothing else. We are incapable of progressing vertically. We cannot take one step towards the heavens. God crosses the universe and comes to us. (SWR 450)

Man's soul is subject to moral forces derived from, and equivalent to, those of physical necessity, unless grace intervenes to alter the equation. 'The wretchedness of our condition subjects human nature to a moral form of gravity that is constantly pulling it downwards, towards evil, towards a total submission to force', she argues (OL 166-167). 'All the *natural* movements of the soul are controlled by laws analogous to those of physical gravity. Grace is the only exception' (GG 1). But although humanity is reliant on God's grace to achieve a higher level of being and make contact with the divine, Weil insists human action is also required. Man's primary effort should be to locate, understand, and use the bridges, or *metaxu*, which God has permitted to span the breach between himself and mankind.¹²

Her core concept of the *metaxu* is essential to understanding how she attempts to reconcile the contraries of God and man, but what exactly are these mediators? Above all seeking 'bridges to relate human misery and divine perfection' (IC 75), like her beloved ancient Greeks, Weil considers art, poetry, philosophy, and the sciences (when as we saw in Chapter One they are divinely inspired to levels of genius) constitute structures which lessen the distance between the sacred and profane. But she claims unlike the Greeks, modern man no longer conceives how to use these cultural causeways. 'We have erected skyscrapers on them to which we ceaselessly add storeys. We no longer know that they are bridges, things made so that we may pass along them, and that by passing along them we go towards God' (GG 132-133). However Weil considers the arts and sciences constitute only a small portion of the *metaxu* available to humanity. Demonstrating her profound sacramentalism, she contends 'there is not any department of human life which is purely natural. The supernatural is secretly present throughout', and consequently 'the essence of created things is to be intermediaries' (WFG 175, NB 496). Paradoxically this 'world is the closed door. It is a barrier, and at the same time it is the passageway' (492).

The universe in its entirety is a *metaxu*. In addition to its imposition of necessity and affliction on man - which are themselves crucial *metaxu*, allowing the opportunity to perceive and achieve links between mankind and God's love - the physical world also operates as a bridge by providing a focus for humanity's implicit love of God. This is important because the implicit love of God itself affords the opportunity to prepare for the explicit contact with God that violent grace provides. In her important essay 'Forms of the Implicit Love of God', Weil maintains it is impossible for the soul to love God before any direct contact with the divine has been achieved, and therefore the soul's love is motivated towards the three major

metaxus in this world in which God is secretly present. These are loves of religious ceremonies, other human beings, and the combined order and beauty of the world, and when attained, each 'has the virtue of a sacrament' (138). Destined eventually to become the explicit love of God, irrational love is their common denominator, because grace operates beyond human reason.

These kinds of love are supernatural, and in a sense they are absurd. They are the height of folly. So long as the soul has not had direct contact with the very person of God, they cannot be supported by any knowledge based on experience or reason. They cannot therefore rest on any certainty'. (209)

This phenomenon is demonstrated in religious rites such as the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist. The notion that God is present in a piece of bread is rationally ridiculous. Yet because certain religious practices such as the Eucharist are 'conventions' ratified by God, they function on superposed levels which combine both the natural and supernatural.¹³ As 'special tangible things, existing here below and yet perfectly pure', they are both 'unconditioned and perfect, and at the same time real' (186, 187). Therefore although they remain ultimately incomprehensible and mysterious, it is possible to approach religious mysteries through intensive intellectual attention, which in Weil's schema is synonymous with prayer.¹⁴ 'One might in a sense say by analogy that Christ is present in the consecrated host by hypothesis, in the same way that a geometrician says by hypothesis that there are two equal angles in a certain triangle', Weil concludes (188). Moreover, by concentrating intently on something tangible which is also perfectly pure - the host, the words of the liturgy, or the prayer 'Our Father' - it becomes possible for man 'by a process of transference, to destroy a part of the evil that is in him' (189). The attention devoted to such religious conventions is therefore salvific, imitating in miniature Christ's redemptive crucifixion, which transferred the burden of humanity's sin to the cross in order to absorb it.

God is 'the reality inspiring all indirect loves, the reality of which they are as it were reflections' according to Weil (213), and man's love for his neighbour is the mirror-image of God's love for his creatures. By giving his attention to what did not previously exist God, created mankind, and analogously, man's love for other human beings is comprised of this same type of 'creative attention' (149). Illustrating this idea by referring to the Good Samaritan parable, Weil maintains that the afflicted individual lying by the roadside is actually devoid of humanity, and

therefore when the Samaritan focuses his attention on this person, it amounts to a creative affirmation of the stranger's existence. Believing the sympathy of the strong for the weak is unnatural, she consequently considers man's love for his neighbour is supernatural. As I noted previously when discussing Weil's concept of affliction, such a love involves a degree of self-loss which constitutes a redemptive act that imitates Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Weil's notion of friendship, conceived as another type of man's love of his neighbour, is based on a similar supernatural balance and union of opposites, but in this instance she takes the Trinity as her paradigm. Quoting Christ's 'Where there are two or three gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them', Weil interprets pure human friendship as an image of 'the original and perfect friendship that belongs to the Trinity and is the very essence of God' (208). The combination of personal and impersonal, one and many that comprises both the Trinity and friendship, resembles the parity achieved by charitable love between subordination and equality, necessity and liberty.¹⁵

Love of the order and beauty of the world is analogous to the love between humans expressed in friendship and the love of our afflicted neighbour, because it is also founded on a self-abnegation which has positive results.¹⁶ This 'creative renunciation' (158), is the complement of the creative attention with which both God produces, and humanity affirms the existence of what is Other. Weil's absence/presence creation theory combines with her theory of man's egocentric fictionality here. God provides man with the capacity to freely renounce his imaginary, *ersatz* divinity, imitating God's own voluntary renunciation of self in creating the cosmos, and permitting humanity's autonomy. 'In a sense God renounces being everything. We should renounce being something. That is our only good' Weil contends (GG 29). The impact of necessity on human life is not lessened by this action, but mankind has the facility to transform its relationship with the universe from a negative into a positive spiritual experience. 'The beauty of the world is not an attribute of matter in itself. It is a relationship of the world to our sensibility, the sensibility that depends on the structure of our body and our soul' (164). Deciding to love the very force which inflicts agonising affliction, and reinforcing the autonomy of other human beings amount to self-destructive loves that are absurd yet also divine, and which, 'if they are sufficiently strong and pure, will be enough to raise the soul to any height' (182).

By demonstrating how attention, consent to affliction and self-loss can act as leverage towards grace, the implicit loves provide evidence of what Weil terms 'spiritual mechanics', whose 'supernatural mechanisms are at least as dependable as

are the laws of gravity' (FLN 287, NR 252). This notion is crucial to understanding how Weil conceives that a relationship between God and man is possible, as spiritual mechanics constitutes an umbrella term which covers several of her core *metaxu*, that can usefully be divided into two groupings. First, the paradoxical concepts which are all based on Weil's pivotal use of *logos alogos* and positive inversion: passive activity, and negative virtue, experience of void considered as plenitude, and loss of self or decreation as ultimate being. Second, and interconnected with these states, Weil's concept of grace as a seed which is sown in the soul as a trap by which the individual is able to make explicit contact with God, almost in spite of his will rather than because of it.

Both these two groups of ideas are based on Weil's premise that the 'strictly scientific study of supernatural mechanisms' is possible, because 'the mechanism of this world' is 'a reflection of the supernatural mechanism' (NR 252, 90). Consequently, just as the natural world is subject to rigorous laws of necessity dominated by gravity - this action will inevitably generate this result unless grace intervenes - so is the interior mechanism of the human soul. When grace enters the soul it works via laws analogous to natural necessity but they operate inversely. So paradoxically, to 'lower oneself is to rise in the domain of moral gravity. Moral gravity makes us fall toward the heights'.¹⁷ I will now analyse Weil's concept of this 'supernatural physics of the human soul' (NR 254), by first, examining her theories of passive activity and negative virtue.

The very idea that the soul operates mechanistically is problematic, and seems to compromise Weil's concept of human liberty. As I have already argued, her work displays a consistent conflict between an acceptance of the reality of man's free will, and a parallel attraction to determinism. However, in the distinction she makes between human will, and its superior counterpart of 'passive activity' (WFG 194), Weil goes some way towards explaining her apparently contradictory concept of human freedom. The first is required to respond to specific obligations and has a minor role in the redemptive process, while the latter is vital to salvation. 'The will is on the level of the natural part of the soul. The right use of the will is a condition of salvation, necessary no doubt but remote, inferior, very subordinate and purely negative', she insists (WFG 193). Despite this apparently reductive idea of free will, Weil is actually not denying its efficacy, but typically, redefining it in her own terms. Her demand for a rigorously accurate vocabulary that can effectively, and truthfully represent the relationship between mankind and God is evident in Weil's clarification of what 'will' actually means. The word is totally inappropriate for the

concept it purports to represent, because 'what language designates as will is something suggestive of muscular effort', she argues, while the 'effort that brings a soul to salvation is like the effort of looking or of listening' (193).

Such passive activity is vital to the endurance of inconsolable affliction and the experience of a void that it induces, and requires concentrated obedience rather than frenetic human action: 'there is only waiting, attention, silence, immobility, constant through suffering and joy' (194). Waiting patiently, with a supremely focussed attention on, and desire for, God is the catalyst which 'draws God down', Weil claims (111). Rejecting the traditional Christian metaphor of a search for God because it suggests 'efforts of muscular will', she insists that her outwardly inactive counterpart - 'waiting for goodness and truth' - is actually 'something more intense than any searching'.¹⁸ Yet she uses a traditional Christian analogy - bread as the body of Christ and eternal life - to represent this passive activity. 'A conception of the relationship between grace and desire. The conviction that had come to me was that when one hungers for bread one does not receive stones'.¹⁹ Ultimately it is this kind of passive activity and intensive desire, not muscular will, that is redemptive.

There are people who try to raise their souls like a man continually taking standing jumps in the hopes that, if he jumps higher every day, a time may come when he will no longer fall back but will go right up to the sky [...] We cannot take a single step toward heaven. It is not in our power to travel in a vertical direction. If however we look heavenward for a long time, God comes and takes us up. He raises us easily. (194)

According to Weil there 'is an easiness in salvation which is more difficult to us than all our efforts', and it is her stress on the importance of passive activity as an instigator of supernatural intervention which leads her to maintain that 'true virtue in every domain is negative, at least in appearance' (197). This concept of negative virtue does not deny the importance of human virtues, charitable actions which in fact train the soul to orientate itself to the highest level of its architecture: supernatural love and intensive contemplation. But once again it displays her disturbing tendency to justify the diminution of human liberty for the greater good which she considers only achievable through God's compulsion on, and place in the soul. Those who accomplish virtuous actions are unable to do otherwise, because of the supernatural love within them. 'Good achieved in this way, almost in spite of ourselves, almost shamefacedly and apologetically is pure. All absolutely pure

goodness completely eludes the will. Good is transcendent. God is goodness' (GG 40). Negative virtues provide further evidence of the supernatural physics of the soul because they are the result of acting 'not *on behalf* of a certain object, but *as a result* of a certain necessity. I am unable to do otherwise. This is not action, but a sort of passivity. Non-active action' (NB 124).

The *logos alogos* of passive activity, negative virtue, and (un)free will, lead to the most paradoxical elements of Weil's spiritual mechanics: void and decreation. True to her theory of the inverted nature of spiritual mechanisms, Weil's concept of void is paradoxically at the core of her metaphysics, the central point at which the seed of violent grace and decreation as ultimate being intersect. It is consent to the experience of void which enables the climactic encounter in which the soul breaks free from natural gravity and makes explicit contact with God. According to Weil

man only escapes from the laws of this world in lightning flashes. Instants when everything stands still, instants of contemplation, of pure intuition, of mental void, of acceptance of the moral void. It is through such instants that he is capable of the supernatural. (GG 11)

It is violent grace that creates these gaps which interrupt the mechanism of physical necessity. 'Grace fills empty spaces but it can only enter where there is a void to receive it', Weil claims, 'and it is grace itself which makes this void' (10). This is a traumatic procedure in which 'there must first of all be a tearing asunder, something of a desperate nature, so that a void may first of all be produced' (NB 135). I will interrogate how the violent seed of grace makes this possible later. But at this juncture it is important to clarify Weil's concept of void and how it relates to both spiritual and human mechanics.²⁰

Man's consent to a void within himself is a more extreme version of the element of self-loss which charitable actions require, and is like them supernatural, because it refuses the normal human inclination to demand a recompense for energy expended, or vengeance for harms suffered. 'The acceptance of a void in oneself is a supernatural thing. Where find the energy for an act without any counterpart? The energy has to come from elsewhere' Weil argues (135). Not exercising all the power at one's disposal is 'contrary to all the laws of nature. Grace alone can do it' (GG 10). But the 'desire for equilibrium' (6), which dominates human mechanics leads to attempts to fill voids. This phenomenon is seen in the afflicted, who try to equalise

their agony by communicating it to others: 'either by ill-treating another or by provoking pity' (NB 122). This desire to escape the experience of void is the primary cause of immorality. 'It is the void which makes men capable of sin', Weil maintains, 'all sins are attempts to fill voids' (GG 21). Fictionality is the greatest sin and leads to all others, because the egocentric imagination 'is continually at work filling up all the fissures through which grace might pass' (16). As the most damaging attempt to find equilibrium on a human rather than spiritual level, being fictional offers erroneous consolations which prevent the soul experiencing the reality of its profound limitation, the bitter 'dark night' which is the first stage in the soul's spiritual regeneration.²¹

Interestingly Weil merges her unusual technological metaphors for spiritual realities with classic mystical imagery here. In addition to conceiving her concept of void as a dark night of the soul she borrows the notion of spiritual nakedness from the mystics,²² to describe how it is imperative that man fully recognises the reality of his creaturely status by being denied all consolations for affliction and void. Weil's proximity to the mystics, her preoccupation with how to attain direct contact with God largely unmediated by institutional religion, is demonstrated by the fact that her refusal of all mitigation includes denying Christianity's traditional solaces for the horrors of human life. She acknowledges that the soul understandably flees its dark night, and 'a desperate revolt' follows (137), in which man's imagination attempts to occupy the vacuum with illusory beliefs that dilute the void's horrifying reality. But Weil insists humanity

must leave on one side the beliefs which fill up voids and sweeten what is bitter. The belief in immortality. The belief in the utility of sin: *etiam peccata*. The belief in the providential ordering of events - in short the 'consolations' which are ordinarily sought in religion. (GG13)

Yet although she is adamant that the 'fathomless bitterness' of the void must be endured entirely without consolation (FLN 159), what appears a monstrously nihilistic creed does provide some scope for optimism if Weil's concept of superposed vision is applied to her ideas here. As my examination of other areas of Weil's metaphysical philosophy has shown, what often appears at first sight to be extreme negativity is frequently only one facet of a larger, more positive whole, providing we perceive how each dimension of her thought is connected and indeed

interdependent. In this instance, a vital change of perspective can transform the void's incalculable vacuity into a conception of it as 'supreme plenitude' (161), and equilibrium is thus achieved on a different, supernatural plane. Weil insists 'the void serves for nothing except grace' (159), and when considered as a vehicle for divine assistance rather than a vindictive Nemesis, experience of void becomes one of her most crucial *metaxu*, a bridge between humanity and God, rather than a chasm that separates them.

Weil's interrelated notion of decreation is intended to operate on an equivalent principle but due to its more intense offensiveness to concepts of human autonomy, is even harder to accept than her theory of void. Experience of affliction and void coerces man into an agonising awareness of his essential fragility and constrained status. But despite his vulnerability, Weil believes man's endemic fictionality manages to construct a barrier preventing God from making contact with himself - the supernatural part of the human soul which is divine. This overemphasis on mankind's depravity yet the contradictory idea that God is present in a portion of the soul, leads to an appallingly narcissistic concept of God, and a reductive view of man.

God can only love himself. His love for us is love for himself through us [...] Our existence is made up only of his waiting for our acceptance not to exist. He is perpetually begging from us that existence which he gives. He gives it to us in order to beg it from us. (GG 28)

It is this warped view of human autonomy which leads Weil to consider annihilation, the virtue of non-being, to be humanity's most positive act.²³ The ultimate negative virtue and passive activity is completely to cease to be. Man is annihilated 'in God which confers the fulness of being upon the creature so annihilated, a fulness which is denied it so long as it goes on existing' (NB 471). The soul's reward for consenting to the intensely traumatic suffering of affliction, void, and decreation is a brilliant, but merely momentary epiphany. The 'instant of death is the center and object of life' Weil argues, 'for those who live as they should, it is the instant when, for an infinitesimal fraction of time, pure truth, naked, certain, and eternal enters the soul' (WFG 63), before it is totally annihilated. This is characteristically a more severe version of the Christian concept of a beatific vision at the instant of death in which individuality is preserved, and the justified soul's reward is to see God 'face to face' as St. Paul terms it.²⁴ In Weil's notion of an

explicit encounter with the divine, 'the soul must finally cease to be, through total assimilation to God' (FLN 310).

As disturbing and problematic as this vision of the human/divine encounter is Weil's indistinct terminology on such a crucial element of her theology as the salvation of the soul. Although she contends that the individual soul is completely exterminated through the process of decreation, Weil attempts to differentiate between decreation and destruction. 'Decreation: to make something created pass into the uncreated. Destruction: to make something created pass into nothingness. A blameworthy substitute for decreation' (GG 28). But this intended distinction between 'nothingness' and its superior counterpart of 'uncreation' is blurred when Weil describes this state of nothingness as itself divisible into either ultimate being or total loss. Considering the highest attainment available to the soul is to become part of pure good, Weil argues that 'in that nothingness which is at the limit of good we shall be more real than at any moment of our earthly life. Whereas the nothingness which is at the limit of evil is without reality' (FLN 311). She permits a limited amount of free will in the soul's ultimate transformation into non-existence, offering a type of fundamentalist choice 'between travelling towards nothingness through more and more good or through more and more evil' (310). In a Weilean version of the salvation/damnation divide, she contends 'it is not a matter of indifference whether one arrives at nothingness through good or through evil. On the contrary, it is the only thing that matters and everything else is indifferent'.²⁵ But despite this discrimination, even the most successful soul's remuneration for a lifetime of enduring the horrors of necessity consists of being merely a positive rather than a negative type of nothingness. Consequently the type of nihilistic salvation envisaged by Weil, the monstrously high price she demands for it, and the seriously restricted nature of human liberty make the validity of this advanced example of negative virtue extremely difficult to accept.

If Weil's theories of void and decreation are problematic, so is her concept of the action of grace which leads to these states, because it too relies on the idea that union with God requires violent loss of self and limited free will. Her concept of spiritual mechanics is founded on the notion that it is vital to let

that which is base in us go to the bottom in order that that which is noble in us may go to the top. For we are reversed beings. We are born like this. Re-establishing order means unmaking the creature in us. (NB 241)

Because humanity lives in this ‘inverted fashion’, the first stage in its spiritual renewal ‘is one of reversal - Conversion’, according to Weil (GG 30). The catalyst for this change of direction, and potential salvation is the operation of grace within man. In *Letter to A Priest*, Weil maintains salvation is not possible without ‘a “new birth”, without an inward illumination, without the presence of Christ and of the Holy Spirit in the soul’ (LP 46). To explain how this action of grace operates within the soul, she borrows from the Gospels the central motif of the seed as the Word of God, and amalgamates it with readings of Greek myths and her concept of the cross, to create a distinctively mystical, yet characteristically original concept.

Just as Weil’s adoption of the Pythagorean notion of the *logos alogos* proved revelatory to both the content and form of her theology, the central metaphor of a seed of grace is crucial to her concept of spiritual mechanics and the means by which she attempts to articulate it. The technological figurative imagery she uses to analyse the supernatural physics of the soul is paralleled by Weil’s perception of an equivalent mechanism in the natural world that operates on the same principle. Her central premise that lowering is paradoxically the condition for rising, expressed by scientific analogies using levers and fulcrums, is developed in her concept of grace through two important images. First, the idea that an infinitely small amount of natural energy can act as a catalyst for major changes is offered as an analogy for how the supernatural intervention of grace fundamentally alters human mechanics. Second, the ‘double mechanism of growth’ by which plants grow from seeds through absorbing sunlight is considered a model for ‘the germination of grace’ in the soul (NR 90, 252). Both these aspects of how the natural mechanism parallels and interacts with the supernatural mechanics of grace is seen in her observation that ‘just as the catalysts of bacteria, such as yeast, operate by their mere presence in chemical reactions, so in human affairs the invisible seed of pure good is decisive when it is put in the right place’; and assertion that ‘the purely human virtues would not spring up out of man’s animal nature without the supernatural light of grace’, which itself has a ‘chlorophyll-like virtue’ (SWR 337, OL 167, FLN 70).

There are two methods by which Weil believes this seed of grace tears open the human soul and begins the process by which it returns to God. First, through the joy generated by loving the beauty of the world, and second, and most importantly, through the violent suffering induced by affliction. Although she claims these ‘are the only two ways and they are equivalent’, Weil’s preference for the route provided via affliction is indicated by the comment that immediately follows this statement: ‘but the way of affliction is the way of Christ’ (IC 199). This consistent demand that

humanity must share Christ's cross, and predilection for affliction as the superior mode of rending the soul is made explicit in the *Notebooks*. When discussing the need for affliction totally without consolation she insists it 'is thus, and not in any other way, that the soul makes the return journey which God has made to come to it' (NB 429).

Through both beauty and affliction the soul is trapped by a combination of divine deception and the type of Weilean unfree will in which consent is at best ambiguous. In her essay 'God's Quest for Man', Weil describes how as the manifestation of divine love within the cosmos, the beauty of the world functions as 'a snare for the soul' by which 'God seizes the soul in spite of itself' (IC 3). Although this initial contact with God is instantaneous it proves decisive, the soul is forever afterwards fundamentally changed. Weil explains this process by an intertextual linkage of the New Testament parable of the mustard seed with Greek myths.²⁶ Reading the Persephone myth as itself a narrative about the action of grace, Weil contends that 'by surprise and by strategy' God 'furtively' gives the soul a pomegranate seed to eat (3).

If the soul eats this, it is captured for ever. The pomegranate seed is that consent which the soul gives to God almost without knowing it, and without admitting it to itself. This is an infinitely small thing among all the carnal inclinations of the soul, and nevertheless this decides its destiny for ever. This is the grain of mustard seed to which Christ compares the Kingdom of Heaven, the smallest of the seeds, but which later shall become that tree wherein the birds of heaven alight. (3)

The extent to which Weil's concept of grace is dependent on this kind of seizure of the soul by a combination of God's trickery and man's limited freedom is shown in her interpretation of the myth of the labyrinth as another representation of how the divine/human encounter operates. The beauty of the world is comparable to the mouth of the labyrinth, in which once inside man is lost, unable to retrace his steps, and eventually arrives at the centre of the maze 'where God waits to devour him' she argues (4). Later man will leave the labyrinth, 'but he will be changed, he will have become different, after being eaten and digested by God'.²⁷ This startling image of the soul being devoured by God is in keeping with Weil's concept of decreation being the summit of human attainment, and I will now analyse how her

predisposition towards this mystical loss of self is crucial to Weil's notion of how the violent seed of grace operates.

She locates 'two successive acts of violence to which God subjects the soul, one which is pure violence, another to which the soul's consent to God is indispensable and upon which its salvation depends' (IC 4). This first act of violence occurs when the soul is initially seized by God through either beauty, or more dramatically, through subjection to affliction. Yet despite God's crossing the universe to make contact with man, Weil contends the soul has 'the power to consent to receive' God 'or to refuse' (SWR 450). Consent to the implantation of grace requires a second, self-inflicted type of violence, man's violent compulsion on his own free will. In her *Notebooks* Weil describes how this secondary violence functions.

As one has in oneself a principle of violence, namely, the will, one should also, in a limited measure, but to the fullest possible extent of that measure, make a violent use of this violent principle; compel oneself by violence to act just as if one had not that particular desire or aversion; without attempting to persuade the sensibility, but by forcing it to obey. (NB 424-425)

Such violent methods directed against the self 'are only admissible either when they emanate directly from the reasoning faculty, or else when they are forced upon one by some irresistible impulsion' she argues, 'but then it is not from the self whence the violence actually proceeds' (425). Man's violence to himself is a result of the impact of supernatural necessity on the soul, the compulsion of God's pressure. In its initial stage this self-violence makes charitable actions possible. 'The first and most necessary form of violence done to the self consists of carrying out, in fact, what one clearly represents to oneself as being one's duty'. (425-426). As I noted when discussing the architecture of the soul, such moral actions elevate the soul towards its highest level of supernatural love. This sort of violence to the self constitutes an apprenticeship for the greater self-violence which is required to accept affliction, the seed of grace, and the total self-loss required in decreation, and therefore each 'time we do ourselves violence in this sense we make genuine progress, be it much or little, in the task of training the animal in oneself' (425).

It is this interconnected notion of self-violence, loss of self, and complex (un)free will which helps to explain Weil's monstrous New York 'prayer', and her equation of rape with the action of grace. After her infamous plea to be subjected to all

manner of appalling afflictions, she insists it is only possible to accede to such horrors against the will, not voluntarily.

In spite of oneself, yet one comes to it. One does not consent to it with abandon, but with a violence exerted upon the entire soul by the entire soul. But the consent is total and unreserved, and given by a single movement of the whole being. (FLN 244)

This contradictory concept of violent consent is the source for Weil's use of the metaphor of rape to represent the soul's union with God. Characteristically she exaggerates the analogies of courtship and marriage traditionally used by mystics to explain the divine/human relationship, adopting more violent figurative imagery to describe the same contact. 'Marriage is a consented rape. And so is the soul's union with God', she insists (244). Any element of assent given to this violent seed of grace is temporary and wrenching, but Weil claims if the soul 'allows a pure and utter consent (though brief as a lightning flash) to be torn from it, then God conquers that soul' (GG 80).

After this initial violent impregnation of grace God abandons the soul, and man's role is to not regret the consent he has given, which 'is not as easy as it seems, for the growth of the seed within us is painful' she claims (SWR 451). The mechanism by which the seed of grace germinates requires further acts of self-violence, but is largely automatic.

We cannot avoid destroying whatever gets in its way, pulling up the weeds, cutting the grasses; and unfortunately they are part of our very flesh, so that this gardening amounts to a violent operation. On the whole, however, the seed grows of itself. (451)

Yet although God gratuitously makes contact with humanity, and 'wears himself out through the infinite thickness of time and space in order to reach the soul and to captivate it' (GG 80), how exactly is it possible, after God has abandoned the soul, for man to be reunited with him? Weil contends that it is man who must go to God. The soul must 'cross the infinite thickness of time and space in search of whom it loves. It is thus that the soul, starting from the opposite end, makes the same journey that God made towards it' (80). But how is this achievable if humanity is as

absolutely incapable of rising above gravity and traversing the immense gulf between creature and Creator as Weil insists it is?

Her answer is that the violent seed of grace germinates through acceptance of affliction into the same cross as Christ's, the supreme *metaxu* between gravity and grace, God and man.

It was the seed of this tree that God placed within us, without our knowing what seed it was. If we had known, we should not have said Yes at the first moment. It is this tree which has grown within us and has become ineradicable. Only a betrayal could uproot it. (SWR 451)

Just as the crucified Christ acts as a *logos alogos* between God and man by consenting to his agonising affliction and not faltering in his love of God, the seed of this same cross sown in the human soul constitutes man's bridge back to God. In this reworking of the traditional Christian concept of bearing the cross and following Christ, the other major areas of Weil's spiritual mechanics: passive activity and negative virtue, experience of void and decreation, violent free will, and the violent seed of grace; coalesce.

Passive activity and negative virtue are crucial to ensuring that the soul stays focused on God while enduring the agonies of affliction. By concentrating the whole of necessity like a nail through the soul, affliction pierces the egocentric screen which previously separated man from God. If like the crucified Christ man's soul 'remains oriented towards God while a nail is driven through it' man 'finds himself nailed to the very centre of the universe; the true centre [...] which is God', Weil argues (452). In this 'totally other dimension' without

leaving the time and place to which the body is bound, the soul can traverse the whole of space and time and come into the actual presence of God. It is at the point of the intersection between creation and Creator. This point is at the point of intersection of the two branches of the Cross. (452)

The cross brings necessity 'into contact with the lowest and the highest part of us; with our physical sensibility by its evocation of physical pain and with supernatural

love by the presence of God' (465). It is only participation in the crucifying affliction of Christ's cross, borne entirely without mitigation, that has the capacity to rend the soul, and only acceptance of the void it opens up enables man to perceive this chasm between God and man as paradoxically the central *metaxu* by which creature and Creator are reunited, not separated.

In its torment afflicted mankind seeks a meaning for its agony, an answer to the question 'Why must I suffer?'. We 'must have real words. We cry out for them. The cry tears our very entrails. All we get is silence' according to Weil (GG 102). It is through this total absence of consolation that man is forced to confront the void. If in this vacuum, through passive activity the soul continues to love and wait with desire for God it eventually hears 'not a reply to the question which it cries, for there is none, but the very silence as something infinitely more full of significance than any response, like God himself speaking' (IC 199). In this mystical state the human element in the soul diminishes and its supernatural part is reconnected to God:

Our soul is constantly clamorous with noise, but there is one point in it which is silence, and which we never hear. When the silence of God comes to the soul and penetrates it and joins the silence which is secretly present in us, from then on we have our treasure and our heart in God; and space opens before us as the opening fruit of a plant divides in two, for we are seeing the universe from a point situated outside space. (SWR 467)

Affliction therefore does not provide evidence for denying God's existence, but rather is the primary means by which man transcends gravity and makes explicit contact with God. It is 'God himself holding his hand and pressing it rather hard', and if the afflicted remains constant, 'what he will discover buried deep under the sound of his own lamentations is the pearl of the silence of God' (468).

Eventually passive activity, acceptance of affliction and void, the combined violence of the seed of grace and violent free will, leads to the stage when the soul is not only linked to God but belongs to God through decreation. Man becomes nothing more than a passageway through which God makes contact with God. The love within the soul

is divine, uncreated, for it is the love of God for God which is passing through it [...] We can only consent to give up our own feelings so as to allow free passage in our soul for this love. That is the meaning of denying oneself. We were created solely in order to give this consent. (451)

The supreme state of decreation occurs with man's physical death and reabsorption into the divine. But in its earlier stages the self-diminishment through which some individuals manage to accept affliction and the void opened by violent grace, and in doing so encounter God, leads to brilliant but only brief epiphanies, after which these souls must continue with their lives whilst striving to maintain states of passive activity and negative virtue. If God 'reveals himself in person, it is only for an instant', before once again these souls must 'remain still, attentive, inactive, calling out only when their desire cannot be contained' (WFG 211). But the decisive change in the soul caused by direct contact with God ensures an increased level of supernatural grace in human affairs. The implicit loves 'become infinitely stronger' (138), and fundamentally different, because they have become the explicit love of God. The life-changing meeting of creature and Creator ensures that man's 'love in all these forms has become a movement of God himself, a ray merged in the light of God' (209).

Through this type of symbolism and rhetoric of illumination Weil demonstrates her affinity with the Christian mystics,²⁸ and offensively reinvigorates the central Christian paradox that man must lose his life to find it. Christ, as the ultimate *logos alogos* who makes this redemptive process possible, is the paradigm for her concepts of spiritual mechanics and the implicit loves. Christ's life is Weil's model for the implicit loves which generate charitable actions. But most importantly, the crucified Christ as man's greatest *metaxu*, is a paragon of passive activity, negative virtue, endurance and acceptance of affliction, void and decreation. However although locating *metaxu* is both a major theme in Weil's theology and a constituent part of the form of her writings via startling figurative imagery and analogies, Weil objects to Catholicism's most important earthly mediator - the Church. If as Christocentric mystic she is preoccupied with the union of the afflicted human body with Christ's tortured body on the cross, a significant element of her theological writings are concerned with criticising, and finally rejecting, the collected corpus of the Catholic Church. Consequently it is important briefly to analyse why a writer so concerned with locating *metaxu* that connect tangible

realities and sacred mysteries does not consider the Church admissible as such a bridge.

Weil's principle objection to the Church, as I noted in my Introduction, is founded on her belief that it prevents the type of 'intellectual honesty' that she associates with the objective, superposed vision in which 'thought should be indifferent to all ideas without exception' (85). She considers institutionalised Catholicism promotes an intellectual malaise 'due to the way in which the Church has conceived its power of jurisdiction and especially the use of the formula *anathema sit*' (LP 62). Equating the Church with the same type of dangerous abuse of authority and erosion of language she associates with other collectivities, Weil maintains the Church 'is guilty of an abuse of power when she claims to force love and intelligence to model their language upon her own' (80).

The disequilibrium she perceives between individual and collective is harmonised when the intelligence acts as a *metaxu* between them, but this is only possible when the intellect is not subject to unwarranted restrictions.²⁹ In her 'Spiritual Autobiography' Weil claims the 'special function of the intelligence requires total liberty, implying the right to deny everything, and allowing of no domination' (78). Considering unequivocal adherence to Church dogma the epitome of intellectual subjugation, she is totally opposed to what she believes is St. Thomas Aquinas' affirmation 'that he who refuses his assent to a single article of faith does not possess the faith in any degree'.³⁰ Escaping such intellectual suffocation requires that religious laws should not be affirmed, but instead contemplated with attention. 'We owe the definitions with which the Church has thought it right to surround the mysteries of the faith, and more particularly its condemnations (...*anathema sit*) a permanent and unconditional attitude of respectful attention, but not adherence' she maintains (LP 60). Associating adherence with muscular will rather than faith in the Weilean, passive activity sense, she proffers a traditional mystical alternative. The metaphor of a 'veil' or 'reflection' applied to faith in Weil's opinion enables the mystics to escape intellectual constraints, and 'accept the Church's teaching, not as the truth, but as something behind which the truth is to be found' (39).

Equivalent to her superposed vision, this dual perspective enables Weil to attribute to the Church an 'indispensable' role as 'collective keeper of dogma', not because its doctrines are irrevocably true, but because it cultivates the necessary 'discipline of the attention' (61), through and beyond which, spiritual realities can be ascertained. As Weil's inclusion of certain Catholic religious practices in her implicit loves

demonstrates, the Church's duty is to preserve key doctrines and rites of worship which, when concentrated on with intuitive attention, offer direct access to grace. 'The Church is only perfectly pure under one aspect' she claims, 'when considered as guardian of the sacraments. What is perfect is not the Church; it is the body and blood of Christ upon the altars' (44). Only in this sense does the Catholic Church legitimately function as a *metaxu*.

What distinguishes Weil's antagonistic writings on the Church is her rejection of the pre-eminent Catholic concept of a community of faith in which the Church and all its sacraments and doctrines act as crucial *bridges* between God and man. Instead Weilean theology, with its stress on an individual divine/human encounter is not just mystical, but displays a distinctively Protestant emphasis. According to Weil, 'dogma is an object of contemplation for love, faith, and intelligence, three strictly individual faculties' (WFG 79). Likewise, the implicit loves are dependent on developing individual responses to religious ceremonies, and the order of the world. Even the moral obligation derived from loving our neighbour, although indirectly improving communal life, is primarily a reaction to a solitary vocation.

This preference for sole communication with God unmediated by the Church is evident in the array of alternative 'sacraments' and methods of worship Weil advocates. Her close reading of the Bible is distinctively Protestant, as is her profoundly individualised concentration on her own alternative Scriptures: the Greek, European, and Eastern philosophical, theological and fictional texts I analysed in Chapter One. Equally, and personally significant is Weil's solitary reading and repetition of the prayer the 'Our Father' in Greek, and George Herbert's poem 'Love', which acted as a catalyst for the mystical experiences which were more significant to her than any Church rituals. Despite the sacramental perspective in which she perceives the world as *metaxu*, Weil's superposed vision balances this with the contradictory radical disparity she considers exists between the human and divine. This division, and the inability of the human mind to grasp the reality of God are all characteristically Protestant, as is the form of Weil's writings: her dialectical reasoning and use of affirmation and negation to approach the mystery of a God radically separated from humanity.

Three major principles of Protestantism, '*sola fide*' ('by faith alone'), '*sola gratia*' ('by grace alone'), and '*sola Scriptura*' (by Scripture alone),³¹ are based on the problem of how to achieve a relationship between the type of transcendent God and his miserable creatures Weil envisions. Her theology conforms to these three

principles in three ways. First, although she does consider good works and some Catholic sacraments part of the redemption process, Weil's emphasis on the fact that to achieve salvation it is imperative for man to desire God, have faith as a negative virtue, is distinctively Protestant. 'To long for God and to renounce all the rest, that alone can save us' she insists (196). Second, her repeated emphasis on humanity's inability to escape the limitations of its creaturely status without the gratuitous intervention of grace emphasises God's sovereignty, diminishing the element of human freedom in the process of salvation. Mankind can only progress towards God after it has been called, or in Weilean imagery impregnated with grace in an explicit contact with God, and significantly, this 'movement comes from above, never from below; it is a movement on God's part, not on ours. We cannot bring about such intercommunion except when God decrees it' (GG 42). Third, the Protestant preoccupation with God's Word being communicated directly to man via solitary meditation on sacred Scriptures rather than mediated through collective Church dogmas is as I have shown, replicated in Weil's own antagonism to institutional doctrines and insistence that contemplating texts with attention is spiritually revelatory.

At the extreme edge of her Protestant thinking Weil veers towards Calvinism and Lutheranism.³² The pronounced separation between good and evil that is so prevalent in Calvinist and Lutheran teachings is evident in Weilean notions of these two forces being fundamentally opposed. Equally, Calvinist concepts of predestination and the existence of an elect, are apparent in Weil's claim that the 'word of God is the secret word. He who has not heard this word, even if he adheres to all the dogmas taught by the Church, has no contact with truth' (WFG 80). The dual problem of how to hear God's Word, and how to articulate spiritual realities in human language is vital to Weil, and encompasses the central dilemma of how to bridge the gap between gravity and grace, God and man, human liberty and divine compulsion. Weil struggles with God in her desire to preserve her individuality and free will, yet demonstrates a contradictory urge to be reconciled with the divine through being conquered and consumed: 'Isn't it the greatest possible calamity, when you are wrestling with God, not to be beaten?' she contends.³³ Commensurately Weil battles with the problem of how to hear God's Word and communicate the action of grace, the reality of the mystical encounter, within a human vocabulary. Despite her dynamic mixture of technological, biblical and natural symbols she is similarly defeated. 'The speech of created beings is with sounds. The word of God is silence' (SWR 467). Only in silence, the failure, or void in human vocabulary, can man hear God's Word as a *metaxu*.

As Denys Turner observes, 'no partial, restricted vocabulary is adequate to express the inadequacy of theological language [...] It is in the profusion of our affirmations that we encounter the limits of language, and then break through them into the dark silence of the transcendent'.³⁴ As writer-prophet Flannery O'Connor is like Weil primarily concerned with considering how a relationship between God and man is possible, how to communicate God's Word via a human vocabulary, and specifically, how to make fictions plausible as successful spiritual *metaxus*. The relationship with a supreme being recognised through faith 'is the experience of an encounter, of a kind of knowledge which affects the believer's every action', she insists, and the 'problem of the novelist who wishes to write about a man's encounter with his God is how he shall make the experience - which is both natural and supernatural - understandable, and credible, to his reader' (MM 160, 161). By using the Weilean concepts I have just analysed I will now interrogate first, O'Connor's theological approach to the human/divine encounter, before second, analysing how her written forms correspond to or diverge from both Weil's theories and her own theology.

In both her theology, fictions and non-fictional writings O'Connor shares Weil's concern with understanding how God and man communicate, and in accordance with Weil she considers man's encounter with God is principally a consequence of God making contact with man through the gratuitous intervention of grace in human life. Due to her Catholic belief in mankind's Fall, and the original sin she believes resulted from it, O'Connor shares Weil's concept of man subject to a moral gravity which tends towards evil unless grace intercedes. Yet her Catholicism also ensures she considers mankind a mixture of both nature and grace, and therefore O'Connor agrees with Weil that for man to achieve a relationship with God requires human effort and not only gratuitous grace. 'It is true that grace is the free gift of God but in order to put yourself in the way of being receptive to it you have to practice self-denial' she maintains (HB 336). Also interested in locating bridges between nature and grace, mystery and manners, O'Connor's sacramentalism ensures she shares Weil's superposed perspective of the universe as a bridge to a sacred reality. O'Connor's 'point of view is Catholic in the widest sense of the term', and consequently she 'reads nature the same way the medieval commentators read Scripture' (128). Reading O'Connor's theology superposed with Weil's implicit loves, reveals some significant differences to, as well as similarities with, Weil's *metaxu*.

The love of religious practices is even more vital to O'Connor, as member of the Catholic Church, than it is to Weil as individual/outsider. Both women share a profound love of the sacrament of the Eucharist, because they consider it constitutes a real, not merely symbolic *metaxu* between God and man. "Well, if it's a symbol, to hell with it", O'Connor argues, 'it is the center of existence for me; all the rest of life is expendable', 'I believe the Host is actually the body and blood of Christ, not a symbol' (HB 125, 124). But a difference between O'Connor as Catholic insider and Weil who refused membership of the Church is apparent in Weil's emphasis on paying intense attention to the sacrament as a means of purification, rather than participating in it as literally an act of communion with God. Unlike O'Connor, who believes the sacrament of baptism is as crucial as the Eucharist (see my reading of *The Violent Bear It Away*), Weil considers baptism at best a symbol of purity and not a *metaxu*.³⁵

Not surprisingly considering its centrality to Christianity as well as Weil's implicit loves, there is a correspondence between Weil and O'Connor on the need for man to love his neighbour. Weil's notion of the creative affirmation of the afflicted being an irrational and supernatural redemptive act that imitates Christ, and in which only Christ within man can recognise Christ in what is so outwardly monstrous, articulates with greater clarity O'Connor's concept of the motivating force responsible for charitable actions, and her attempt to define it. 'Satisfy your demand for reason always but remember that charity is beyond reason, and that God can be known through charity' she claims (480). Commenting on how humanity's salvation is worked out on earth according to how men love and perceive Christ in each other, O'Connor observes this is 'one reason I am chary of using the word love, loosely. I prefer to use it in its practical forms such as prayer, almsgiving, visiting the sick and burying the dead and so forth' (102). However Weil's stress on the importance of loving both the order and beauty of the cosmos is not evident in O'Connor's theology. She parallels Weil in her conception of a world dominated by the terrible reality of necessity and affliction, yet despite her sacramentalism any discussion of, or emphasis on beauty is conspicuously absent from O'Connor's thinking. Weil's extension of her theory of the self-renunciation required by moral actions to encompass an acknowledgement of the beauty of the world and man's relationship to it, ensures her supposition is effectively more Christian and sacramental than O'Connor's position here.

As I have already noted Weil's implicit loves, through their reliance on attention and self-abasement act as levers by which the soul rises higher, and form part of her

larger concept of the *metaxu* incorporated in the important notion of spiritual mechanics and the supernatural physics of the soul. I want to now compare Weil's first group of spiritual mechanisms, her crucial *logos alogos* of passive activity and negative virtue, void and decreation, to O'Connor's theology.

O'Connor's conviction that receptivity to grace requires self-denial, and her belief that acts of charity form part of the salvation process, correspond to the fundamental principle of Weil's spiritual mechanics and theory of moral gravity - that rising morally requires a lowering or debasement of the physical, and egocentric self. Some kind of spiritual mechanism, or supernatural physics of the soul is implied in O'Connor's notion that a concern with grace is 'simply a concern with the human reaction to that which, instant by instant, gives life to the soul. It is a concern with a realization that breeds charity and with the charity that breeds action' (MM 204). The degree to which she considers such interventions of grace in the soul are required to alter the type of human mechanics ordinarily dominated by immoral gravity, is demonstrated in her assertion that 'Catholics believe that all creation is good and that evil is the wrong use of good and that without grace we use it wrong most of the time' (HB 144).

Yet the very idea that the interior workings of the soul can be studied scientifically, that man's progression towards salvation is to some extent mechanised or automated, directly contravenes O'Connor's stress on the reality of human liberty, which as I showed in Chapter Two, is a vital component of her concept of man. So while she does acknowledge the idea of moral leverage through asceticism and God's gratuitous grace, crucially O'Connor differs from Weil in perceiving the supernatural physics of the soul as itself considerably less predictable and significantly more mysterious. This greater emphasis on human autonomy and the curious, often mystifying realisation of a relationship between God and man is apparent when comparing O'Connor's theology to Weil's concepts of passive activity and negative virtue.

In contrast to Weil, O'Connor is not preoccupied with establishing a distinction between 'muscular' free will and its superior counterpart of passive activity. In the complex notion of free will she outlines in her 'Author's Note' to the second edition of *Wise Blood*, O'Connor stipulates man's integrity inheres precisely in a Weilean type of muscular free will, which requires an intense struggle to believe in God, rather than Weil's more tranquil alternative. It is this kind of muscular rather than passive spiritual activity that O'Connor is most fascinated by. Mankind's

disobedience, inattention, impatience, wrestling with conflicting urges to believe or not believe in God, and frenetic, frequently immoral activity, are what eventually, often circuitously lead to salvation in her schema. Man's relationship with God is fundamentally more active than passive.

This leads to another important difference in emphasis between Weil and O'Connor. Weil's passive activity enables the soul to concentrate all its attention unremittingly on God, and vitally man must desire God. This longing is crucial in drawing God towards man and effecting an encounter between them, and therefore in Weil's thinking incessant yearning for God is essential to the intervention of grace in human affairs, and ultimately man's salvation. But while O'Connor recognises that 'God rescues us from ourselves if we want him to' (118), she does not consider intensive desire for God imperative for human salvation. Indeed her more intricate notion of free will ensures that humanity's encounter with God/grace is frequently made possible by man's inability to rid himself of God rather than a specific urge for contact with the divine. Equally, O'Connor's Catholic theory of the utility of sin, and her more fundamentalist concept of the Devil's role in the action of grace, ensures she allows a confrontation between God and man may, and frequently does come reluctantly, suddenly, arbitrarily, it may be undeserved, and neither prepared for nor requested. Negative virtue in O'Connor's thinking is not the equivalent of the Weilean notion of non-active action that acts as a catalyst for charitable behaviour through God's compulsion. For O'Connor man's integrity is also conceived negatively, but constitutes having the capacity to refuse a relationship with God, to refuse the action of grace.

However, despite these important differences between O'Connor and Weil, the complicated, contradictory virtue of O'Connor's own thought does allow some scope for consensus between the two writers through O'Connor's acceptance of Teilhard de Chardin's notion of 'passive diminishments'.³⁶ The idea that passive submission to human suffering permits spiritual progression corresponds in part with Weil's concept of the role passive activity plays in man's required consent to affliction, void, and decreation, and I will now examine how O'Connor's theology compares to Weil's concepts of experience of void as plenitude and decreation as total being.

When using Weil's theory of void to analyse O'Connor's theology the first and most important point to note is that there is in fact no equivalent concept in O'Connor's religious thinking. The major reason for this is that in a direct

contradistinction to Weil as mystic, O'Connor's Catholicism ensures she accepts the specific religious consolations: man's immortality, the utility of sin, and the reality of Providence, that Weil condemns as erroneous palliations for the horrifying experience of void, the necessary dark night of the soul essential to spiritual regeneration. But although this significant element of Weil's spiritual mechanics is not found in O'Connor's theology, Weil's interrelated notion of human mechanics is valuable in illuminating O'Connor's concept of human fictionality and immorality. In describing how consent to void is supernatural because it requires a refusal of human forms of equilibrium, the mechanical process by which man desires revenge for his affliction, and tries to flee an experience of void by egocentrism and sinfulness, Weil explains with greater lucidity O'Connor's understanding of secular man, his limitations, and their causes and consequences.

Weil's interconnected concept of decreation is similarly useful for interrogating O'Connor's theology because of both its comparability with, and divergence from some of O'Connor's most important ideas on the relationship between God and man. First, the Weilean concept of decreation offensively revivifies the central Christian paradox that man must lose his life to find it, a doctrine which is crucial to O'Connor, who insists the 'creative action of the Christian's life is to prepare his death in Christ' (MM 223). But second, the greater emphasis on mankind's depravity, the diminution of human liberty, and refusal of all consolation for void which leads Weil to insist man's soul completely ceases to exist beyond death and is totally annihilated by absorption into God, is fundamentally different to O'Connor's Catholic viewpoint.

The survival of man's individual soul is all important to O'Connor, due to her concept of humanity as a more integrated amalgamation of nature and grace, her more pronounced notion of the reality of human freedom, and her acceptance of the religious consolations Weil rejects. Her ideas are in accord with Weil on the essential need for man to confront his limitations and decreate his fictional self, which as the source of man's egocentrism and immorality does create a damaging barrier between God and man. As Jefferson Humphries notes, O'Connor is interested above all in 'the distance which humans are at pains to place between themselves and the spiritual in themselves, the sacred in and around them, and in the terrible violence with which the Holy finally and inevitably erupts into their wilfully profane lives'.³⁷ But vitally, the stripping away of this obstruction, and eventually the removal of the physical barrier between God and man at the moment of human death is not so that God can be reconnected with himself. Instead, in O'Connor's

theology it is so that man can make contact with God. The individual soul does not completely cease to be, and due to O'Connor's Catholic, and to some extent Fundamentalist Christianity,³⁸ she believes when man's soul confronts God it faces a climactic judgement which decides its eternal future in either heaven or hell, and this pivotal drama of the soul, is irrevocably linked to human free will. Although Weil acknowledges the choice available to progress towards individual annihilation through either good or evil, the notions of Christian salvation or damnation are perceived as imaginative constructs by which humanity understands the difference between the type of positive and negative nothingness she envisions. In contrast O'Connor considers heaven and hell crucial realities, with human damnation a consequence of mankind's freedom. There 'is nothing in our faith that implies a foregone optimism for man so free that with his last breath he can say *No*' she insists (182). Writing to a friend in 1959 O'Connor is adamant that

hell is what God's love becomes to those who reject it. Now no one has to reject it. God made us to love him. It takes two to love. It takes liberty. It takes the right to reject. If there were no hell, we would be like the animals. No hell, no dignity. And remember the mercy of God. (HB 354)

To achieve salvation requires conversion, and due to O'Connor's concept of original sin her idea of the conversion process is similar to Weil's notion that man's status as a reversed being requires an unmaking of his creatureliness, the removal of his fictionality and reorientation of the soul towards God.

I don't think of conversion as being once and for all and that's that. I think once the process is begun and continues that you are continually turning inward toward God and away from your own egocentricity and that you have to see this selfish side of yourself in order to turn away from it. (430)

But O'Connor maintains 'I don't know if anybody can be converted without seeing themselves in a kind of blasting annihilating light' (427). As in Weil's schema, she is convinced this dramatic initiation of self-awareness and decreation is reliant on man's inward illumination by grace, and I will now apply Weil's theories of the seed of grace, violent grace and violent free will to O'Connor's ideas.

Weil's central notion of the necessary implantation of, specifically, a seed of grace in the soul, and her supposition that this seed includes the germination of grace through an appreciation of the beauty of the world, is not found in O'Connor's conceptual theory of grace. As I noted while discussing O'Connor in connection with Weil's implicit loves, beauty, and its relation to man and the cosmos plays almost no part in O'Connor's thinking, despite her sacramentalism. In her stress on the importance of loving beauty, and particularly in her claim that the seed of beauty constitutes a *metaxu* for grace - grace is literally attained through nature - Weil is more sacramental, and more Catholic than O'Connor, offering a greater number and variation of bridges to God.

But absolutely vital to a comparative study of Weil and O'Connor's work is Weil's concept of violent grace and the violent free will connected to it, which together provide profound insights into, and interrogation of, O'Connor's equivalent ideas and their depiction in the narratives. Interestingly O'Connor's theories also shed some light on Weil's ideas here. Due to O'Connor's more powerful notion of human liberty, and insistence on the soul's individual immortality, there is little evidence in her theology of the type of Weilean idea of divine deception by which God entraps and devours the soul. But Weil's criteria for violent grace are vital to, and help to illuminate O'Connor's comparable concept in three ways. First, Weil's belief that grace is resisted by man is shared by O'Connor, and therefore in this sense she too considers the soul is transformed, if not taken, almost in spite of itself, rather than voluntarily. 'All human nature vigorously resists grace because grace changes us and the change is painful' she claims (307). Second, Weil's assertion that man's initial contact with grace/God is decisive, effecting a fundamental alteration in the soul, is also evident in O'Connor's contention that grace enables selfless, charitable actions. Referring to a previous letter in which she mentioned mankind's capacity to demonstrate a concern with other people's afflictions, O'Connor writes to her friend 'A':

The kind of concern I mean is a doing, not a feeling, and it is the result of a grace [...] It doesn't have to be associated with religious; I am just trying to isolate this kind of abandonment of self which is the result of sanctifying grace. (455)

Third, and most importantly, Weil's contention that violent grace operates through two successive acts of violence to which God subjects the soul: first, pure violence, and second a violent compulsion on man's free will, provides a unique insight into

O'Connor's concepts of violent grace, violent love, and complex free will. Commensurate with Weil, O'Connor considers experiential violence has a pivotal role in stripping man of his fictionality and a correspondingly decisive impact on the soul. The 'man in the violent situation reveals those qualities least dispensable in his personality, those qualities which are all he will have to take into eternity with him' she contends (MM 114). However in a significant dissimilarity with Weil, she considers this redemptive violence which is interlocked with the action of grace can be achieved through evil actions. Primarily 'interested in the indication of Grace, the moment when you know that Grace has been offered and accepted', O'Connor believes these instants can be prepared for 'by the intensity of the evil circumstances' (HB 367). 'Violence is a force which can be used for good or evil, and among other things taken by it is the kingdom of heaven' she claims, 'more than ever now it seems that the kingdom of heaven has to be taken by violence, or not at all. You have to push as hard as the age that pushes against you' (MM 113, HB 229).

Interestingly, she makes a Weilean-type connection between this sort of pure violence, and the kind of self-violence Weil perceives operating in man's violent free will. While discussing the biblical verse from Matthew 11:12 which provides her novel *The Violent Bear It Away* with its title: 'From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away'; O'Connor describes her fascination with the nobility of unnaturalness rather than the nobility of naturalness, and maintains: the 'violent are not natural. St. Thomas's gloss on this verse is that the violent Christ is here talking about represent those ascetics who strain against mere nature. St. Augustine concurs' (343). This violent wrestling against the natural will, the human mechanics which incline towards gravity, egocentrism, immorality, in order to raise the soul to a higher level and make possible supernatural mechanics - the charitable actions by which moral gravity makes man fall towards the heights - O'Connor terms 'the violence of love, of giving more than the law demands, of an asceticism like John the Baptist's, but in the face of which even John is less than the least in the kingdom' (382). In a separate comment she specifically relates this type of violent love to violent grace.

I have got to the point now where I keep thinking more and more about the presentation of love and charity, or better call it grace, as love suggests tenderness, whereas grace can be violent or would have to be to compete with the kind of evil I can make concrete. (373)

The similarities between O'Connor's violent grace, violent love, and violent will and Weil's concepts are significant, and of great value in providing new readings of *The Violent Bear It Away*. However a conceptual difference in emphasis between the two writers worth observing here, is that O'Connor's less determined notion of human liberty ensures that her version of violent free will, precisely because it is more free, is also more violent. The conflicting forces of man's freedom and God's will, human and spiritual mechanics, are more equally balanced, more mysterious and more complex. Man grapples with his own will, grace, God's compulsion on the soul and also the Devil's, and this struggle is even more intense than Weil's concept of the self-violence induced by God's irresistible force.

Another important distinction is evident when although O'Connor acknowledges that humanity resists grace because it changes the soul and the alteration is painful, she does not envision this harrowing germination taking place after the soul has been abandoned by God. No such desertion occurs, no void is created in O'Connor's theological concept of violent grace, and this leads to another significant difference between the two writers on how man achieves a relationship with God.

Weil's core idea that the seed of grace grows into the same cross as Christ's, and this is the major *metaxu* by which man retraces God's journey to the human soul and is finally absorbed back into God's presence, is not equivalently displayed in O'Connor's theology. There are two important points to make on this dissimilarity. First, due to their different theories of the Creation, O'Connor's notion of Providence ensures that she does not consider man abandoned, or as radically separated from God by a terrible void, and therefore her notion of man's encounter with God does not require a system for spanning the enormous gulf between them that Weil envisions. Second, O'Connor's Christianity: both the Catholic and Fundamentalist areas of her thinking, does ensure she believes the crucified Christ is the primary *metaxu* and *logos alogos* by which God and man are reconciled, but she conceives this vital bridge in a different form to Weil. O'Connor agrees violent grace is essential to humanity's conversion, instigating the necessary recognition of man's limitations and fictionality, and making it possible through suffering and violent love to share in Christ's self-loss through charity and the cross. Bearing the cross through an acceptance of the horrors of affliction whilst continuing to love God are vital. But crucially, it is not consent to void which eventually nails man to the same cross as Christ and transports him across time and space into a personal mystical encounter with God. In O'Connor's theology the unification of God and man is achieved through personal participation in the sacraments, and adherence to

the doctrines of the Catholic Church. Christ and the Church are inseparable, and the individual as literally a member of the collective body of the Church, is simultaneously part of the body of Christ.

In contrast to Weil's mystical philosophy, the Church, with all its doctrines, dogmas and sacraments, is in conjunction with Christ, O'Connor's major *metaxu* between God and man and the bridge which makes a relationship possible. The 'individual in the Church is, no matter how worthless himself, a part of the Body of Christ and a participator in the Redemption' she insists (HB 92). This at-one-ment between God and man achieved by Christ's Incarnation and death on the cross, and the bridge between natural and supernatural realms continuously supplied by the institution of the Church requires a faith which is itself crucifying. Faith 'is the cross' in O'Connor's schema (354), and interestingly it is to faith rather than the horrifying experiential reality of necessity to which she applies a kind of Weilean passive activity and negative virtue. 'If you feel you can't believe, you must at least do this: keep an open mind. Keep it open toward faith, keep wanting it, keep asking for it, and leave the rest to God' she insists (354). It is at this point that O'Connor goes some way towards Weil's notion of the dark night of the soul and its acceptance. 'You arrive at enough certainty to be able to make your way, but it is making it in darkness. Don't expect faith to clear things up for you. It is trust, not certainty' (354), she contends.

In a major difference between the two writers, O'Connor's total faith in the Church and its dogmas as legitimate *metaxu*, and therefore her unlimited adherence to them as a form of trust if not certainty, is directly opposed to Weil's rejection of the Church due to its doctrine of *anathema sit*, and her subsequent belief this statute prevents intellectual honesty and the superposed vision which results from paying attention to, rather than affirming Church doctrines. Weil's theology offers a direct challenge to O'Connor's religion here, by effectively asking why, and how, is the Church necessary? O'Connor's defence of the Church is based on her belief that it provides a successful causeway between God and man precisely because its dogmas preserve religious mysteries and in doing so the Church as an institution has a multilayered prophetic vision essential to man's spiritual development. 'For me a dogma is only a gateway to contemplation and it is an instrument of freedom and not of restriction. It preserves mystery for the human mind' she insists (92). 'The Church's vision is prophetic vision' because it 'stands for and preserves always what is larger than human understanding' (365).

Because unlike Weil, O'Connor believes the Church constitutes a *metaxu* through which, not merely behind which spiritual truths are revealed, she approaches differently the central problem beyond human understanding: why must man suffer? Weil's lack of faith in the Church as spiritual mediator, ensures the answer to the afflicted's cry is supplied by a personal epiphany in which the silent void is itself paradoxically God's Word. Although O'Connor's acknowledgement of the crucifying struggle to have faith, as part of man's experiential agony is in some ways equivalent to Weil's experience of void, in O'Connor's religious thinking God's Word is ultimately not heard in this horrifying silence but through the Church. It is its dogmas and sacraments which supply the real words of comfort for which mankind craves, and through which the Word of God is audible by man, enabling a relationship between them. Why Christ found the world worth dying for remains a mystery, but it is Christ who 'speaks to us now through the mediation of a visible Church' she maintains, insisting that although 'this may seem a long way from the subject of fiction' it is not, because 'the main concern of the fiction writer is with mystery as it is incarnated in human life' (MM 176).

The writer of philosophical, prophetic fictions must demonstrate mystery through manners, grace through nature and communicate the Word via human words. I will now analyse how as prophetic writer O'Connor attempts to communicate this vital action of grace, man's crucial encounter with his God, through the medium of fictional narratives. To achieve this I will briefly use Weil and O'Connor's concepts of violent grace to illuminate *The Violent Bear It Away*, and Weil's final two criteria for texts of genius: violent grace, and the resultant brief moments of epiphany in which men find their souls, will be applied to the narrative.

My analysis of violent grace in the novel will be divided into three sections which demonstrate the depiction of: first, the seed of grace as prophecy and its connection to violence, second, violent free will, and third, violent love. Using the parable of the sower (Matthew 13: 4-9, Mark 4: 1-9) as her basis for representing her concept of the seed of God's Word, through repetitive symbolism which interconnects this seed with the hereditary blood line of her three major characters: Mason Tarwater, Francis Marion Tarwater, and Rayber, O'Connor structures the novel into her own form of typology. Mason Tarwater's mission to pass on the seed of prophecy to Rayber appears to have failed yet he insists, 'Good blood knows the Lord and there ain't a thing he can do about having it. There ain't a way in the world he can get rid of it' (VB 59). 'I planted the seed in him and it was there for good. Whether anybody liked it or not' he claims, 'it fell in deep' (67). Both Rayber and Francis

Tarwater attempt to flee their prophetic heritage yet its compulsion on their souls dominates their behaviour. Francis is afraid Mason's hunger for Christ's bread 'might be passed down, might be hidden in the blood and might strike some day in him' and that 'torn by hunger' there would be 'nothing that would heal or fill' his stomach but the bread of life' (21) Yet he informs Rayber that it is he who contains the seed and there 'ain't a thing you can do about it. It fell on bad ground but it fell in deep', whereas with himself 'it fell on rock and the wind carried it away' (192). The vehemence of Rayber's reply displays how concerned he is to deny this assertion. 'God damn you!' he responds, contending that the seed fell in both of them but he can control it. 'I know it's in me and I keep it under control. I weed it out but you're too blind to know it's in you. You don't even know what makes you do the things you do' (192). But reading the novel through Weil's interconnected concepts of pure violence, and the violence against the self which is a result of the compulsion of a supernatural necessity, after Tarwater's murder of Bishop and the (im)pure homosexual rape, Tarwater is forced to consent to the seed of grace within him being germinated. When he receives his epiphany, and sees Mason eating with the disciples and Christ, O'Connor amalgamates the seed, blood and bread of life symbolism which spans the novel. Earlier in the narrative Mason's words, we are informed by the narrator, 'had been dropping one by one into him and now, silent, hidden in his bloodstream, were moving secretly toward some goal of their own' (61). When Tarwater finally consents to the prophetic mission in which he must 'GO WARN THE CHILDREN OF GOD OF THE TERRIBLE SPEED OF MERCY', the words are described 'as silent seeds opening one at a time in his blood' (242).

Violent free will forms an important part of the novel. Defending the text against accusations of determinism, O'Connor insists that an 'absence of free will in these characters would mean an absence of conflict in them, whereas they spend all their time fighting within themselves, drive against drive' (HB 488), and this contention is borne out by the central characters. When Mason 'thrashed out his peace with the Lord' he looked 'as if he had been wrestling a wild cat' (VB 8) Tarwater struggles to free himself from Mason, Rayber, God, and the 'stranger' who informs him 'It ain't Jesus or the devil. It's Jesus or *you* (39). He tries to escape Rayber's rationalist control insisting 'I'm free [...] I'm outside your head. I ain't in it and I ain't about to be' (111). The compulsion on him to accept his prophetic mission and baptise Bishop, and his competing efforts to resist it, are evident when seeing Bishop playing in the park fountain he 'seemed to be drawn toward the child in the water but to be pulling back, exerting an almost equal pressure away from what attracted

him' (145). Yet O'Connor acknowledges the type of compulsion of God's pressure on the soul that Weil identifies. Although 'Tarwater is certainly free and meant to be', O'Connor contends that if he does demonstrate a compulsion to become a prophet it is not psychological, but rather 'in this compulsion is the mystery of God's will for him' (MM 116).

Rayber's actions also demonstrate this type of violent free will, which veers between his inherited seed of violent prophecy and his secular humanist attempt to eradicate it. He 'felt afflicted with a peculiar chilling clarity of mind in which he saw himself divided in two - a violent and a rational self' (VB 139). The family affliction of prophecy must be either fought or succumbed to. 'The old man had been ruled by it. He at the cost of a full life, staved it off. What the boy would do hung in the balance' (114). Rayber considers he has 'turned his destiny as if with his bare will', and considering what 'we understand, we can control', he desires to remove Tarwater's compulsion to baptise Bishop, 'expose it to the light, and let him have a good look at it' (115, 187) He informs Tarwater that he wants to prevent him being 'driven by a compulsion you don't understand' because he believes that what 'we understand, we can control' (194).

But Rayber's mysterious, violent love for Bishop, which is connected to the seed of grace implanted within him obstructs his rational attempts to control his free will. Rushing 'from some inexplicable part of himself, he would experience a love for the child so outrageous that he would be left shocked and depressed for days, and trembling for his sanity' (113). Bishop is its fountainhead 'but then like an avalanche' Rayber's violent love 'covered everything his reason hated', and constituting 'a touch of the curse that lay in his blood', in these irrational moments he longs to share Mason's prophetic, 'impossible vision of a world transfigured' the desire for which is 'like an undertow in his blood dragging him backwards to what he knew to be madness' (113, 114). An instance of this illogical violent love is shown when Rayber follows Tarwater to a revival meeting and hears the child evangelist Lucette Carmody preach. Carmody specifically connects this mysterious capacity for irrational love to Christ as the Word of God, and his redemptive crucifixion on the cross, insisting the 'Word of God is love and do you know what love is you people? If you don't know what love is you won't know Jesus when He comes. You won't be ready' (130). Preoccupied with his pity for the girl, and his vision of himself as a human saviour 'moving like an avenging angel through the world, gathering up all the children that the Lord, not Herod, had slain' so that he could 'let the sunshine flood their minds', (132, 133); Rayber is not prepared for the

young prophet's accusation that he is 'a damned soul', a 'dead man Jesus hasn't raised', whose ear is 'deaf to the Holy Word!' (134). Carmody's words prophesy Rayber's response to the drowning of Bishop, when apart from the 'dull mechanical beat of his heart' he 'continued to feel nothing' (203). Earlier the narrator notes how Rayber can only control his terrifying love if it is concentrated on Bishop, but if anything happened to the child 'he would have to face it in himself' and comply with his love for the world, or 'resist feeling anything at all, thinking anything at all' and would 'have to anaesthetise his life' (182). With his reaction to Bishop's death, Tarwater appears to have lost the ability to balance the madness of love with emptiness, and fulfilled his intention 'to lurch toward emptiness and fall on the side of his choice' (115).

O'Connor maintains that 'Rayber's love for Bishop is the purest love I have ever dealt with. It is because of its terrifying purity that Rayber has to destroy it. Very interesting' (HB 379). But many critics find no purity in the novel, and although the characterisation of Rayber is deemed unsatisfactory because he is unconvincing: Bloom considers him 'an aesthetic disaster' who is not 'even minimally persuasive' (Bloom, 2); disapproval of the novel as immoral and uncatholic mostly revolves around its use of violence. According to a review of *The Violent Bear It Away*, 'O'Connor's sophisticated pessimism creates a number of unrewarding moral culs-de-sac'.³⁹ Brinkmeyer argues that it is the violent who bear 'if not the kingdom of heaven, then at least this novel - away', O'Connor 'was in this novel carried away too, her more charitable Catholic vision overwhelmed by her fundamentalist fanaticism' (*Art and Vision*, 131). Weil's final two criteria for texts of literary and spiritual genius are useful here in approaching the issue of whether the depiction of violent grace in the novel successfully prepares for a moment of grace in which men find their souls.

Tarwater's rape and its impact on his subsequent behaviour does comply with Weil's third standard for fictions of redemptive genius, that they must manifest grace intervening violently in human affairs, which causes suffering against the will, and leads to the redemptive cognition of spiritual truth. The cruciform imagery used to describe Tarwater's awakening naked, with his hands tied, and finding himself 'propped up against a log that lay across a small open space between two very tall trees'; combined with his 'twisted' mouth, 'scorched' eyes and the 'loud cry' that 'tore' out of him, testify to his affliction. (VB 231-32, 232). But the cross symbolises redemptive suffering as well as undeserved agony, and combined with his burning of the bushes which mark the site of the rape, suggests Tarwater's

potential to apprehend sacred truths. This is emphasised by the information that he 'knew that his destiny forced him on to a final revelation', and that Tarwater's eyes 'would never be used for ordinary sights again' (232).

Tarwater's vision of Mason sharing the Eucharist with the 'multitude' he sees 'seated on the slope' of the field, and his apparition of the 'red-gold tree of fire' which appeared 'as if it would consume the darkness in one tremendous burst of flame' (241, 242), qualifies the narrative for the first feature of Weil's final criteria for texts of genius, that they must render both the beauty as well as the bitterness of the world. But most crucially, the conclusion of the novel depicts Weil's most important demand for redemptive fictions, that they represent the brief epiphanic instant of grace in which men manage to rise above the strictures of gravity and find their souls. The command to go warn of the terrible speed of God's mercy, the 'words which were as silent as seeds opening one at a time in his blood' constitute the vital moment of grace in which Tarwater transcends the limits imposed on him by the world of necessity, and finds his soul by accepting his prophetic mission (242). The final paragraphs of the novel are loaded with imagery that indicates this spiritual ascendancy. Tarwater's epiphany begins when his eyes 'lifting' beyond Mason's grave 'appeared to see something coming in the distance' (240), and when he experiences his hunger as a tide rather than a pain, Tarwater :

felt it rising in himself through time and darkness, rising through the centuries, and he knew that it rose in a line of men whose lives were chosen to sustain it, who would wander in the world, strangers from that violent country where the silence is never broken except to shout the truth. (242)

I would argue that in this narrative, O'Connor fulfils Weil's criteria for texts of redemptive genius, and in doing so, manages to parallel her own role as Christian writer-prophet with her fictional character's mission. As Desmond contends:

O'Connor's novel is prophetic in at least two senses. It dramatizes the struggle of young Tarwater over whether to answer the call to become a prophet, a bearer of God's word into the world. On another level the novel is reflexive; through Tarwater's struggle it dramatizes O'Connor's struggle as prophetic novelist.⁴⁰

To what extent O'Connor is successful at realising a Christian literature, and just how my thesis demonstrates how Weil's work assists in interrogating O'Connor's writings, forms the basis of my following Conclusion.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. E. J. Yarnold, 'Grace', in Richardson & Bowden, *Christian Theology*, pp. 244-45 (p.245).

2. Types of Christian grace identified by theologians include: 'uncreated grace': God's gift of himself, 'created grace': the transformation of human nature this brings about, 'habitual' and 'sanctifying grace': God's supernatural self-communication permanently offered, and the permanent principle of new life in the Spirit; 'actual grace': required for particular needs and actualised in the act of acceptance, 'elevating grace': participation in divine nature, 'healing grace': heals the effects of sin, 'prevenient grace': God's grace anticipating man's movement to God, and 'efficacious grace': God's offer of grace to which man responds. For detailed analysis of grace and its related concepts see the relevant entries in the theological works I have referred to in previous chapters: Richardson & Bowden, *ibid.*, Komonchak, *Dictionary of Theology*, McGrath, *Introduction, and Reader*, McBrien, *Catholicism*. See also: on both Catholic and Protestant doctrines: Henry Bettenson, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967). On contemporary Christian theologians, an area I am unable to cover here due to constraints of space see: David F. Ford, ed., *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1997). For detailed discussions of Catholic grace and its related doctrines see: Jacques Dupuis, ed., *The Christian Faith: In the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, 6th edn (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1996), Aidan Nichols, O.P., *The Shape of Catholic Theology: An Introduction to Its Sources, Principles, and History* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), and Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, trans. by Patrick Lynch, ed. by James Bastible, 4th edn (Rockford, Illinois: Tan, 1960).

3. *Catholicism*, p.1236. Conversion also refers to 'the decision of an individual or group to change affiliation from one major religious tradition to another'. See Lewis R. Rambo, 'Conversion', in Richardson and Bowden, pp.123-24 (p.123).

4. David A. Pailin, 'Revelation', in *ibid.*, pp.503-06 (p.503). See also: revelation is 'God's self-disclosure (literally, "unveiling") to humankind through creation, events, persons, and especially Jesus Christ', *Catholicism*, p. 1249.

5. Diane Bergant, CSA, 'Prophecy', in Komonchak, pp.808-11 (p.808). Prophecy involves individuals experiencing personal revelations that deepen their understanding of God, man, and the world, and for New Testament prophets such as St. Paul this involves deepening their understanding of the gospels. See St. Paul on revelation: Romans 16: 25-27, Colossians 1: 26, on the mystery of revelation and its witnessing by the Apostles and prophets: 1 Corinthians 2: 7 and Ephesians 3:5. On his private revelations, and how others can experience revelations as insights into

the gospels see: 2 Corinthians 12: 1-7, Galatians 2: 2, and Ephesians 1: 17, Philippians 3: 15.

6. I use the terms 'Protestant' and 'Protestantism', like Jeffrey Gros FSC, to refer to 'those Churches and ecclesial communions of the West that have their origin in the sixteenth-century Reformation'. See his 'Protestantism' in Komonchak, pp. 811-15 (p.811). I concentrate here on the traditional distinction between Catholicism and Protestantism at the expense of more recent ecumenical movements between the two churches for two reasons. First, Weil died long before the changes of emphasis in Catholic doctrine heralded by Vatican II (October 1962 - December 1965), and second, O'Connor's conservative Catholicism, interest in, and respect for Protestantism, plus her death in 1964, ensured she was only marginally affected by the changing religious climate.

7. As McGrath observes, Pelagius 'understood grace to be external enlightenment provided for humanity by God', which 'informs us what our moral duties are', but 'does not, however, assist us to perform them. We are enabled to avoid sin through the teaching and example of Christ', *Introduction*, p.375.

8. See McGrath:

Humanity is justified as an act of grace: even human good works are the result of God working within fallen human nature. Everything leading up to salvation is the free and unmerited gift of God, given out of love for sinners. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God is enabled to deal with fallen humanity in this remarkable and generous manner, giving us that which we do not deserve (salvation), and withholding from us that which we do deserve (condemnation). (Ibid. p.376)

Augustine's notion of 'prevenient grace' maintains 'God's grace is active in human lives before conversion', while his theory of 'operative grace' considers 'God effects the conversion of sinners without any assistance on their part. Conversion is a purely divine process, in which God operates upon the sinner'. Ibid., p.378.

9. 'Actual grace' constitutes 'a series of divine actions or influences upon human nature', while 'habitual grace' is 'a created habit of grace, within the human soul', *ibid.*, p.379. On how grace builds on nature in Aquinas' schema see Mc Brien: 'Grace elevates and transforms human nature, but human nature retains all of its characteristics, including its weaknesses [...] Grace presupposes nature; it doesn't replace it', *Catholicism*, p. 176. If 'grace supposes nature, nature in its own way supposes grace', and this 'emphasis on the importance of the natural and of the natural order is historically and theologically characteristic of Catholicism'. *Ibid.*, p.169.

10. Augustine argued that justification ‘was to be found within believers; Luther insisted that it remained outside believers. For Augustine the righteousness in question is internal; for Luther it is external.’ McGrath, *Introduction*, p. 385. Protestants ‘drew a sharp distinction between the event of being *declared* righteous and the process of being *made* righteous, designating the former “justification” and the latter “sanctification”’, while for Catholicism they were ‘simply different aspects of the same thing’. *Ibid.*, p.387. For excerpts from the most important documents on the Catholic and Protestant debate in the human nature versus grace argument, see McGrath’s *Reader*, pp.212-57.

11. See McGrath:

Faith is not assent to an abstract set of doctrines, but a union between Christ and the believer. It is the response of the whole person of the believer to God, which leads in turn to the real and personal presence of Christ in the believer [...] Faith makes both Christ and his benefits - such as forgiveness, justification, and hope - available to the believer. (*Introduction* p.384)

The Catholic Church’s response at The Council of Trent (1545-1563) was to deny the supremacy of faith and reinforce the doctrine that faith is not saving without good works, hope and charity: ‘No one can know with a certitude of faith which cannot be subject to error, that one has obtained God’s grace’, “‘You see that one is justified by works and not by faith alone”. It is this increase in faith that the holy Church asks for when she prays: “Give us, O Lord, an increase of faith, hope and charity”’. Dupuis, *Christian Faith*, p.754.

12. See Springstead’s analysis of Weil’s *metaxu* in *Christus Mediator*, pp. 197-219.

13. See Weil on ‘conventions’:

If it were something other than a convention, it would be at least partially human and not totally divine. A real convention is a supernatural harmony [...] Only a convention can be the perfection of purity here below, for all nonconventional purity is more or less imperfect. That a convention should be real, that is a miracle of divine mercy. (WFG p.188)

14. ‘Prayer consists of attention. It is the orientation of all the attention of which the soul is capable toward God’, *ibid.*, p. 105.

15. 'There is no friendship where there is inequality' Weil insists (*ibid.*, p.204), it requires the same type of equilibrium of incommensurates achieved when the non-afflicted assists the afflicted:

Through this supernatural miracle of respect for human autonomy, friendship is very like the pure forms of compassion and gratitude called forth by affliction. In both cases the contraries which are the terms of the harmony are necessity and liberty, or in other words subordination and equality. These two pairs of opposites are equivalent. (*Ibid.* p.205)

16. For an analysis of Weil's concept of beauty see Patrick Sherry, 'Simone Weil on Beauty', in Bell, pp.260-76.

17. GG, p.4. Note the similarity between Weil's concept of moral gravity and Christian humility: 'For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the man who humbles himself will be exalted.' Luke 14: 11.

18. WFG, p. 195, p.197. Weil's rejection of a search for God is due to the influence of Hinduism on her thinking:

As the Hindus perceived, the great difficulty in seeking for God is that we have him within us, at the centre of ourselves. How can I approach myself? Every step I take leads me away from myself. That is why we cannot search for God. (FLN p.261)

19. WFG, p.64. This bread/stone imagery is a motif used frequently by Weil: see *ibid.*, p.107, p.220, p.157 amongst others. This symbolism is connected to a wider concept: the need to look and not eat as an analogy for the requirement to develop passive activity/desire for God, rather than a search for him via muscular free will. Referring to the biblical Fall narrative in which 'by eating the fruit' Eve 'caused humanity to be lost', Weil maintains 'the opposite attitude' should be what saves mankind, *ibid.*, p.166. "Two winged companions", says an Upanishad, "two birds are on the branch of a tree. One eats the fruit, the other looks at it". These two birds are the two parts of our soul', *ibid.* 'Man's great affliction, which begins with infancy and accompanies him till death, is that looking and eating are two different operations. Eternal beatitude [...] is a state where to look is to eat', NB, p.637. This concept is apparent in Weil's attitude to the Eucharist. On this subject see Loades, 'Eucharistic Sacrifice: Simone Weil's Use of a Liturgical Metaphor', and Van Herik on looking and eating imagery.

20. Weil's notion of void in addition to other areas of her philosophy has both similarities with and distinctions from existentialism. On Weil, void, and

existentialism see Iris Murdoch, 'Void', in her *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (London: Penguin, 1992), pp. 498-512; 'Knowing the Void' in *Existentialists and Mystics*, pp.157-160 (first publ. in *The Spectator*, November 1956), and E. W. Martin, 'Simone Weil and Existential Commitment', *Hibbert Journal*, 63 (1964), 9-12.

21. See St. John of the Cross: 'The means to a knowledge of God and of oneself is this dark night with its aridities and voids' from which:

the soul draws spiritual humility, which is the contrary virtue to the first capital sin, which as we said, is spiritual pride. Through this humility, which is acquired by the said knowledge of self, the soul is purged from all those imperfections whereinto it fell with respect to that sin of pride, in the time of its prosperity.

See Book I, Chapter XII, (8), in *Dark Night*, p.75.

22. To consent to being 'anonymous [...] to renounce prestige, public esteem - that is to bear witness to the truth, namely, that one is composed of human material, that one has no rights. It is to cast aside all ornament, to put up with one's nakedness' (NB p. 217).

23. Robert Coles links Weil's concept of decreation to a kind of inverted egocentrism:

there is a terrific (and arguably perverse) willfulness at work in all this struggle for paralysis, even as the notion of "decreation" may be regarded as an ultimate assertion of the self by means of the very effort to assault and demolish, once and for all, its hold.

See his article 'Simone Weil: The Mystery of Her Life', *Yale Review*, 73.2 (1984) 309-20 (p.319). However Weil's respect for Hinduism may offer a more positive interpretation for her concept of decreation. Discussing the Hindu notion that God is within the self, she notes the only way to legitimately search for God is 'to come out of oneself and contemplate oneself from outside. Then, from outside, one sees at the centre of oneself God as he is', but this requires 'total renunciation of being anybody'. FLN, p.261.

24. See St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 13: 12: 'Now we are seeing a dim reflection in a mirror; but then we shall be seeing face to face. The knowledge that I have now is imperfect; but then I shall know as fully as I am known.'

25. FLN, p.310. But her idea that the soul is consumed by the divine ensures that the distinction between heaven and hell that is so vital to Christian notions of redemption and damnation, is less important to Weil. The concepts of heaven and hell amount to imaginative constructs by which the human mind can understand the soul's fate. Mankind cannot conceive the difference between the soul's disappearance into the absence or presence of God and that 'is why the representations of heaven and hell have been elaborated, so as to have an approximation which the imagination can grasp', *ibid.*, 142.

26. Weil finds this concept in Plato's *Phaedrus*, the myth of the Cave in *Republic*, and the biblical parable concerning the wedding banquet. See IC, pp. 3-4.

27. This cannibalistic imagery is apparent elsewhere in Weil's writings. 'Instead of loving a human being for his hunger, we love him as food for ourselves. We love like cannibals. To love purely is to love the hunger in a human being' she claims FLN, 284. Weil appears to consider God's devourment of man is an acceptable metaphor for divine love, but when she applies the same type of symbolism to the relationship between humans it has a negative connotation. The limitation of human love is due to the fact 'one loves only what one can eat. When a thing is no longer edible one leaves it to anyone else who can still find nourishment in it', *ibid.*, p. 322-23.

28. For excellent analyses of Christian mysticism, its symbolism and language, see Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), and Evelyn Underhill, *The Mystic Way: The Role of Mysticism in the Christian Life* (Atlanta, Georgia: Ariel Press, 1913, 1992). See also: Grace M. Jantzen, *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), and Mark A. McIntosh, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1998).

29. The position of the intelligence is 'the key to this harmony, because the intelligence is a specifically and rigorously individual thing. This harmony exists wherever the intelligence, remaining in its place, can be exercised without hindrance and can reach the complete fulfillment of its function'. WFG, p.78.

30. LP, p.37. But Aquinas actually demonstrates more flexibility than Weil acknowledges. Also concerned to preserve the primacy of individual conscience in the face of the possibility of institutionalised error, he maintains: 'anyone upon whom the ecclesiastical authority, in the ignorance of true facts, imposes a demand that offends against his clear conscience, should perish in excommunication rather than violate his conscience'. *IV Sentences*, dist. 38, q. 2, a. 4, *Catholicism*, p.972.

31. See McGrath, *Introduction*, pp.379-92 on grace and justification by faith, and on *sola Scriptura* see *ibid.*, pp.66-67.

32. See J. T. McNeill's discussions of 'Calvinism, Calvin', and 'Lutheranism, Luther', in Richardson and Bowden, pp.79-81, and pp.342-44.

33. NB, p.574. This struggling against God can be attributed to both Weil's Jewishness and ego. See Nevin:

How Jewish, too, we find her passionate wrestling, often bitter and violent, with God. Her *attente de Dieu* itself barely conceals a plea that God issue her a command, make, as it were, a covenant with her. This is egotism of the highest order. (Nevin p.390)

34. Turner, p.32. See Ricoeur on how silence opens up a space for 'hearkening' and obedience in his essay 'Religion, Atheism, and Faith', in *Conflict of Interpretations*, pp. 440-67 (pp.449-52).

35. See Weil's substitution of her favourite *metaxu*: affliction, for baptism:

Baptism contains the symbol of the state of perfection. The engagement it involves is the promise to desire that state and to beseech God for it - as a hungry child never stops asking his father for bread. But we cannot know what this promise commits us to until we encounter the terrible presence of affliction. It is only there, face to face with affliction that the true commitment can be made, through a more secret, more mysterious, more miraculous contact even than a sacrament.

36. See note 63 in my Introduction on 'passive diminishments'.

37. See his *The Otherness Within: Gnostic Readings in Marcel Proust, Flannery O'Connor, and Francois Villon* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1983), p.96.

38. For a detailed analysis of Protestant Fundamentalism see Kathleen C. Boone, *The Bible Tells Them So: The Discourse of Protestant Fundamentalism* (London: SCM Press, 1989, 1990). See William Dinges, 'Fundamentalism', in Komonchak, pp. 411-14, and Raymond F. Collins, 'Fundamentalism', in Richardson and Bowden, pp.223-24 for the similarities and differences between Catholicism and Fundamentalism. See O'Connor's own expressions of the resemblances between her Catholic faith and the fundamentalists, including: 'I accept the same fundamental doctrines of sin and redemption and judgement that they do', HB, p.350. 'Theologically our differences with them are on the nature of the Church, not on the nature of God or our obligations to him' she insists, *ibid.*, p.518. For a useful

discussion of O'Connor's Fundamentalism and its links to her fictional form see Robert H. Brinkmeyer Jr., 'A Closer Walk with Thee: Flannery O'Connor and Southern Fundamentalists', *Southern Literary Journal*, 18.2 (1986), 313-21.

39. 'Review', *Times Literary Supplement*, 14 October 1960, p.666.

40. See his article 'Violence and the Christian Mystery: A Way to Read Flannery O'Connor', *Literature and Belief*, 15 (1995), 163-181.

CONCLUSION: DEEPER AND STRANGER VISIONS

In 1964, Flannery O'Connor presented a lecture, later published as 'Catholic Novelists and Their Readers' in which she informs her audience:

The poet is traditionally a blind man, but the Christian poet, and storyteller as well, is like the blind man whom Christ touched, who looked then and saw men as if they were trees, but walking. This is the beginning of vision, and it is an invitation to deeper and stranger visions that we shall have to learn to accept if we want to realize a truly Christian literature.¹

As writer-prophet O'Connor aims to inscribe deeper and stranger Christian visions on the souls of her 'monstrous' secular readers through fictional and non-fictional writings. To conclude my analysis of her attempt to achieve this by correcting what she considered her audience's impaired, desacralised vision, I will examine two questions. First, how does my thesis demonstrate how Weil's work can assist readers to see O'Connor's writings differently, and interrogate her form(s), theology, and the relationship between them? Second, how successful is O'Connor at persuading her secular audience to read her work differently, recalling them to known but ignored spiritual truths, and realising 'a truly Christian literature'?

To re-view how Weil and her work makes an original contribution to the field of O'Connor studies, I will divide my analysis into three sections examining: first, Weil's inter-linked concepts of superposed reading and locating equilibrium between incommensurates. Second, her four criteria for literature of genius, and her notions of the writer's role. Third, her theological concepts of God, experiential reality, man, and how they are connected.

As my Introduction demonstrated, Weil's theory of superposed reading, with its central premise that to *read*, rather than possess merely subjective, inaccurate opinions dominated by prejudices, requires intensive attention in which truths may be eventually ascertained by balancing many simultaneous interpretations, provides a new method of approaching both O'Connor and her writings. This superposed reading strategy supplies O'Connor's critics with a mode of reading the ambiguities and contradictions within her narratives and non-fictional writings, a means of balancing the actual content of the fictions with her aural circumcision; a method of

finding equilibrium between divergent critical interpretations, and consequently, permits her readers to ascertain some truths, if not *the* truth, contained in O'Connor's works.

Weil's extension of her superposed reading strategy to include the concept of finding equilibrium between incommensurates is an extremely useful tool for building the kind of critical architecture in, and through which to analyse O'Connor's writings and O'Connor studies itself. Weil's notion that the illegitimate use of contradiction involves being prematurely satisfied with one-dimensional solutions to contraries can be rightly applied to the type of 'Pavlovian critics' Satterfield and others have identified: who read the fictions from a single Christian/anagogical perspective, because they have been instructed to do so through O'Connor's aural circumcision. Such readers ignore both the complexity of the fictions, which offer spiritual connotations yet undermine them, and the ambivalences within O'Connor's lectures, essays, and letters, which are themselves dialogic and subjective. Her critical disciples effectively negate one element of the contradiction, the literal, in their search for specifically anagogical textual completions, and in doing so fall into the critical trap of reading the fictions as theological treatises.

Yet O'Connor's secular readers are also capable, in their contrary inclination to negate anagogical interpretations, of allowing their objections to the aural circumcision process perpetuated by O'Connor and her elect, to obstruct their reading of the stories, and consequently underestimate the quality of the fictions. In his vitriolic castigation of O'Connor and her literary disciples, Satterfield's invective is as guilty of the 'didacticism with a vengeance' that he so ardently condemns in his critical opponents (Satterfield 41). His conclusion that O'Connor 'will remain a second rate fictionist' (42), appears founded not on close examination of the fictions, but the assertion that if 'the things the sectarian critics have written about O'Connor have any validity, then her work is undeniably more concerned with doctrine than art', and therefore he argues, she should be placed in the canon of American literature as 'a religious propagandist of minor importance who wrote didactic fiction, or at least thought she did' (48). Both O'Connor's insider and outsider readers are like Weil's critics, subjective.² But Weil's superposed method of finding legitimate equilibrium between contraries by intensive attention, detached, objective vision which negates neither element of the contradiction, offers a framework for balancing the different readings both O'Connor, her work, and O'Connor studies itself 'cries out for'.

Yet paradoxically it is Weil's own subjectivity, her outsider's prejudiced philosophical bias against the autonomous value of fictions, which leads to the second major area in which she illuminates O'Connor and her writings. It is due to her belief that the majority of fictional narratives prevent the attainment of spiritual truths because they are inherently fictitious, and her opinion that fiction writers, unless they have a 'philosophical bent' are unworthy of attention, that instigates Weil's establishment of her criteria for texts and writers of genius, which, as Chapter One argued, offer original, and indispensable frameworks for interrogating O'Connor's fictions and her role as Christian writer-prophet.

Sharing O'Connor's concern with how to make narratives mediums for the communication of spiritual truths, yet conversely considering this function is only achievable by solving the 'problem' of literary fictionality through narratives which transcend their fictional status, Weil combines the incommensurates of insider and outsider viewpoints to provide a truly different way of reading O'Connor's fictions and her comments about them. Her four criteria for texts of genius more convincingly explicate O'Connor's aims as anagogical writer than O'Connor's own non-fictional writings, and offer a means of judging how successfully O'Connor's narratives - separated from her aural circumcision - may, or may not, write Christian truths on the soul. Weil's first three points offer more succinctly and compellingly, insights into O'Connor's motivation for using the multiple interpretative levels offered by fictions, specifically, medieval allegory, and her reasons for employing the violent shock-tactics of the grotesque genre as a method of communicating her Christian vision, making a story successful, and fulfilling her mission as writer-prophet. Yet Weil's fourth criteria, that great spiritual fictions must demonstrate both the beauty and afflictions of human life, allied to her stress on their requirement to accurately depict the oppositional relationship between good and evil that dominates experiential reality, offers some explanation for why the moments of grace O'Connor insists occur within the narratives, remain less than convincing to her outsider readers. The absence or inversion of beauty in her stories, O'Connor's Catholic belief in the utility of sin, and employment of evil as a preparation for the action of grace in the narratives, makes the fictions more dramatic and interesting, but ultimately dilutes her theological thesis: that such grotesque and immoral characters, in such an ugly Fallen world, have the potential to be, actually have been redeemed.

Weil's extension of the (im)morality issue to incorporate the fiction writer's function, again based on her philosophical bias - fictions must transcend fictionality, great writers require sanctity, writing on the soul is connected to the soul of the

writer - provides significant illuminations of O'Connor's notion of her role as Christian fiction writer, and her preoccupation with how to balance the competing demands of her theology and fictional form. The contentious Weilean notion that to write texts of genius which themselves participate in the redemptive process through which readers, as well as fictional protagonists, re-cognise spiritual truths, requires rare writers of genius whose sanctity is the only antidote to the innate immorality of fictions, offers new methods of interrogating O'Connor and her work. Flawed though it is by her defective rationale - the equation of genius with sanctity, the claim that writers of non-genius are incapable of being inspired by the sacred, or communicating spiritual truths - Weil's argument that average writers with pretensions to morality are no less immoral than others, have usurped the function of spiritual guidance which they do not deserve, and bear a moral responsibility for weakening spiritual values by depicting immorality, offers an important new slant through which to question O'Connor's concept of her role as Christian writer-prophet, and presumption that the grotesque genre assists her to reveal spiritual truths. Are her non-fictional proclamations of Christian orthodoxy pretensions to morality which are insufficient to countermand the immoral/amoral content of her narratives? Is O'Connor's defence of her amoral/grotesque narratives as: first, accurate depictions of a Fallen world, second, a necessary strategy for demonstrating this reality to readers too stupid or recalcitrant to accept it, and third, her somewhat sanctimonious 'habit of art' argument, sufficient to deserve/preserve her role as a kind of self-proclaimed literary-spiritual guide? Is it really credible to claim that her allegiance to the Catholic Church and its moral guardianship both intensifies her prophetic vision and absolves her of any moral responsibility for her work?

Weil's concern with establishing the spiritual function of fictions from a distinctively philosophical viewpoint demonstrates her own status as both insider/outsider critic of literature, and I would argue, a fertile source for interpreting O'Connor and her writings. Weil's religious consciousness without a religion, Christianity without a Church, makes her insider/outsider spiritual position equally invaluable to interrogating O'Connor's theology and its depiction/non-depiction in the fictions. As Thomas Merton has observed, Weil 'preferred not to be in the middle of the Catholically approved and well-censored page, but only on the margin', and remained there as a question mark, 'questioning not Christ, but Christians'.³ So how does she cross-examine O'Connor's theology and her narratives?

As I observed in Chapter Two, Weil's concepts of God, reality, and the nature of man, in both their similarities and distinctions from O'Connor's theories offer profitable lines of investigation into O'Connor's work. The Weilean rational philosophical response to how it is possible to approach the mystery of God's existence, and the idea that atheism can be a purification, questions O'Connor's preference for faith over reason, and her notion that Christian scepticism is only constructive within the confines of the Catholic Church. Weil's unorthodox creation theory, her idea that God is both omnipotent and impotent, absent and present, and her unusual theodicy, which links the incommensurates of terrible affliction and human immorality with the existence of a benevolent God, offer useful contradistinctions to O'Connor's Catholic concept of Providence. Equally, Weil's ideas provide interesting insights into O'Connor's notion that her fictions can only show grace in its absence, and how her Fallen fictional world and its protagonists, though saturated with ontic and moral evils, can conceivably also be simultaneously redeemed and subject to God's beneficial mercy.

But it is in her concepts of man, and his relationship with God, that Weil provides some of her most significant insights into O'Connor's theology and writings. Her central exploration of the problems caused by ontological fictionality, and the schema she presents as a solution to overcoming this spiritual damage offer original interrogations of O'Connor's concept of 'monstrous' secular man, and how she analyses being fictional with the fictional beings in the microcosms of her narratives. The core Weilean concept of affliction, its vital element of spiritual torment and capacity to annihilate man's fictional self, explains with greater lucidity than O'Connor's own comments, the predicament of the maimed souls she is primarily concerned to explore in the narratives.

This idea loss of self is paradoxically man's greatest virtue, leads into Weil's complex, interconnected notions of the three domains and architecture of the soul, which are highly pertinent to readings of O'Connor's work. Weil's in-depth examination of how the body may act as a lever for the soul, the philosophical framework she provides to analyse how man is subject to the gravitational pulls of his physical environment, yet crucially also subject to the supernatural necessity of God's compulsion on, and presence in, the soul, offers fascinating new avenues of exploration into O'Connor's fundamental theory of the interconnection of mystery and manners, and how she attempts to depict the action of grace through a primarily grotesque nature in her fictions. The type of Weilean (un)free will that makes impulsive spiritual actions possible provides a new method of approaching O'Connor's notion of humanity's conflicting free will(s), and her key concept of

the anagogical gesture she claims takes place in her fictions. Weil's theories on the links between contemporary man's deracination and desacralisation, and her claim that risk is a vital need of the soul, provide rewarding insights into some of O'Connor's most important theological beliefs and fictional requirements: her preoccupations with modern society's spiritual rootlessness, the reality of man's liberty, the free will on which the soul's eternal fate pivots between salvation and damnation; and her attempts to reproduce this hazardous drama of the soul in fictional form. Even Weil's inconsistencies provide insights into O'Connor's own. Weil's blurring of obedience to God into determinism, her failure to adequately distinguish between ontic and moral evils, the tension in her thinking between a Manichean desire to consider good and evil radically opposed, yet concession they may be linked, her claim for man's free will yet impoverished view of humanity prone to evil unless grace intervenes, are all demonstrated in the tension between O'Connor's Catholicism and the content of her fictions.

As Chapter Three has established, Weil's notion that mankind is incapable of progressing towards God without the intervention of gratuitous grace, yet idea it is imperative for humanity to find the bridges, or *metaxu* which unite the contraries of God and man, combined with her criteria for texts of genius that attempt to mediate this reality in fictional narratives, provide unique insights into both O'Connor's theology, fictions, and aural circumcision. A comparison of Weil's implicit loves with O'Connor's emphasis on the institutional Christian *metaxu* of the sacraments at the expense of love and beauty, and the inversion or absence of these mediators in the stories, raises questions about just how Christian, how Catholic O'Connor and her writings are.⁴ Weil's important concept of spiritual mechanics offers fascinating new approaches to both the interior workings of O'Connor's fictional form, and her notions of the relationship between God and man. The central premise that lowering leads to spiritual rising illuminates O'Connor's use of the carnival grotesque as narrative form and the interior apparatus of her fictions: the plot structures in which protagonists must be physically or socially humiliated before they can potentially reach a higher moral level, the moral amorality which debases or inverts spiritual language, symbolism, and biblical references in an attempt to regenerate their original meanings. Weil's important concepts of the necessity to experience void and decreation, and her analysis of the human mechanics of fictionality and sin through which man tries to escape these ordeals, manage to illuminate with greater clarity than O'Connor's non-fictional writings, her understanding of secular man, his limitations, their causes and consequences, and how she depicts them in her stories.

But most significantly, the Weilean core concepts of a seed of grace, violent grace and violent free will, allied to her final two criteria for texts of genius, provide original and penetrating insights into both O'Connor's theology and attempts to depict the action of grace in her fictions. Specifically Weil's analysis of how pure violence on the soul is connected to man's self-violence, God's compulsion on the soul, and violent free will offers major new avenues of enquiry into O'Connor's concept of violent grace, violent love, complex free will, the interaction of nature and grace, the encounter between God and man, and how these theories operate in her narratives. Commensurately, the concept of violent free will presents a different perspective of O'Connor's dialogism: her constant attempt to balance the conflicting demands of her theological imperative, yet desire to write great fictions not merely dispensed dogma, the collision between her attempts to make her religious prophecy manifestly clear in the fictions by aural circumcision, yet textual ambiguities within the narratives.

Weil's rejection of the Catholic Church and its doctrines as a principle *metaxu* between the sacred and profane because she considers it non-essential to the personal mystical encounter which eventually unites God and man, and belief adherence to Church dogmas would remove her intellectual freedom, offer a direct challenge to O'Connor's position. By asking why?, and how?, is the Church necessary to forming a relationship between the incommensurates of God and man, Weil's ideas highlight the differences between O'Connor's theological concept of how God's Word is mediated through the Church, how she attempts to communicate this reality through Fundamentalist characters in her fictions, and the aural circumcision by which she endeavours to disseminate the Word to her audience.

In concluding my discussion of how Weil and her writings both interrogate and illuminate O'Connor's work, it is important to note that she sheds new light on the whole canon of O'Connor's fictions, not merely the texts I have examined in the preceding chapters. Consider for example how Weil's theory of the need to accept the superposed reality of affliction and God's love offers a splendid new approach to analysing the hermaphrodite in 'A Temple of the Holy Ghost' (1954). Her responses to the questions: Is there a God? And how can this be known?, and Weil's concept of void can be usefully applied to the Misfit; and her notions of being fictional, the need for risk, and violent grace to annihilate the fictional self, add a new dimension to discussion of the grandmother in 'A Good Man Is Hard to Find' (1953). The idea the body acts as a lever for the soul, Weil's concept of the architecture of the soul, and complex (un)free will, supply alternative ways of interpreting 'Parker's Back' (1965). The problems of deracination and

desacralisation afford interesting methods of reading 'The Displaced Person' (1954), 'A View of the Woods' (1957), and O'Connor's first and last stories, 'The Geranium' (1946) and 'Judgement Day' (1965). Equally, Weil's concepts of spiritual mechanics, the need for unbiased, objective superposed readings of humanity and the world, and her theory of the *metaxu*, contribute important and original opportunities for reinvigorating interpretations of Ruby Turpin and her epiphany at the end of the appropriately titled 'Revelation' (1964). The startling convergences between Weil and O'Connor's thinking, and the equally interesting distinctions, ensure that each of O'Connor's narratives can be read using one or several of Weil's concepts to provide significantly different interpretations.

In keeping with my comparative study of these two very different yet similar writers, after analysing how Weil both illuminates and challenges O'Connor and her work I will briefly examine four areas in which O'Connor interrogates Weil and her writings. First, agreeing with Sally Fitzgerald's claim that O'Connor 'cannot be dismissed in silence. Even those who take a strongly contrary or reductive view appear to feel she must be engaged',⁵ I would argue that in addition to her influential aural circumcision, O'Connor's grotesque fictions have the capacity to be engaging, to offer profound meanings which write on the souls of her readers, even if their ambiguity ensures no single (Christian) truth is automatically conveyed from writer to reader. Consequently they refute Weil's claim that fictions have no autonomous value beyond Christian prophecy. As Thibon notes of Weil's own work, writers of genius both reveal and create, if the literariness of philosophy, its symbolic and evocative value, its capacity to be both philosophical and fictional, is what provides its ability to be prophetic, I would argue that O'Connor's philosophical/theological fictions also have this ability to write on the soul. Second, part of O'Connor's ability to engage the reader - secular and Christian - is due to the comic elements of her vision, which can add an extra dimension to Weil's concept of superposed reading and texts of genius.⁶ By providing another form of balance, linking the incommensurates of comic and terrible, sacred and profane, O'Connor's comedy helps to provide a more accurate density of the real, a deeper architecture of the abyss, the beauty as well as the bitterness of the world, which Weil considers so important. The inversion of Weil's type of hierarchy of language forms part of this process, the uses of profanity and banality, the parodying of biblical references and the ironic, satirical narrative voice, can to some extent defamiliarise and make strange habitual perceptions and provide a hierarchy of readings, even if not O'Connor's specifically Christian interpretation. In contrast to Weil's preoccupation with the monstrous, harrowing, repulsive agony of necessity and affliction, the kind

of ludicrous monstrosity envisioned by O'Connor offers not merely consolation or entertainment to her readers, but a more balanced method of writing on the soul.

This conclusion leads to my third point. O'Connor's use of the grotesque genre, and its amalgamation of both the comic and terrible, illuminates how Weil personally, and her writings particularly, are prophetic. Weil's own ludicrous monstrosity, and her unconscious distortions, combined with the shocking figurative imagery and emotiveness of her work have as much, if not more success in engaging the reader, and writing her concepts on the souls of her audience (whether or not these concepts are accepted or rejected), than her rational use of contradiction and dialectic.⁷ Fourth, O'Connor's depiction of both Christ and man in her fictions can illuminate and illustrate Weil's equivalent concepts. O'Connor's fictional Christ - the wild, ragged, bleeding, stinking, mad creature that demands allegiance from her Christ-haunted characters, brings to life Weil's notion of Christ as scandalous *logos alogos*, the abased and inglorious fulcrum who paradoxically raises man from gravity to grace, and the necessity for man to commit himself to such a god who shares his affliction. In addition, O'Connor's plot structures render more persuasively than Weil's philosophical rationales, her second criteria for affliction: that it is arbitrarily inflicted against the will, and they more graphically demonstrate Weil's notion of spiritual deracination and its consequences: the fictional social personalities, spiritual lethargy and violence. The philosophical concept of being fictional is more cogently explored by fictional beings.

But if fictions can write truths on the soul, how successful is O'Connor as writer-prophet at recalling her secular readers to known but ignored spiritual truths, and realising, specifically, a 'truly Christian literature'? To answer this question requires analysing how O'Connor endeavours to 'realise' a Christian literature through first, a fictional form, and second, her non-fictional forms of essays, lectures, and letters. In analysing the fictions, it is important to note the development in O'Connor's ability to suggest religious connotations in the narratives. While the idea a major division between her early and late work is over-stated,⁸ there is an evolution in O'Connor's narratives from *Wise Blood* and the *A Good Man Is Hard to Find* short story collection, to *The Violent Bear It Away* and *Everything That Rises Must Converge*.

The Manicheanism of *Wise Blood*, Haze's physical and spiritual blindness, his need to die to escape the unredeemably Fallen world depicted by the novel, and his at best highly doubtful and unconvincing salvation, ensures proclamations of epiphany and redemption for Haze are reliant, primarily, on aural circumcision. Hulga Hopewell

must return humiliated to the world, but her vision is blurred and evidence of a spiritual revelation is equivocal. However O'Connor's later stories display a profounder integration, rather than collision, between the sacred and profane imagery,⁹ and most importantly, she allows her readers to view what her protagonists themselves perceive at the climactic endings of the narratives. In 'A Good Man Is Hard to Find' any redemptive vision for the grandmother is not conclusively shown, and her death permits no further evidence of altered behaviour to be explored, therefore claims for her salvation remain dependent on O'Connor's non-fictional utterances. But Francis Tarwater's epiphany towards the end of *The Violent Bear It Away* is revealed to the reader, and his actions afterwards display its impact on his conduct. This event, and Ruby Turpin's vision in 'Revelation', are therefore more, if not totally, successful at suggesting an anagogical dimension in these stories.¹⁰

I would argue that 'Revelation' is O'Connor's most anagogical text. The superposed structure of the story is well established through first, analogies to biblical texts: most obviously the Book of Revelation,¹¹ and second, the successful investing of profane symbols with mystical connotations. Deliberate parallels to the Book of Revelation are suggested by the use of equivalent symbols, which when combined with the story's title, encourage the reader to perceive mystically rather than see literally. References to 'a watery snake', an 'earthquake', and a 'wart hog' from hell are just some of the imagery used to prompt the reader into recognising the correspondences between the fictional narrative and biblical scripture.¹² Most interestingly, the last line of the gospel hymn on the radio, which Ruby comically supplies: 'And wona these days I know I'll we-eara crown', works anagogically, by reminding the reader of the woman crowned by stars in Revelation.¹³ As Desmond argues, this story 'best demonstrates how O'Connor gathered up the themes of her work processively and deepened them through analogical technique'.¹⁴ But while these biblical analogies require her 'intelligent', insider reader to make the necessary connections between fictional narrative and religious scripture, O'Connor's brilliant use of hog, and road/sky symbolism to indicate sacred mystery through the profane, ensures that it is not essential to be acquainted with the biblical analogues in order to apprehend the apocalyptic dimension of Ruby's final vision.

The significantly named Mary Grace links these two major clusters of symbols. Her eyes are described as lit 'with a peculiar light, an unnatural light like night roadsigns give', and it is she who delivers the vital 'message' to Mrs Turpin: 'Go back to hell where you came from you old wart hog' (CS 492, 500). Ruby's infuriated response to this insult: 'How am I a hog and me both? How am I saved and from hell too?

(506), itself illuminates the 'message' signposted to the reader: that grace operates through nature, that man is both fallen and redeemable. That it is she who is equated to a hog and not the 'niggers' and 'white trash' she despises, angers Ruby because it repudiates the assurance of superiority that she has gained by formulating her own Chain of Being. She literally rails against such an inversion of her carefully defined concept of a human hierarchy: 'Call me a wart hog from hell. Put that bottom rail on top. There'll still be a top and a bottom!' (507). But when the echo of her subsequent challenge to God: 'Who do you think you are?' is 'returned to her clearly like an answer', she is significantly silenced. (507, 508).

As Asals argues, this is a story 'full of demeaning and reductive hogs, but the "transparent intensity" of the final landscape is irrevocably apocalyptic, and even the despised hogs have a crucial part to play in bringing about Mrs Turpin's revelation' (*Imagination*, 93). This linkage of the hogs to Ruby's apocalyptic vision is stressed by the narrator, who immediately after Ruby has been silenced, connects her figure as she hoses down the pigs, with the road/sky symbolism. After standing with her 'gaze fixed on the highway', she transfers her attention back to the pig parlour and stares 'as if through the very heart of mystery' down at the hogs who 'appeared to pant with a secret life' (CS 508). When Ruby lifts her head, the 'abysmal life-giving knowledge' she is seemingly 'absorbing' from the hogs, is linked to the 'purple streak' of sky that is 'like an extension of the highway' (508). The 'hieratic and profound' gesture in which she raises her hands, combined with the 'visionary light' in her eyes, suggests that just as her 'vision suddenly reversed itself' after she had been hit by the book, thrown by Grace, entitled *Human Development*; Ruby's vision has again been enlarged, and she may now possess the capacity to perceive grace through nature.

The streak in the sky that she sees 'as a vast swinging bridge extending upwards from the earth through a field of living fire' acts as a Weilean-type *metaxu* along which Ruby discerns the 'vast horde of souls' which are 'rumbling toward heaven' (508). But the apocalyptic epiphany which is mediated through her consciousness is itself intended to function as a *metaxu* between the narrative and its reader, O'Connor as Christian writer-prophet and her monstrous secular audience. What the 'shocked and altered faces' of Ruby's tribe, whose virtues are 'being burned away' as they march behind the white trash, niggers, freaks and lunatics reveal to both Mrs Turpin and potentially the reader, is that secular notions of 'good order and common sense and respectable behaviour' are themselves grotesque (508). That Ruby has 'absorbed' the 'abysmal' but life-giving' knowledge imparted by this simultaneously comic and terrible revelation of how man is both fallen and redeemed, and how the

bottom rail will indeed be put on top, is stressed by the narrator's description of her ensuing behaviour (508). As she grips the hog pen rail and stares 'unblinkingly on what lay ahead' Ruby is left 'immobile', and after her vision has faded it is only at 'length' that she makes her 'slow way' home (509). Most tellingly, instead of hearing the natural sounds of crickets, 'what she heard were the voices of the souls climbing upward into the starry field and shouting hallelujah' (509).

O'Connor's 'carnal' readers may not accept that Ruby attains a 'spiritual' redemptive vision,¹⁵ or ascribe to the Christian 'message' her apocalyptic epiphany mediates. But as John F. Haught maintains, revelation means 'the breaking through of the dimension of mystery into our ordinary awareness. And it is especially through the intrinsically revelatory medium of symbols that this unconcealment of mystery occurs'.¹⁶ I would argue, that primarily through the hog symbolism and its close connection in the narrative to the road/sky imagery, in this text O'Connor manages to suggest mystery through manners, a connection between the sacred and profane, the comic and terrible, and intimate an added, anagogical dimension more powerfully than in any of her other stories. 'What' O'Connor 'got to say' to her audience was never better revealed.¹⁷

But as my readings of the narratives in the preceding three chapters have demonstrated, due to the textual ambiguities, the escape hatches - psychological, sexual, socially explicable mitigating circumstances previously embedded in O'Connor's narratives - the anagogical gesture and moment of grace she claims for her stories are most often debatable, because they rely too heavily on ambivalent, inconclusive evidence of an altered perspective or conduct. So why do so many of O'Connor's readers prefer to identify latent order behind the manifest in her fictions?

The answer lies in the impact of O'Connor's extra-fictional comments, and I want to analyse the part played by this type of communication with her audience in promoting the realisation of a Christian literature, by returning to Frank Kermode's concepts of outsider and insider, carnal and spiritual readers, aural circumcision, and the moment of interpretative divination in which spiritual readers locate an impression point that gives sense and structure to a narrative. Discussing insider audiences Kermode maintains 'Only those who already know the mysteries - what the stories really mean - can discover what the stories really mean' (*Genesis* 3). O'Connor's insider/Christian readers are predisposed to perceive mystically rather than carnally, and while some critics may be sympathetic to O'Connor's religious intentions, yet remain unconvinced by the depiction of her beliefs due to the

ambivalence of her fictions, too many, as members of O'Connor's elect, are prepared to make an act of divination, and find anagogical meanings, even when they are not textually apparent.¹⁸

All O'Connor's critics are susceptible to her persuasive aural circumcision in their desire to penetrate to profounder levels in texts and locate narrative coherence, to be 'intelligent' rather than 'average' readers in O'Connor's terminology. But just as the communication of O'Connor's anagogical vision in the narratives is flawed by ambiguous signals, her aural circumcision is itself contradictory. Riven by the conflicting demands of both her religion and her art, O'Connor is compelled to make her monstrous readers see anagogically, yet considers her writing is not 'primarily a missionary activity', and her fiction must be 'good in itself' (MM 81). In 'The Nature and Aim of Fiction' she quotes Joseph Conrad on the writer's role:

My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel - it is, above all, to make you *see*. That - and no more, and it is everything. (80)

O'Connor uses the 'power' of aural circumcision and the grotesque in an attempt to make her readers *see* with her Christian perspective, but this is not 'everything' for her. It is O'Connor's commitment to produce good fiction which ensures her texts are equivocal, and are ultimately unable to sustain irrevocably anagogical readings, and therefore the process of her Christian prophecy is obstructed. Yet this paradoxically redeems her fiction. As Kermode insists, 'a text with all its wits about it would see and hear and remember too much', there 'would be no game, only a carnal world' (*Genesis* 14).

Playing the game of interpretation with O'Connor's texts, both fictional and non-fictional, should involve acknowledging their ambivalences because these contradictions are what makes her work truly 'spiritual'. Carnal readings, as Kermode maintains, are all the same, while spiritual readings offer multiple interpretations. Neither exclusively treatises on grace, nor one-dimensional entertainments, they work on numerous levels, but only if O'Connor's readers are not deafened by her aural circumcision. Unable to 'leave evangelising to the evangelists' precisely *because* she did a writer's 'duty' and attended to her art (MM 171), O'Connor attempts to enhance the clarity of her insider's theology for an outsider audience via her lectures and essays. But failing to impose, even on herself, a monologic viewpoint,¹⁹ she acknowledges that a 'story that is any good can't be

reduced, it can only be expanded. A story is good when you continue to see more and more in it, and when it continues to escape you' (102).

O'Connor's texts are good, because they 'escape' the imposition of any single interpretation, including her own. As Fodor argues, 'her stories have engaged popular and elite audiences, naturalistic and religious readings, and a variety of critical approaches, but in the end it may be their ability to elude all these categories that continues to fascinate readers' (Fodor 35). 'To be blessedly fallible', as Kermode argues, 'to have the capacity to subvert manifest senses, is the mark of good enough readers and good enough texts' (*Genesis* 14). To be 'good enough' readers to perceive the true mystery in O'Connor's work - the oracular qualities which both suggest divine revelation, yet through equivocation obscure it - requires a revived vision analagous to the radical change of perspective O'Connor herself demands of her readers.

If as Victor Shklovsky argues, 'as perception becomes habitual, it becomes automatic', and the purpose of art is 'to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known',²⁰ after decades of 'knowing' and disseminating O'Connor's anagogical interpretations, too large a proportion of her critics see her work automatically, rather than perceiving it with acts of critical divination. By relying too heavily on aural circumcision rather than textual evidence, anagogical readings become themselves carnal. The aurally circumcised amongst O'Connor's critics need, to borrow Shklovsky's Formalist terminology, to 'defamiliarise' or 'make strange' their perception,²¹ to be jolted out of their exegetical complacency, in the same way O'Connor aims to use violence and the grotesque to shock both her fictional characters and monstrous readers into recognising the action of grace. As Bacon contends, more 'than any other writer, O'Connor needs to be repositioned' in the literary history of postwar America, because although the 'theological approach has deepened our understanding of O'Connor', it 'has also excluded her [...] Even as they have praised her imaginative power, her admirers have marginalised O'Connor' (Bacon 5). I agree with Kreyling that the 'stubborn tradition of seeing O'Connor's work' as 'theologically exceptional - entitled to a truth status over and above that which we accord "mere" literature - has overpowered nearly every other approach', and 'it would be a mistake to read her work as if all it had to offer was a single-channel communication with the Omnipotent' (Kreyling 22). An altered perspective becomes possible when O'Connor's elect interpreters allow insider's readings into the 'community of the ear' (5). O'Connor criticism enjoys a renewed vitality when anagogical interpretations are argued against secular perspectives, and insider's

readings differ from O'Connor's own. Critical vigour in readings of O'Connor's work, as Rath observes, owes its 'power to the encounter between traditional scholars' and 'new scholars who see in O'Connor's writings new horizons of relevance and meaning' (Rath 11).

O'Connor insisted she could wait fifty or a hundred years to have her fiction understood,²² but by inundating her audience with explanations of her anagogical perspective, she has been remarkably successful in ensuring the 'right kind' of readers,²³ protect and maintain her authorised interpretations. However, if O'Connor's critics are to appreciate the full complexity of her texts they need to turn a deaf ear to aural circumcision, whether conducted by outsiders like Satterfield, or more ear-splittingly by insiders like O'Connor and her elect.²⁴ As she herself acknowledges, art 'requires a delicate adjustment of the outer and inner world in such a way that, without changing their nature, they can be seen through each other' (MM 34-35), and O'Connor criticism benefits from those occasions when insider and outsider readings are focused as transparently. Only by such critical equilibrium can the truly brilliant, if not 'truly Christian' nature of O'Connor's fiction be fully realised, if not definitively explained.

In Mark's gospel, immediately before the passage describing the cure of the blind man, Christ is frustrated by the disciples' inability to understand his parables. 'Do you not yet understand? Have you no perception? Are your minds closed? Have you eyes that do not see, ears that do not hear?' he demands (8: 17-18). To perceive and understand O'Connor's narratives as a specifically Christian literature requires the capacity to hear the insider discourse of the elect. As John R. May concedes, due to 'O'Connor's preoccupation with conversion, the strongest temptation, even among the most judicious critics, is to project actual conversion beyond the available evidence'.²⁵ Yet he proceeds to do just that, when claiming the 'reader has no choice but to hear the universal language of *homo religiosus* spoken by her contemporary parables', and although allowing her 'parables' can not demand assent, he insists 'inasmuch as the reader exists between call and response O'Connor's word is challenging him to respect the radical mystery of existence; to rob her stories of this *meaning* is to destroy their parabolic art (May, *Word* xxv, 19). While such readers may not see men like walking trees, they can still interpret atheist murderers, itinerant perverts, immoral thieves, and homosexual rapists, as agents of grace.

But as 'spiritual' texts, O'Connor's stories resist the imposition of any overriding perspective. As Kermode observes, like parables, narratives have a 'radiant

obscurity', they both proclaim and conceal truth (*Genesis* 126). Consequently, although acts of divination 'glimpse the secrecy through the meshes of a text', it is only ever 'a momentary radiance' from the interpreter's particular 'angle' of vision (47, 144). Readings of O'Connor's work should be produced from our own 'angle', not because we have been programmed to see through either the 'anagogical glasses' O'Connor and her elect provide us with, or the literal ones which her outsider readers rely on.²⁶ As O'Connor herself insists: 'Your beliefs will be the light by which you see, but they will not be what you see and they will not be a substitute for seeing' (MM 91). A good enough reader is not so hard to find as O'Connor presumed, providing he or she is not 'thrown off balance' by aural circumcision - anagogical or secular, O'Connor's or our own.

Simone Weil's mystical philosophy provides a necessary balance to O'Connor criticism. As both insider and outsider Weil, and her writings, offer different angles of seeing O'Connor and her works, and the ability to defamiliarise and make strange existing critical approaches. First, through her rational ideas of superposed reading and the equilibrium of incommensurates, second, via her own unbalanced prejudice towards literature, and third, with the aid of her brilliant but distorted theology. As Sontag has noted distortion may have a greater intellectual thrust than, and ultimately reveal truth. In an important letter to her parents written on 4 August 1943, less than three weeks before her death, Weil recognises the connection between her own kind of distortion and the revelation of truth, and is frustrated by the inability of her readers to perceive it. 'Everyone knows that a high intelligence is often paradoxical and sometimes a bit wild' she contends (SL 201). Writing of how Shakespeare's fools are afflicted and despised she insists 'these are the only people who tell the truth. All the others lie', no one 'is aware that their sayings deserve the slightest attention - everybody being convinced *a priori* of the contrary, since they are fools - their expression of the truth is not even listened to' (200). The truth these fools express is 'not satirically or humorously true, but simply the truth. Pure unadulterated truth - luminous, profound, and essential' she insists, before asking her mother 'do you feel the affinity, the essential analogy between these fools and me?' (201). The eulogies of her intelligence 'are positively *intended* to evade the question: "Is what she says true?"' Weil argues, 'my reputation for "intelligence" is practically equivalent to the label of "fool" for these fools' (201).

Yet despite considering she was unable to communicate the radiant truth she believed it her prophetic function to impart, posthumously, Weil has achieved a wide-ranging readership. As Czeslaw Milosz argues, Weil's writings 'are read by Catholics and Protestants, atheists and agnostics'.²⁷ Appealing to both the insider

and outsider audience O'Connor tries so hard to reach and reconcile, as a brilliant but ludicrous monstrosity,²⁸ embodying the nobility of unnaturalness that so interests O'Connor, Weil offers original insights into the equally strange truths, the deeper and stranger visions, if not exclusively 'truly Christian literature' realised by O'Connor and her work(s). Ultimately, O'Connor can not be totally successful in her mission as Christian writer-prophet because as she well knew, fiction 'escapes any orthodoxy we might set up for it' (MM 192). But in 1962 she declared 'I agree that I must be seen as a writer and not just a Catholic writer' (HB 464), and her work remains both fascinating and admirable, because above all, she could *write*.²⁹

NOTES TO CONCLUSION

1. The biblical parable O'Connor alludes to is Mark 8 23-26, the curing of the blind man at Bethsaida:

Then putting spittle on his eyes and laying his hands on him, he asked, "Can you see anything?" The man, who was beginning to see, replied, "I can see people; they look like trees to me, but they are walking about". Then he laid his hands on the man's eyes again and he saw clearly; he was cured, and he could see everything plainly and distinctly.

2. Nevin rightly suggests 'we do well not to grasp her and her thinking in an appropriative way, putting her under a house arrest convenient to our own sensibility', Nevin, p. 385. But studies of Weil's work are marked by the same type of sectarianism displayed in O'Connor criticism. Weil's critics can be divided into two sharply opposed interpretative camps, which interestingly replicate O'Connor's aurally circumcised insider reader, and her secular outsider audience. As Thibon notes, the first group of Weil readers produce hagiography, 'causing her message to be considered as a kind of infallible revelation of universal import', and from 'this point of view, any reservation appears to be out of place, any criticism almost a blasphemy'. Thibon & Perrin, p.5. Meanwhile her outsider readers 'stress everything which might be considered as exaggerated or illusory' in Weil's thought 'in order to question, not only the deep value, but even the authenticity of her spiritual testimony', *ibid.* Both sets of reductive readings amount to 'totalitarian, and for that very reason mutilating, interpretations', Thibon correctly points out. As Heinz Abosch maintains some critics 'obscure her declarations - largely with clouds of incense', but the critical backlash against the hagiographers can itself be damaging: for example Jean Améry in his *Simone Weil - Jenseits Der Legende*, has 'rebelled against the "Simone Weil myth" yet in his excessive anger he failed to recognize achievement and rejected ideas which were less nostalgic than progressive'. See Abosch, *Simone Weil: An Introduction*, trans. by Kimberly A. Kenny (New York: Penbridge Books, 1993), p.3.

3. See 'Barth's Dream', in his *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (New York: Image, Doubleday, 1989), pp. 11-61 (p.40). But Weil interrogates more than theology, more than Christians. As Abosch observes: 'We are in a challenging dialogue with her thoughts - a dialogue which does not rest, which continuously poses new questions and does not end in the quietness of trite certainties', Abosch, p.127.

4. Bleikasten maintains the 'mediating function associated with Jesus by the Christian and particularly the Catholic tradition is hardly acknowledged, and what characterizes O'Connor's fictional world is precisely the absence of all mediation, of all intercession', leading him to conclude that although a Catholic, 'she was not a

Catholic novelist. She was a writer, and as a writer she belongs to no other parish than literature'. Bleikasten, p.156, p.157.

5. In 'Degrees and Kinds: Introduction', in *Realist of Distances: Flannery O'Connor Revisited*, ed. by Karl-Heinz Westarp and Jan Nordby Gretlund (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1987), pp. 11-16.

6. Asals acknowledges O'Connor's 'incurable sense of comedy that animates and burnishes her creations everywhere, that cannot quite be contained by any thesis about the religious dimensions of her fiction. It overflows the borders [...] to maintain a life of its own', *Imagination*, p. 233.

7. Perrin: 'Naturally inclined to extremes, she almost automatically provokes extreme reactions in others', Perrin & Thibon, p.6. Coles agrees: 'her writings rarely leave her readers - let alone her biographers - with a moment's indifference', *Pilgrim*, p.xviii. 'Simone Weil is fascinating even when one does not share her ideas - which is frequently the case', according to Abosch, p.121.

8. Asals particularly, insists *Wise Blood* is unique in O'Connor's oeuvre, and there are 'fundamental differences that constitute almost a reversal in her imaginative thinking' between it and *The Violent Bear It Away*. See *Imagination*, pp. 9-64 (p. 24).

9. See for example the ending of 'Revelation', when the narrator informs us the purple streak in the sunset sky is 'leading like an extension of the highway, into the descending dusk', and proceeds to describe how Ruby Turpin sees it 'as a vast swinging bridge extending upward from the earth through a field of living fire', CS, p.508. See also the imagery describing how O. E. Parker 'felt the light pouring through him, turning his spider web soul into a perfect arabesque of colors, a garden of trees and birds and beasts' in 'Parker's Back', *ibid.*, p.528. The difference in emphasis between *Wise Blood* and the previous stories is apparent.

10. As Asals notes of the later stories, the early asceticism continues but is modified into a more successfully rendered sacramental vision:

The mortifications that come down on O'Connor's later protagonists are cleansings of the doors of perception, purifications not of body, but of consciousness. They are returned *to* a world of matter through which spirit gleams: the ascetic action thus comes to reveal the sacramental vision [...] Out of the creative tension between the ascetic and the sacramental comes that mingled severity and radiance, the austere and the visionary, that marks the uniqueness of all O'Connor's later fiction. (*Imagination*, p.205)

11. Ruby's outrage is also explicitly linked to the Old Testament Book of Job when 'Occasionally she raised her fist [...] as if she was defending her innocence to invisible guests who were like the comforters of Job, reasonable-sounding but wrong'. CS, p.503. On the story's links to the Job narrative, see Michael L. Schroeder, 'Ruby Turpin, Job, and Mystery: Flannery O'Connor on the question of Knowing', FOCB, 21 (1992), 75-83. In a letter to Maryat Lee (15 May 1964), O'Connor claims Ruby is 'a country female Jacob', HB, p. 577. The *axis mundi* imagery in the story, and specifically the cloud depicted as 'a bridge extending upwards' in Ruby's final vision, CS, p.508, has interesting similarities with Jacob's 'ladder' in Genesis 28: 12-13, and the 'gate of heaven', 28: 16-17.

12. CS, p.507, p.499, p.500. In addition see the parallels with the persecuted 'who have washed their robes white' and who will never suffer again, and how the first will be last. Revelation 7:14-17 and 22: 12-15. An interesting indication of why O'Connor may have chosen the name Ruby for her major protagonist is found in Revelation 4: 2-3: 'the *One* who was *sitting on the throne*, and the Person sitting there looked like a diamond and a ruby'.

13. See Revelation 12: 1-2: 'Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman, adorned with the sun, standing on the moon, and with the twelve stars on her head for a crown'.

14. *Risen Sons*, p.80. He observes how

In 'Revelation', the idea of mystical community is developed precisely in terms of a vision of history that unites Old Testament and New Testament analogues and is made concrete in the hierophany Mrs Turpin has about her place in that community at the end of the story.

See Desmond's reading of the narrative in *ibid.*, pp. 80-82 (p.80).

15. Satterfield maintains that what Ruby 'sees is in all likelihood caused by the blow to her head, and the reader has no reason to believe that Mrs Turpin's life has been profoundly changed or that she has received grace or been redeemed', Satterfield, p.45. While not a 'carnal' reader Gentry argues that 'there is still much in Mrs Turpin's vision to suggest that she produces it', and she 'surely will fall away from her moment of redemption as consciousness again asserts itself'. See his reading of the story in *Religion*, pp. 42-49 (p.43, p.49). A critical polarity between whether Ruby's vision is internally or externally provoked continues. See Sura P. Rath's article 'Ruby Turpin's Redemption: Thomistic Resolution in Flannery O'Connor's "Revelation"', FOCB, 19 (1990), 1-8.

16. See his article 'Revelation' in Komonchak, *Dictionary of Theology*, pp. 884-99 (p.893). For an interesting discussion of The Book of Revelation and the apocalyptic genre see Bernard McGinn, 'Revelation' in Alter, Robert and Frank Kermode, eds., *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (London: Fontana Press, 1989, 1997), pp. 523-41. On different aspects of the apocalyptic vision see Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (San Diego: Harvest, Harcourt Brace, 1982, 1983), pp.136-37.

17. CS, p.500. Several critics agree on the excellence of this story. For example Joyce Carol Oates considers that Ruby's vision 'is the most powerful of O'Connor's revelations'. See 'The Visionary Art of Flannery O'Connor, in *New Heaven, New Earth: The Visionary Experience in Literature* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1974), pp. 143-76 (p.174). Di Renzo maintains that 'Revelation' 'achieves a humorous grandeur that none of O'Connor's other stories can surpass', and believes that Ruby's final vision 'is the most glorious in Flannery O'Connor's fiction'. Di Renzo, p.207, p.215.

18. As Shloss observes:

Those who already belong to the Christian community are able to see read this author on her own anagogical terms. But their readings have been guided both by O'Connor's comments on her work and by their own predisposition to see anagogically and so to fill in what is unstated in the text. (Shloss, pp.125-26)

Carter Martin, as one of the aurally circumcised, demonstrates this tendency:

To the literary dilettante, to the morally neutral reader, and to those who are squeamish or sentimental, Flannery O'Connor's fiction will generate a startling range of misconceptions and preposterous analytical abuses. But to the reader with a sound background in modern literature and an orthodox understanding of Christocentric religion, Miss O'Connor's work will be understood for what it is - a unique and forceful body of fiction based upon the profound and yet simple verities that have been the focal point of Western thought for almost two thousand years. (*True Country*, pp.241-42)

The benefit of using Weil's superposed reading strategy to arrive at some truth(s) about O'Connor's work and O'Connor criticism, by balancing the insider prejudices of such a religious dilettante with the equally biased but contradistinctive outsider reading presented by Satterfield, and the interpretations within these extremes, is obvious.

19. O'Connor's dialogism is evident when after discussing 'average' and 'intelligent' readers she acknowledges 'actually, both these readers are just aspects of the writer's own personality' MM, p. 95.
20. 'Art as Technique', in David Lodge, ed., *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* (London: Longman, 1988), pp. 16-30 (p. 19, p.20), reprinted from *Russian Formalism and Criticism* (1965), trans. by Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis.
21. Quoted in Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics* (London: Routledge, 1977), p. 62, p.63. See Hawkes for a useful discussion of Shklovsky and Russian Formalism: pp. 59-73.
22. 'Maybe in fifty years, or a hundred, Catholics will be reading the Bible the way they should have been reading it all along. I can wait that long to have my fiction understood'. Quoted in Wells, in CFO, p.87.
23. O'Connor maintains a 'few readers go a long way when they're the right kind. There are so many of the other kind'. Quoted in Lochridge, in CFO, p.39
24. As McMullen argues:
- If we, as critical readers, are able to step back from her counsel to acquaint ourselves with the written word on the page, O'Connor emerges as a tremendously complex writer despite her concerted attempts to appear simple and available to her reading public. (McMullen p.143)
25. *The Pruning Word: The Parables of Flannery O'Connor* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1976), p. xxi.
26. Satterfield claims the 'strings leading up to O'Connor's manipulating hands are obvious to readers not wearing those anagogical glasses that screen out all strings' Satterfield, p.45.
27. See 'The Importance of Simone Weil', in his *Emperor of the Earth: Modes of Eccentric Vision* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), pp.85-98 (p. 98).
28. Thibon notes 'the elemental flashing brilliance of her thought', Perrin & Thibon, p.154, while McLellan observes that her 'aberrations should not be allowed to divert attention [...] or to obscure the fragmentary brilliance of her writings which

illuminate so many areas of the human condition', McLellan, p.272. Other critics link this brilliance to her absurdity. As Nevin contends, 'by outward account she was a failure several times over, yet in her true vocation as a writer she succeeded brilliantly' she 'is bound to enthrall or irritate even as her ideas are variously strange, penetrating, ridiculous, brilliant', Nevin, p. 387, p. 390. Acknowledging he finds 'something monstrous in Simone Weil', Paul West argues 'something crackpot emerges alongside what is her evident genius and her almost pernicious goodness'. See 'Simone Weil', in his *The Wine of Absurdity: Essays on Literature and Consolation* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1966), pp.141-57 (p.153).

29. Alice Walker also applauds O'Connor as writer, not just Catholic writer. See Walker, p.46.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

FLANNERY O'CONNOR: PRIMARY SOURCES

Collected Works, ed. by Sally Fitzgerald (New York: Library of America, 1988)

The Complete Stories (London: Faber, 1971, 1990)

The Habit of Being: Letters of Flannery O'Connor, selected and ed. by Sally Fitzgerald (New York: First Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1979, 1988)

The Manuscripts of Flannery O'Connor at Georgia College, ed. by Stephen G. Driggers, Robert J. Dunn and Sarah Gordon (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1989)

Mystery and Manners, ed. by Sally & Robert Fitzgerald (London: Faber, 1972, 1984)

The Presence of Grace and Other Book Reviews, ed. by Leo J. Zuber and Carter W. Martin (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983)

The Violent Bear It Away (London: Faber, 1960, 1980)

Wise Blood (London: Faber, 1952, 1980)

SECONDARY SOURCES

Allen, William Rodney, 'The Cage of Matter: The World as Zoo in Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood*', *American Literature*, 58.2 (1986), 256-70,

Angle, Kimberly Greene, 'Flannery O'Connor's Literary Art: Spiritual Portraits in Negative Space', *FOCB*, 23 (1994-95), 158-74,

Archer, Emily, 'Naming in the Neighborhood of Being: O'Connor and Percy on Language', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 20.2 (1987), 97-108

Arnold, Marilyn, 'Sentimentalism in the Devil's Territory', *Literature and Belief*, 17 (1997), 243-58

Asals, Frederick, 'The Limits of Explanation', in *Critical Essays on Flannery O'Connor*, ed. by Melvin J. Friedman and Beverly Lyon Clark (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1985), pp.49-53 (first publ. as 'Flannery Row', in *Novel*, 4 (1970), 92-96)

_____, *Flannery O'Connor: The Imagination of Extremity* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1982)

_____, ed., *Flannery O'Connor: "A Good Man Is Hard to Find"* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1993),

Ashley, Jack Dillard, 'Throwing the Big Book: The Narrator Voice in Flannery O'Connor's Stories', in *Realist of Distances: Flannery O'Connor Revisited*, ed. by Karl-Heinz Westarp and Jan Nordby Gretlund (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1987), pp.73-81

Babinec, Lisa S., 'Cyclical Patterns of Domination and Manipulation in Flannery O'Connor's Mother-Daughter Relationships', *FOCB*, 19 (1990), 9-29

Bacon, Jon Lance, *Flannery O'Connor and Cold War Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

Baker, J. Robert, 'Flannery O'Connor's Four-Fold Method of Allegory', *FOCB*, 21 (1992), 84-96

Balée, Susan, *Flannery O'Connor: Literary Prophet of the South* (New York: Chelsea House, 1995)

Baumbach, Jonathon, 'The Acid of God's Grace: *Wise Blood* by Flannery O'Connor', in *The Landscape of Nightmare: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel* (New York: New York University Press, 1965), pp.87-100

Beck, Christiane, 'Flannery O'Connor's Poetics of Space', in *Realist of Distances: Flannery O'Connor Revisited*, ed. by Karl-Heinz Westarp and Jan Nordby Gretlund (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1987), pp.136-46

Bellamy, Michael O., 'Everything Off Balance: Protestant Election in Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard to Find"', *FOCB*, 8 (1979), 116-24

Bleikasten, André, 'Writing on the Flesh: Tattoos and Taboos in "Parker's Back"', *Southern Literary Journal*, 14.2 (1982), 8-18

___, 'The Heresy of Flannery O'Connor', in *Critical Essays on Flannery O'Connor*, ed. by Melvin J. Friedman and Beverly Lyon Clark (Boston: G.K.Hall, 1985), pp.138-58 (first publ. in *Les Américanistes*, ed. by Ira D. and Christine Johnson (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1979), pp.53-70)

Bloom, Harold, ed., *Modern Critical Views: Flannery O'Connor* (New York: Chelsea House, 1986)

Bowen, Rose, O.P., 'Baptism by Inversion', *FOCB*, 14 (1985), 94-98

Brewer, Nadine, 'Christ, Satan, and Southern Protestantism in O'Connor's Fiction', *FOCB*, 14 (1985), 103-10

Brinkmeyer, Robert H., Jr., 'Borne Away by Violence: The Reader and Flannery O'Connor', *Southern Review*, 15.2 (1979), 313-21

___, 'A Closer Walk with Thee: Flannery O'Connor and Southern Fundamentalists', *Southern Literary Journal*, 18.2 (1986), 313-21

___, *The Art and Vision of Flannery O'Connor* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989)

___, "'Jesus, Stab Me in the Heart!": *Wise Blood*, Wounding, and Sacramental Aesthetics', in *New Essays on Wise Blood*, ed. by Michael Kreyling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp.71-89

___, 'Asceticism and the Imaginative Vision of Flannery O'Connor', in *Flannery O'Connor: New Perspectives*, ed. by Sura P. Rath and Mary Neff Shaw (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp.169-82

Browning, Preston M., 'Flannery O'Connor and the Grotesque Recovery of the Holy', in *Adversity and Grace: Studies in Recent American Literature*, ed. by Nathan A. Scott Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp.133-61

___, 'Flannery O'Connor and the Demonic', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 19.1 (1973), 29-41

___, *Flannery O'Connor* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1974)

Burke, William, 'Displaced Communities and Literary Form in Flannery O'Connor's "The Displaced Person"', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 32.2 (1986), 219-27

___, 'Protagonists and Antagonists in the Fiction of Flannery O'Connor', *Southern Literary Journal*, 20.2 (1988), 99-111

___, 'Fetishism in the Fiction of Flannery O'Connor', *FOCB*, 22 (1993-94), 45-52

Burns, Stuart L., "'Torn by the Lord's Eye": Flannery O'Connor's Use of Sun Imagery', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 13.3 (1967), 154-66

___, 'Flannery O'Connor's *The Violent Bear It Away*: Apotheosis in Failure', *Sewanee Review*, 76.2 (1968), 319-36

___, 'The Evolution of *Wise Blood*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 16.2 (1970), 147-62

___, 'O'Connor and the Critics: An Overview', *Mississippi Quarterly*, 27 (1974), 483-95

Burt, John, 'What You Can't Talk About', in *Modern Critical Views: Flannery O'Connor*, ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1986), pp.125-43

Butler, Rebecca Roxburgh, '*Wise Blood*'s Joy in Contradiction', *FOCB*, 10 (1981), 23-28

Buzan, Mary, 'The Difficult Heroism of Francis Marion Tarwater', *FOCB*, 14 (1985), 33-43

Byers, John, 'Prophecy and Apocalyptic in the Fiction of Flannery O'Connor', *FOCB*, 16 (1987), 34-42

Campbell, 'Flannery O'Connor Is Not John Updike', *American Quarterly*, 43.2 (1991), 333-40

Carlson, Thomas M., 'Flannery O'Connor: The Manichaeian Dilemma', *Sewanee Review*, 77.2 (1969), 254-76

Cheney, Brainard, 'Miss O'Connor Creates Unusual Humor Out of Ordinary Sin', *Sewanee Review*, 71.4 (1963), 644-52

Clasby, Nancy T., "'The Life You Save May Be Your Own': Flannery O'Connor as a Visionary Artist", *Studies in Short Fiction*, 28.4 (1991), 509-20

Coles, Robert, *Flannery O'Connor's South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980)

_____, 'Flannery O'Connor: A Southern Intellectual', *Southern Review*, 16.1 (1980), 46-64

Coulthard, A.R., 'From Sermon to Parable: Four Conversion Stories by Flannery O'Connor', *American Literature*, 55.1 (1983), 54-71

_____, 'Flannery O'Connor's Deadly Conversions', *FOCB*, 13 (1984), 87-98

Currie, Sheldon, 'Comic Imagery in the Fiction of Flannery O'Connor', in *Realist of Distances: Flannery O'Connor Revisited*, ed. by Karl-Heinz Westarp and Jan Nordby Gretlund (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1987), pp.94-101

Daniel, Frank, 'Flannery O'Connor Shapes Own Capital', in *Conversations with Flannery O'Connor*, ed. by Rosemary M. Magee (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1987), pp.91-94 (first publ. in *The Atlanta Journal and the Atlanta Constitution*, 22 July 1962)

Davis, Joseph K., 'Time and the Demonic in William Faulkner and Flannery O'Connor', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 20.2 (1987), 123-43

Desmond, John F., 'The Shifting of Mr Shiftlet: Flannery O'Connor's "The Life You Save May Be Your Own"', *Mississippi Quarterly*, 28.1 (1974-75) 55-59

___, *Risen Sons: Flannery O'Connor's Vision of History* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987)

___, 'Violence and the Christian Mystery: A Way to Read Flannery O'Connor', *Literature and Belief*, 15 (1995), 163-81

Detweiler, Robert, 'The Curse of Christ in Flannery O'Connor's Fiction', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 3.2 (1966), 235-45

Di Renzo, Anthony, *American Gargoyles: Flannery O'Connor and the Medieval Grotesque* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993)

Donahoo, Robert, 'The Problem with Peelers: *Wise Blood* as Social Criticism', *FOCB*, 21 (1992), 43-57

___, 'O'Connor's Catholics: A Historical-Cultural Context', *Literature and Belief*, 17 (1997), 101-13

Dowell, Bob, 'The Moment of Grace in the Fiction of Flannery O'Connor', *College English*, 27.3 (1965), 235-39

Doxey, William S., 'A Dissenting Opinion of Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard to Find"', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 10.2 (1973), 199-204

Drake, Robert, *Flannery O'Connor A Critical Essay* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1966)

___, 'The Bleeding Stinking Mad Shadow of Jesus in the Fiction of Flannery O'Connor', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 3.2 (1966), 183-96

___, 'Flannery O'Connor and American Literature', *FOCB*, 3 (1974) 1-22

Driskell, Leon V., and Joan T. Brittain, *The Eternal Crossroads: The Art of Flannery O'Connor* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1971)

Duhamel, Albert, 'The Novelist as Prophet', in *The Added Dimension: The Art and Mind of Flannery O'Connor*, ed. by Melvin J. Friedman and Lewis A. Lawson, 2nd edn, rev. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1977), pp.88-107

Ebrecht, Ann, "'The Length, Breadth, and Depth of the World in Movement": The Evolutionary Vision of Flannery O'Connor and Teilhard de Chardin', in *Realist of Distances: Flannery O'Connor Revisited*, ed. by Karl-Heinz Westarp and Jan Nordby Gretlund (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1987), pp.208-16

Edelstein, Mark G., 'Flannery O'Connor and the Problem of Modern Satire', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 12.2 (1975), 139-44

Eggenschwiler, David, *The Christian Humanism of Flannery O'Connor* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1972)

Emerick, Ronald, 'Hawthorne and O'Connor: A Literary Kinship', *FOCB*, 18 (1989), 46-54,

Farley, Blanche, 'Echoes of Poe, In Sawmill and Loft', *FOCB*, 14 (1985), 14-24

Feeley, Kathleen, S.S.N.D., *Flannery O'Connor: Voice of The Peacock* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1972)

_____, "'Mine is a Comic Art": Flannery O'Connor', in *Realist of Distances: Flannery O'Connor Revisited*, ed. by Karl-Heinz Westarp and Jan Nordby Gretlund (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1987), pp.66-72

Fiondella, Maris G., 'Augustine, the "Letter", and the Failure of Love in Flannery O'Connor's "The Artificial Nigger"' *Studies in Short Fiction*, 24.2 (1987), 119-29,

Fitzgerald, Robert, 'Flannery O'Connor: A Memoir', in *The Third Kind of Knowledge: Memoirs and Selected Writings*, ed. by Penelope Laurans Fitzgerald (New York: New Directions, 1993), pp.105-24 (first publ. as 'Introduction', in Flannery O'Connor, *Everything That Rises Must Converge* (New York: Noonday Press-Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966)

_____, 'The Countryside and the True Country', in *Flannery O'Connor*, ed. by Robert E. Reiter (St. Louis, Missouri: B. Herder, 1968), pp.69-82 (first publ. in *Sewanee Review*, 70 (1962)

Fitzgerald, Sally, 'The Owl and the Nightingale', *FOCB*, 13 (1984), 44-58

___, 'Degrees and Kinds: Introduction', in *Realist of Distances: Flannery O'Connor Revisited*, ed. by Karl-Heinz Westarp and Jan Nordby Gretlund (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1987), pp.11-16

Fodor, Sarah J. 'Marketing Flannery O'Connor: Institutional Politics and Literary Evaluation', in *Flannery O'Connor: New Perspectives*, ed. by Sura P. Rath and Mary Neff Shaw (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp.12-37

___, "'A World Apparently Without Comment" or Shouting at the Reader: Narrative Guidance in O'Connor's Fiction', *Literature and Belief*, 17 (1997), 217-29

Folks, Jeffrey J., 'The Mechanical in Everything That Rises Must Converge', *Southern Literary Journal*, 18.2 (1986), 14-26

Foster, Shirley, 'Flannery O'Connor's Short Stories: The Assault on the Reader', *Journal of American Studies*, 20.2 (1986), 259-72

Friedman, Melvin J., 'Introduction', in *The Added Dimension: The Art and Mind of Flannery O'Connor*, ed. by Melvin J. Friedman and Lewis A. Lawson, 2nd edn, rev. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1977), pp.1-31

___, 'Flannery O'Connor's Sacred Objects', in *The Added Dimension: The Art and Mind of Flannery O'Connor*, ed. by Melvin J. Friedman and Lewis A. Lawson, 2nd edn, rev. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1977), pp.196-206

___, and Lewis A. Lawson, eds., *The Added Dimension: The Art and Mind of Flannery O'Connor* 2nd edn, rev. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1977)

___, and Beverly Lyon Clark, eds., *Critical Essays on Flannery O'Connor* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1985)

Garson, Helen S., 'Cold Comfort: Parents and Children in the Work of Flannery O'Connor', in *Realist of Distances: Flannery O'Connor Revisited*, ed. by Karl-Heinz Westarp and Jan Nordby Gretlund (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1987), pp.113-22

Gentry, Marshall Bruce, 'The Eye Vs. the Body: Individual and Communal Grotesquerie in *Wise Blood*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 28.3 (1982), 487-93

_____, *Flannery O'Connor's Religion of the Grotesque* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1986)

_____, 'Narration and the Grotesque in Flannery O'Connor's Stories', in *Realist of Distances: Flannery O'Connor Revisited*, ed. by Karl-Heinz Westarp and Jan Nordby Gretlund (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1987), pp.82-91

_____, 'Gender Dialogue in O'Connor', in *Flannery O'Connor: New Perspectives*, ed. by Sura P. Rath and Mary Neff Shaw (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp.57-72

Getz, Lorine M., *Nature and Grace in Flannery O'Connor's Fiction* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982)

Giannone, Richard, 'The Lion of Judah in the Thought and Design of *The Violent Bear It Away*', *FOCB*, 14 (1985), 25-32

_____, *Flannery O'Connor and the Mystery of Love* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989)

_____, 'Displacing Gender: Flannery O'Connor's View from the Woods', in *Flannery O'Connor: New Perspectives*, ed. by Sura P. Rath and Mary Neff Shaw (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp.73-95

_____, 'Warfare and Solitude: O'Connor's Prophet and the Word in the Desert', *Literature and Belief*, 17 (1997), 161-89

Gidden, Nancy Ann, 'Classical Agents of Christian Grace in Flannery O'Connor's "Greenleaf"', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 23.2 (1986), 201-02

Gilman, Richard, 'On Flannery O'Connor', in *Conversations with Flannery O'Connor*, ed. by Rosemary M. Magee (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1987), pp. 51-57 (first publ. in *The New York Review of Books*, 21 August 1969, 24-26)

Golden, Robert E. and Mary C. Sullivan, *Flannery O'Connor and Caroline Gordon: A Reference Guide* (Boston, Mass.: G.K. Hall, 1977)

Gordon, Caroline, 'Rebels and Revolutionaries: The New American Scene', *FOCB*, 3 (1974), 40-56

_____, 'An American Girl', in *The Added Dimension: The Art and Mind of Flannery O'Connor*, ed. by Melvin J. Friedman and Lewis A. Lawson, 2nd edn, rev. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1977), pp.123-37

Gordon, Sarah, 'Flannery O'Connor and the Common Reader', *FOCB*, 10 (1981), 38-45

_____, 'The News From Afar: A Note on Structure in O'Connor's Narratives', *FOCB*, 14 (1985), 80-87

_____, 'Flannery O'Connor, the Left-Wing Mystic, and the German Jew', *FOCB*, 16 (1987), 43-51

_____, "'The Crop": Limitation, Restraint, and Possibility', in *Flannery O'Connor: New Perspectives*, ed. by Sura P. Rath and Mary Neff Shaw (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp.96-120

Gossett, Thomas F., 'No Vague Believer: Flannery O'Connor and Protestantism', *Southwest Review*, 60 (1975), 256-63

Graulich, Melody, "'They Ain't Nothing But Words": Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood*', *FOCB*, 7 (1978), 64-83

Green, James L., 'Enoch Emery and His Biblical Namesakes in *Wise Blood*', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 10.4 (1973), 417-19

Gretlund, Jan Nordby, 'Mr. Shiftlet, Chapter Two: An Introduction to "The Shiftlet Fragment"', *FOCB*, 10 (1981), 70-77

Griffith, Albert J., 'Flannery O'Connor's Salvation Road', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 3.3 (1966), 329-33

Grimshaw, James A., Jr., *The Flannery O'Connor Companion* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981)

Han, Jae-Nam, 'O'Connor's Thomism and the "Death of God" in *Wise Blood*' *Literature and Belief*, 17 (1997) 115-27

Hannon, Jane, 'The Wide World Her Parish: O'Connor's All-Embracing Vision of Church', *FOCB*, 24 (1995-96), 1-21

Hassan, Ihab, 'The Way Down and Out: Spiritual Deflection in Recent American Fiction', *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 39.1 (1963), 81-93

Havely, Cicely Palser, 'Two Women Novelists: Carson McCullers and Flannery O'Connor', in *The Uses of Fiction: Essays on the Modern Novel in Honour of Arnold Kettle* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1982), pp.115-24

Hawkes, John, 'Flannery O'Connor's Devil', in *Flannery O'Connor*, ed. by Robert E. Reiter (St. Louis, Missouri: B. Herder, 1968), pp. 25-37 (first publ. in *Sewanee Review*, 70 (1962), 395-407).

Hawkins, Peter S., *The Language of Grace: Flannery O'Connor, Walker Percy, and Iris Murdoch* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1983)

Hayward, Elizabeth Mahoney and Anthony Magistrale, 'Inverting Bakhtin: The Carnivalized World of Flannery O'Connor', *Literature and Belief*, 16.1 (1996), 83-98

Hegarty, Charles, M., 'A Man Though Not Yet A Whole One: Mr Shiftlet's Genesis', *FOCB*, 1 (1972), 19-30

Heher, Michael, 'Grotesque Grace in the Factious Commonwealth', *FOCB*, 15 (1986), 69-81

Hendin, Josephine, *The World of Flannery O'Connor* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970)

_____, 'On and Off the Treadmill' in *Vulnerable People: A View of American Fiction Since 1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp.145-55

Higdon, David Leon, 'Flannery O'Connor's Sentence Titles', *Studies in American Fiction*, 17.2 (1989), 227-34

Highsmith, Dixie Lee, 'Flannery O'Connor's Polite Conversation' *FOCB*, 11 (1982), 94-107

Holman, C. Hugh, 'Her Rue with a Difference: Flannery O'Connor and the Southern Literary Tradition', in *The Added Dimension: The Art and Mind of Flannery O'Connor*, ed. by Melvin J. Friedman and Lewis A. Lawson, 2nd edn, rev., (New York: Fordham University Press, 1977), pp.73-87

Horton, James W., 'Flannery O'Connor's Hermaphrodite: Notes Toward a Theology of Sex' *FOCB*, 23 (1994-95), 30-42

Howe, Susan Elizabeth, 'An Interview with Sally Fitzgerald', *Literature and Belief*, (1997), 1-20

Humphries, Jefferson, *The Otherness Within: Gnostic Readings in Marcel Proust, Flannery O'Connor, and Francois Villon* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983)

Hyman, Stanley Edgar, *Flannery O'Connor* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966)

Ireland, Patrick J., 'The Sacred and the Profane: Redefining Flannery O'Connor's Vision', in *Realist of Distances: Flannery O'Connor Revisited*, ed. by Karl-Heinz Westarp and Jan Nordby Gretlund (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1987), pp.186-96

Johansen, Ruthann Knechel, *The Narrative Secret of Flannery O'Connor: The Trickster as Interpreter* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994)

Jones, Madison, 'A Good Man's Predicament', *Southern Review*, 20.4 (1984), 836-41

Kahane, Claire, 'The Artificial Niggers', *Massachusetts Review*, 19 (1978), 183-98

Kane, Richard, 'Positive Destruction in the Fiction of Flannery O'Connor', *Southern Literary Journal*, 20.1 (1987), 45-60

Kaplan, Carola, 'Graham Greene's Pinkie Brown and Flannery O'Connor's Misfit: The Psychopathic Killer and the Mystery of God's Grace', *Renascence*, 32.2 (1980), 116-28

Katz, Claire, 'Flannery O'Connor's Rage of Vision', *American Literature*, 46 (1974), 54-67

Kennelly, Laura B., 'Exhortation in *Wise Blood*: Rhetorical Theory as an Approach to Flannery O'Connor', in *Flannery O'Connor: New Perspectives*, ed. by Sura P. Rath and Mary Neff Shaw (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp.152-68

Kessler, Edward, *Flannery O'Connor and the Language of Apocalypse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986)

Kilcourse, George, 'O'Connor and Merton: Icons of the True Self in a "Christ-Haunted" World', *FOCB*, 23 (1994-95), 119-36

___, "'Parker's Back": "Not Totally Congenial" Icons of Christ', *Literature and Belief*, 17 (1997) 35-46

Kinney, Arthur F., 'In Search of Flannery O'Connor', *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 59.2 (1983), 271-88

___, *Flannery O'Connor's Library: Resources of Being* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1985)

___, 'Flannery O'Connor and the Fiction of Grace', *Massachusetts Review*, 27 (1986), 71-96

___, 'Flannery O'Connor and the Art of the Holy', *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 64.2 (1988), 215-30

Koon, William, "'Hep Me Not To Be So Mean": Flannery O'Connor's Subjectivity', *Southern Review*, 15.2 (1979), 322-32

Kreyling, Michael, *New Essays on Wise Blood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

Lawson, Lewis, 'Wise Blood and the Grotesque', in *Another Generation: Southern Fiction Since World War Two* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1984), pp.22-37

___, 'The Perfect Deformity: *Wise Blood*', in *Modern Critical Views: Flannery O'Connor* (New York: Chelsea House, 1986), pp.37-41 (first publ. as 'Flannery O'Connor and the Grotesque: *Wise Blood*', in *Renascence*, 17.2 (1965))

LeClair, Thomas, 'Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood*: The Oedipal Theme', *Mississippi Quarterly*, 29.2 (1976), 197-205

Lee, Hermione, 'Introduction', in Flannery O'Connor, *Everything That Rises Must Converge* (London: Faber, 1985), pp.vii-xv

Linehan, Thomas M., 'Anagogical Realism in Flannery O'Connor', *Renascence*, 37.2 (1985), 80-95

Literature and Belief, 17 (1997), 'Flannery O'Connor and the Christian Mystery', Special Issue ed. by John J. Murphy and others, 276 pp.

Littlefield, Daniel F., Jr., 'Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood*: Unparalleled Prosperity and Spiritual Chaos', *Mississippi Quarterly*, 23.2 (1970), 121-33

Lochridge, Betsy, 'An Afternoon with Flannery O'Connor', in *Conversations with Flannery O'Connor*, ed. by Rosemary M. Magee (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1987), pp.37-40 (first publ. in *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution Magazine*, 1 November 1959, 38-40)

Lorch, Thomas M., 'Flannery O'Connor: Christian Allegorist', *Critique*, 10.2 (1968), 69-80

Magee, Rosemary M., ed., *Conversations with Flannery O'Connor* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1987)

Magistrale, Tony, "'I'm Alien to a Great Deal": Flannery O'Connor and the Modernist Ethic', *Journal of American Studies*, 24.1 (1990), 93-98

Malin, Irving, 'Flannery O'Connor and the Grotesque', in *The Added Dimension: The Art and Mind of Flannery O'Connor*, ed. by Melvin J. Friedman and Lewis A., 2nd edn, rev. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1977), pp.108-22

Maloff, Saul, 'On Flannery O'Connor', in *Critical Essays on Flannery O'Connor*, ed. Melvin J. Friedman and Beverly Lyon Clark (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1985), pp.53-56

Mallon, Anne Marie, 'Mystic Quest in *The Violent Bear It Away*', *FOCB*, 10 (1981), 54-69

Marston, Jane, 'Epistemology and the Solipsistic Consciousness in Flannery O'Connor's "Greenleaf"', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 21.4 (1984), 375-82

Martin, Carter W., "'The Meanest of Them Sparkled": Beauty and Landscape in Flannery O'Connor's Fiction', in *Realist of Distances: Flannery O'Connor Revisited*, by Karl-Heinz Westarp and Jan Nordby Gretlund (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1987), pp.147-59

_____, *The True Country: Themes in the Fiction of Flannery O'Connor* paperback edn (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969, 1994)

Martin, Karl, 'The Prophetic Intent of O'Connor's "The Displaced Person"', *FOCB*, 23 (1994-95), 137-57

_____, 'Bishop's Role in Flannery O'Connor's *The Violent Bear It Away*', *Literature and Belief*, 16.1 (1996), 27-38

Martinez, Inez, 'Flannery O'Connor and the Hidden Struggle of the Self', *FOCB*, 16 (1987), 52-61

Marx, W.S. III, 'Advertisements for Grace: Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard to Find"', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 4.1 (1966), 19-27

May, John R., *Toward a New Earth: Apocalypse in the American Novel* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1972), pp.126-44

_____, *The Pruning Word: The Parables of Flannery O'Connor* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1976)

___, 'The Methodological Limits of Flannery O'Connor's Critics', *FOCB*, 15 (1986), 16-28

Mayer, David R., '*The Violent Bear It Away*: Flannery O'Connor's Shaman', *Southern Literary Journal*, 4.2 (1972), 41-54

___, "'Like Getting Ticks Off a Dog": Flannery O'Connor's "As If"', *Christianity and Literature*, (Summer 1984), 17-34

McFarland, Dorothy Tuck, *Flannery O'Connor* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1976)

McMullen, Joanne Halleran, *Writing Against God: Language as Message in the Literature of Flannery O'Connor* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1996)

Mellard, James M., 'Flannery O'Connor's Others: Freud, Lacan, and the Unconscious', *American Literature*, 61.4 (1989), 625-43

Merton, Thomas, 'Flannery O'Connor-A Prose Elegy', in *The Literary Essays of Thomas Merton*, ed. by Patrick Hart (New York: New Directions, 1981), pp.159-61

Milder, Robert, 'The Protestantism of Flannery O'Connor', *Southern Review* 11 (1975), 802-19

Miller, James E., 'The Quest Absurd: The New American Novel', in *Quests Surd and Absurd: Essays in American Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp.3-30

Ming, Zhong, 'Designed Shock and Grotesquerie: The Form of Flannery O'Connor's Fiction', *FOCB*, 17 (1988), 51-61

Montgomery, Marion, 'Miss O'Connor and the Christ-Haunted', *Southern Review*, 4.3 (1968), 665-72

___, 'Flannery O'Connor and the Natural Man', *Mississippi Quarterly*, 21.4 (1968), 235-42

___, 'Flannery O'Connor's Territorial Center', *Critique*, 11.3 (1969), 5-10

___, 'Flannery O'Connor's Transformation of the Sentimental', *Mississippi Quarterly*, 25.1 (1971-72), 1-18

___, 'Flannery O'Connor and the Jansenist Problem in Fiction', *Southern Review*, 14.3 (1978), 438-48

___, 'Grace: A Tricky Fictional Agent', *FOCB*, 9 (1980), 19-29

___, 'Flannery O'Connor and Onnie Jay Holy and the Trouble with You Innerlekchuls', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 20.2 (1987), 67-76

___, 'Flannery O'Connor: Realist of Distances', in *Realist of Distances: Flannery O'Connor Revisited*, ed. by Karl-Heinz Westarp and Jan Nordby Gretlund (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1987), pp.227-35

___, 'Eric Voegelin as Prophetic Philosopher', *Southern Review*, 24.1 (1988), 115-33

Mott, Sara, 'Flannery O'Connor's Unique Contribution to Christian Literary Naturalism', in *Realist of Distances: Flannery O'Connor Revisited*, ed. by Karl-Heinz Westarp and Jan Nordby Gretlund (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1987), pp.217-26

Muller, Gilbert H., *Nightmares and Visions: Flannery O'Connor and the Catholic Grotesque* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1972)

Muzina, Matej, 'Inescapable Lucidity: Flannery O'Connor's Gift and Most Terrible Affliction', in *Realist of Distances: Flannery O'Connor Revisited*, ed. by Karl-Heinz Westarp and Jan Nordby Gretlund (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1987), pp.160-70

Myers, Michael, '*Wise Blood* and the Japanese *yugen* Aesthetic', *FOCB*, 21 (1992), 58-72

Napier, James J., 'Flannery O'Connor's Last Three: "The Sense of an Ending"', *Southern Literary Journal*, 14.2 (1982), 19-27

Nelson, Gerald B., 'Hazel Motes' in *Ten Versions of America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), pp.111-25

Nichols, Loxley F., 'Flannery O'Connor's "Intellectual Vaudeville": Masks of Mother and Daughter', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 20.2 (1987), 15-29

Niederauer, George H., Most Rev. 'The Church Listens to Flannery O'Connor', *Literature and Belief*, 17 (1997), 21-33

Nisley, Paul W., 'The Prison of the Self: Isolation in Flannery O'Connor's Fiction', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 17.1 (1980), 49-54

_____, 'The Mystery of Evil: Flannery O'Connor's Gothic Power', *FOCB*, 11 (1982), 25-35

Oates, Joyce Carol, 'The Visionary Art of Flannery O'Connor', in *New Heaven, New Earth: The Visionary Experience in Literature* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1974), pp.143-76

Ochshorn, Kathleen G., 'A Cloak of Grace: Contradictions in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find"', *Studies in American Fiction*, 18.1 (1990), 113-17

O'Donnell, Patrick, 'The World Dactylic: Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood*' in *Passionate Doubts: Designs of Interpretation in Contemporary American Fiction* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1986), pp.95-115

Olson, Steven, 'Tarwater's Hats', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 20.2 (1987), 37-49

Oreovicz, Cheryl Z., 'Seduced by Language: The Case of Joy-Hulga Hopewell', *Studies in American Fiction*, 7.2 (1979), 221-28

Orvell, Miles, *Flannery O'Connor An Introduction* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1972, 1991)

Park, Clara Claiborne, 'Crippled Laughter: Toward Understanding Flannery O'Connor', *American Scholar*, 51 (1982), 249-57

Paulson, Suzanne Morrow, *Flannery O'Connor: A Study of the Short Fiction* (Boston: Twayne, 1988)

_____, 'Apocalypse of the Self, Resurrection of the Double: Flannery O'Connor's *The Violent Bear It Away*', in *Flannery O'Connor: New Perspectives*, ed. by Sura P. Rath and Mary Neff Shaw (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 121-38

Phillips, D.Z., 'Mystery and Mediation: Reflections on Flannery O'Connor and Joan Didion', in *Images of Belief in Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1984), pp.24-41

Pyron, Virginia, "'Strange Country": The Landscape of Flannery O'Connor's Short Stories', *Mississippi Quarterly*, 36.4 (1983), 556-68

Quinn, M. Bernetta, O.S.F., 'Flannery O'Connor, a Realist of Distances', in *Women Writers of the Short Story: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Heather McClave (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1980), pp.136-44

Quinn, John J., S.J., ed., *Flannery O'Connor: A Memorial* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 1964, 1995)

Ragen, Brian Abel, *A Wreck on the Road to Damascus: Innocence, Guilt, and Conversion in Flannery O'Connor* (Chicago, IL: Loyola University Press, 1989)

_____, 'Grace and Grotesques: Recent Books on Flannery O'Connor', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 27.3 (1991), 386-98

Rath, Sura P., 'Comic Polarities in Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood*', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 21.3 (1984), 251-58

_____, 'Ruby Turpin's Redemption: Thomistic Resolution in Flannery O'Connor's "Revelation"', *FOCB*, 19 (1990), 1-8

_____, and Mary Neff Shaw, eds., *Flannery O'Connor: New Perspectives* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996)

'Recent Southern Fiction: A Panel Discussion', in *Conversations with Flannery O'Connor*, ed. by Rosemary M. Magee (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1987), pp.61-78 (first publ. in *Bulletin Wesleyan College*, 41 (January 1961))

Reesman, Jeanne Campbell, 'Women, Language, and the Grotesque in Flannery O'Connor and Eudora Welty', in *Flannery O'Connor: New Perspectives*, ed. by

Sura P. Rath and Mary Neff Shaw (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp.38-56

Reiter, Robert E., ed., *Flannery O'Connor* (St. Louis, Missouri: B. Herder, 1968)

Reuman, Ann E., 'Revolted Fictions: Flannery O'Connor's Letter to Her Mother', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 29.2 (1993), 197-214

'Review', (Anon.), *Times Literary Supplement*, 14 October 1960, p.666

Roos, John, 'The Political in Flannery O'Connor: A Reading of "A View of the Woods"', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 29.2, (1992), 161-79

Rosenfeld, Isaac, 'To Win by Default', *New Republic*, July 7, 1952, 19-20

Rubin, Louis D., Jr., 'Flannery O'Connor and the Bible Belt', in *The Added Dimension: The Art and Mind of Flannery O'Connor*, ed. by Melvin J. Friedman and A. Lawson 2nd edn, rev., (New York, Fordham University Press, 1977), pp.49-72

_____, 'Flannery O'Connor's Company of Southerners Or, "The Artificial Nigger" Read as Fiction Rather Than Theology' in *A Gallery of Southerners* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), pp.115-34

Rupp, Richard H., 'Flannery O'Connor: A Hidden Celebration', in *Celebration in Postwar American Fiction 1945-1967* (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami, 1970), pp.77-98

Russell, Henry M., 'Racial Integration in a Disintegrating Society: O'Connor and European Catholic Thought', *FOCB*, 24 (1995-96), 33-45

Russell, Shannon, 'Space and the Movement Through Space in *Everything That Rises Must Converge*: A Consideration of Flannery O'Connor's Imaginative Vision', *Southern Literary Journal*, 20.2 (1988), 81-98

Samuelson, Todd, 'Creating the Incommensurate God: Art and Belief in O'Connor's "Parker's Back" and Bloom's *The Book of J*', *Literature and Belief*, (1997), 47-59

- Satterfield, Ben, 'Wise Blood, Artistic Anemia, and the Hemorrhaging of O'Connor Criticism', *Studies in American Fiction*, 17.1 (1989), 33-50
- Schaub, Thomas Hill, 'Christian Realism and O'Connor's *A Good Man Is Hard to Find*' in *American Fiction in the Cold War* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 116-36
- Schlafer, Linda, 'Pilgrims of the Absolute: Léon Bloy and Flannery O'Connor', in *Realist of Distances: Flannery O'Connor Revisited*, ed. by Karl-Heinz Westarp and Jan Nordby Gretlund (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1987), pp.55-63
- Schleifer, Ronald, 'Rural Gothic: The Stories of Flannery O'Connor', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 28.3 (1982), 475-85
- Schroeder, Michael L., 'Ruby Turpin, Job, and Mystery: Flannery O'Connor on the Question of Knowing', *FOCB*, 21 (1992), 75-83
- Scott, Nathan A., Jr., 'Flannery O'Connor's Testimony: The Pressure of Glory', in *The Added Dimension: The Art and Mind of Flannery O'Connor*, ed. by Melvin J. and Lewis A. Lawson, 2nd edn, rev., (New York: Fordham University, 1977), pp.138-56
- Scouten, Kenneth, 'The Schoolteacher as a Devil in *The Violent Bear it Away*', *FOCB*, 12 (1983), 35-46
- Sederberg, Nancy, 'Flannery O'Connor's Spiritual Landscape: A Dual Sense of Nothing', *FOCB*, 12 (1983), 17-34
- Sessions, W.A., 'How to Read Flannery O'Connor: Passing by the Dragon', *Literature and Belief*, 17 (1997), 191-215
- Sherry, Gerard E., 'An Interview with Flannery O'Connor', in *Conversations with Flannery O'Connor*, ed. by Rosemary M. Magee (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1987), 97-102 (first publ. in *The Critic*, 21 (June-July 1963), 29-31)
- Shloss, Carol, *Flannery O'Connor's Dark Comedies: The Limits of Inference*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980)

Shroeder, Michael L., 'Ruby Turpin, Job, and Mystery: Flannery O'Connor on the Question of Knowing', *FOCB*, 21 (1992), 75-83

Slattery, Dennis Patrick, 'Evil and the Negation of the Body: Flannery O'Connor's "Parker's Back"', *FOCB*, 17 (1988), 69-79

Sloan, Larue Love, 'The Rhetoric of the Seer: Eye Imagery in Flannery O'Connor's "Revelation"', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 25.2 (1988), 135-45

Sonnenfeld, Albert, 'Flannery O'Connor: The Catholic Writer as Baptist', *Contemporary Literature*, 13.4 (1972), 445-57

_____, 'Flannery O'Connor: The Catholic Writer as Baptist', in *Critical Essays on Flannery O'Connor*, ed. by Melvin J. Friedman and Beverly Lyon Clark (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1985), 108-19

Spaltro, 'When We Dead Awaken: Flannery O'Connor's Debt to Lupus', *FOCB*, 20 (1991), 33-44

Spivey, Ted R., 'Flannery O'Connor's View of God and Man', in *Flannery O'Connor* by Robert E. Reiter (St. Louis, Missouri: B. Herder, 1968), pp.111-17 (first publ. in *Studies in Short Fiction*, I (1964))

_____, 'Flannery O'Connor, the New Criticism, and Deconstruction', *Southern Review*, 2 (1987), 271-80

_____, 'Flannery O'Connor, James Joyce, and the City', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 20.2 (1987), 87-95

_____, *Flannery O'Connor: The Woman, the Thinker, the Visionary* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1995)

_____, 'Flannery O'Connor's Quest For A Critic', *FOCB*, 15 (1986), 29-33

Stanley, Roger, 'The Efficacy of Grace in O'Connor and Cather', *Literature and Belief* (1997), 259-70

- Stephens, Martha, *The Question of Flannery O'Connor* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973)
- Stokes, David, 'Grit, Grace and Miss O'Connor', *Theology*, 80 (1977), 107-10
- Streight, Irwin Howard, 'Is There a Text in This Man?: A Semiotic Reading of "Parker's Back"', *FOCB*, 22 (1993-94), 1-11
- _____, 'A Good Hypogram Is Not Hard to Find', *Literature and Belief*, 17 (1997), 231-41
- Strickland, Edward, 'The Penitential Quest in "The Artificial Nigger"', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 25.4 (1988), 453-59
- Sturma, Lee, 'Flannery O'Connor, Simone Weil, and the Virtue of Necessity', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 20.2 (1987), 109-21
- Sullivan, Walter, 'Flannery O'Connor, Sin, and Grace: *Everything That Rises Must Converge*', in *Death by Melancholy: Essays on Modern Southern Fiction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), pp.22-35
- _____, 'Southerner's in the City: Flannery O'Connor and Walker Percy', in *The Comic Imagination in American Literature*, ed. by Louis D. Rubin Jr. (New Brunswick, New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 1973), pp.339-48
- Swan, Jesse G., 'Flannery O'Connor's Silence-Centered World', *FOCB*, 17 (1988), 82-89
- Tanner, Stephen L., 'Flannery O'Connor and Gabriel Marcel', *Literature and Belief*, 17 (1997), 149-57
- Tate, J.O., 'The Uses of Banality', *FOCB*, 4 (1976) 13-24
- _____, 'Flannery O'Connor's Counterplot', *Southern Review*, 16.4 (1980), 869-78
- _____, 'The Essential Essex', *FOCB*, 12 (1983), 47-59
- Tedford, Barbara Wilkie, 'Flannery O'Connor and the Social Classes', *Southern Literary Journal*, 13.2 (1981) 27-40

Thiemann, Fred R., 'Usurping the Logos: Cliché in O'Connor's "Good Country People"', *FOCB*, 24 (1995-96), 46-56

Tolomeo, Diane, 'Home to Her True Country: The Final Trilogy of Flannery O'Connor', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 17.3 (1980), 335-41

Trowbridge, Clinton W., 'The Symbolic Vision of Flannery O'Connor: Patterns of Imagery in *The Violent Bear It Away*', *Sewanee Review*, 76.2 (1968), 298-18

Vande Kieft, Ruth M., 'Judgement in the Fiction of Flannery O'Connor', *Sewanee Review*, 76.2 (1968), 337-56

Walker, Alice, 'Beyond the Peacock: The Reconstruction of Flannery O'Connor', in *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (London: Women's Press, 1984), pp.42-59

Walters, Dorothy, *Flannery O'Connor* (New York: Twayne, 1973)

Washburn, Delores, 'The "Feeder" in *The Violent Bear It Away*', *FOCB*, 9 (1980), 112-19

Westarp, Karl-Heinz and Jan Nordby Gretlund, eds., *Realist of Distances: Flannery O'Connor Revisited* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1987)

_____, 'Teilhard de Chardin's Impact on Flannery O'Connor: A Reading of "Parker's Back"', *FOCB*, 12 (1983), 93-113

Westling, Louise, 'Flannery O'Connor's Mothers and Daughters', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 24.4 (1978), 510-22

_____, *Sacred Groves and Ravaged Gardens: The Fiction of Eudora Welty, Carson McCullers and Flannery O'Connor* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985)

Whitt, Margaret Earley, *Understanding Flannery O'Connor* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995)

_____, 'Letters to Corinth: Echoes from Greece to Georgia in O'Connor's "Judgment Day"', *Literature and Belief*, 17 (1997) 61-74

- Wilson, Carol Y., 'Family as Affliction, Family as Promise in *The Violent Bear It Away*', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 20.2 (1987), 77-86
- Witt, Jonathan, '*Wise Blood* and the Irony of Redemption', *FOCB*, 22 (1993-94), 12-24
- Wood, Ralph C., 'The Heterodoxy of Flannery O'Connor's Book Reviews', *FOCB*, 5 (1976) 3-29
- ___, 'The Catholic Faith of Flannery O'Connor's Protestant Characters: A Critique and A Vindication', *FOCB*, 13 (1984), 15-25
- ___, *The Comedy of Redemption: Christian Faith and Comic Vision in Four American Novelists* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988)
- ___, 'Flannery O'Connor, Martin Heidegger, and Modern Nihilism: A Reading of "Good Country People"', *FOCB*, 21 (1992), 100-18
- ___, 'Flannery O'Connor's Strange Alliance with Southern Fundamentalists', *Literature and Belief*, 17 (1997) 75-98
- Wyatt, Brian N., 'The Domestic Dynamics of Flannery O'Connor: *Everything That Rises Must Converge*', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 38.1 (1992), 66-88
- Wynne, Judith F., 'The Sacramental Irony of Flannery O'Connor', *Southern Literary Journal*, 7.2 (1975), 33-49
- Yaeger, Patricia, 'Flannery O'Connor and the Aesthetics of Torture', in *Flannery O'Connor: New Perspectives*, ed. by Sura P. Rath and Mary Neff Shaw (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp.183-206
- Young, Thomas Daniel, 'Redeeming Grace: Flannery O'Connor's *The Complete Stories*', in *The Past in the Present: A Thematic Study of Modern Southern Fiction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), pp.117-36
- ___, 'Flannery O'Connor's View of the South: God's Earth and His Universe', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 20.2 (1987), 5-14

Zacharasiewicz, Waldemar, 'Flannery O'Connor Among Creative Readers Abroad: A Late Encounter with the Georgia Writer', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 20.2 (1987), 51-65

SIMONE WEIL: PRIMARY SOURCES

First and Last Notebooks, trans. by Richard Rees (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970)

Gateway to God, ed. by D. Raper (Glasgow: Collins, 1974)

Gravity and Grace, trans. by Emma Craufurd, ARK edn (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952, 1987)

Intimations of Christianity Among the Ancient Greeks, trans. by E.C. Geissbuhler, ARK edn (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957, 1987)

Lectures on Philosophy, trans. by Hugh Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978)

Letter to a Priest, trans. by A.F. Wills (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953)

The Need for Roots: Prelude to a Declaration of Duties Towards Mankind, trans. by A. F. Wills, ARK edn (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952, 1987)

The Notebooks of Simone Weil, trans. by Arthur Wills, 2 vols (London: Routledge & Paul, 1956)

On Science, Necessity and the Love of God, trans. by Richard Rees (London: Oxford University Press, 1968)

Oppression and Liberty, trans. by Arthur Wills and John Petrie, ARK edn (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958, 1988)

Selected Essays, 1934-1943, trans. by Richard Rees (London: Oxford University Press, 1962)

Seventy Letters, trans. by Richard Rees (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965)

Simone Weil: An Anthology, ed. by Siân Miles (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1986)

The Simone Weil Reader, ed. by George A. Panichas (Mt. Kisco, New York: Moyer Bell, 1977)

Waiting for God, trans. by Emma Craufurd (New York: Harper & Row, 1951, 1973)

SECONDARY SOURCES

Abosch, Heinz, *Simone Weil: An Introduction*, trans. by Kimberly A. Kenny (New York: Penbridge Books, 1993)

Allen, Diogenes, 'George Herbert and Simone Weil', *Religion and Literature*, 17.2 (1985), 17-34

Anderson, David, *Simone Weil* (London: SCM Press, 1971)

Bell, Richard H., *Simone Weil's Philosophy of Culture: Readings Toward a Divine Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

Blenkinsopp, Joseph, S.D.B., 'The Frustrated Pilgrim: Afterthoughts on Simone Weil', *The Wiseman Review*, 489 (1961), 277-85

Blum, Lawrence, and Victor Seidler, *A Truer Liberty: Simone Weil and Marxism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1989)

Brady, Veronica, 'The Novelist and the Reign of Necessity: Patrick White and Simone Weil', in Shepherd, R., and K. Singh, eds., *Patrick White A Critical Symposium* (Adelaide: Flinders University of South Australia, 1978), pp.108-16

Bramley, J.A., 'A Pilgrim of the Absolute', *Hibbert Journal*, 66 (1967), 10-14

Braybrooke, Neville, 'Edith Stein and Simone Weil', *Hibbert Journal*, 64 (1965), 75-80

Bree, Germaine, 'A Stranger in This World', *Saturday Review*, 20 February 1965, 26-27

Cabaud, Jacques, *Simone Weil: A Fellowship in Love* (New York: Channel Press, 1964)

Cameron, J.M., 'The Life and Death of Simone Weil', in *Simone Weil: Interpretations of a Life*, ed. by George Abbott White (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981) pp. 35-46

Channing-Pearce, Melville, 'Christianity's Crucial Conflict: The Case of Simone Weil', *Hibbert Journal*, 49 (1950-51), 333-40

Cohen, J.M., 'The Jewish Predicament', *Spectator*, 28 September 1951, p.402

Coles, Robert, 'Simone Weil: The Mystery of Her Life', *Yale Review*, 73.2 (1984) 309-20

___, *Simone Weil: A Modern Pilgrimage* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1987)

Cook, Bradford, 'Simone Weil: Art and the Artist under God', *Yale French Studies*, (1965), 73-80

Cruise, P.E., 'The Problem of Being Simone Weil', *Judaism*, 35.1 (1986), 98-106

Davy, Marie-Magdeleine, *The Mysticism of Simone Weil*, trans. by Cynthia Rowland (London: Rockliff, 1951)

Dunaway, John M., *Simone Weil* (Boston: Twayne, 1984)

___, 'Estrangement and the Need for Roots: Prophetic Visions of the Human Condition in Albert Camus and Simone Weil', *Religion and Literature*, 17.2 (1985), 35-42

Eaton, Jeffrey, 'Simone Weil and the Problem of Analogy', *Theology*, 87 (1984), 13-19

Eliot, T.S. 'Preface' in Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots: Prelude to a Declaration of Duties Towards Mankind*, trans. by A.F. Wills, ARK edn (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952, 1987)

Ferber, Michael K., 'Simone Weil's *Iliad*', in *Simone Weil: Interpretations of a Life*, ed. by George Abbott White (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), pp.63-85

Fiedler, Leslie A., 'Introduction' in Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, trans. by Emma Craufurd (New York: Harper & Row, 1951, 1973), pp.3-39

_____, 'Prophet Out of Israel', in *The Collected Essays of Leslie Fiedler*, 2 vols (New York: Stein and Day, 1971), II pp.5-30

_____, 'On Living with Simone Weil', in *The Collected Essays of Leslie Fiedler*, 2 vols (New York: Stein and Day, 1971), II. pp.31-35

Fiori, Gabriella, *Simone Weil: An Intellectual Biography*, trans. by Joseph R. Berrigan (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989)

Fitzgerald, David, 'Simone Weil: A Note on Her Life', *Dublin Magazine*, 4.1 (1965), 30-49

Frénaud, Georges, O.S.B., 'Simone Weil's Religious Thought in the Light of Catholic Theology', *Theological Studies*, 14.3 (1953), 349-76

Godman, Stanley, 'Simone Weil', *Dublin Review*, 450 (1950), 67-81

Gollancz, Victor, 'Waiting on God', in *More for Timothy* (London: Camelot Press, 1953), pp.63-130 (pp.84-130)

Goodman, Edward, *A Study of Liberty and Revolution*, (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1975)

Greene, Graham, 'Simone Weil', in *Collected Essays* (London: Bodley Head, 1969), pp.372-75

Hardwick, Elizabeth, 'Simone Weil', in *Bartleby in Manhattan and Other Essays* (London: Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1983), pp.157-65

Harper, Ralph, 'The Beauty of this World', in *Human Love Existential and Mystical* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966), pp.83-88

Hellman, John, *Simone Weil: An Introduction to Her Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984)

Hohlwein, Kathryn, 'Armed with a Burning Patience: Reflections on Simone Weil', in Giles, Mary, E., ed., *The Feminist Mystic And Other Essays on Women and Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), pp.142-57

Kazin, Alfred, 'The Gift', in *The Inmost Leaf: A Selection of Essays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955), pp.208-13

Little, J.P., 'Heraclitus and Simone Weil: The Harmony of Opposites', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 5.1 (1969), 72-79

___, 'The Symbolism of the Cross in the Writings of Simone Weil', *Religious Studies*, 2 (1970), 175-83

___, *Simone Weil: A Bibliography* (London: Grant & Cutler, 1973)

___, 'Albert Camus, Simone Weil, and Modern Tragedy', *French Studies*, 31.1 (1977), 42-51

___, *Simone Weil: A Bibliography Supplement No. 1* (London: Grant & Cutler, 1979)

___, *Simone Weil: Waiting on Truth* (Oxford: Berg, 1988)

Loades, Ann, 'Simone Weil-Sacrifice: a Problem for Theology', in Jasper, David, ed., *Images of Belief in Literature* (London: Macmillan Press, 1984), pp.122-37

___, 'Eucharistic Sacrifice: Simone Weil's Use of a Liturgical Metaphor', *Religion and Literature*, 17.2 (1985), 43-54

___, 'Eucharistic Sacrifice: The Problem of How to Use a Liturgical Metaphor, with Special Reference to Simone Weil', in *Sacrifice and Redemption: Durham Essays in Theology*, ed. by S.W. Sykes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 247-61

___, 'Simone Weil and Antigone: Innocence and Affliction' in *Simone Weil's Philosophy of Culture: Readings Toward a Divine Humanity*, ed. by Richard Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 277-94

Martin, E.W., 'Simone Weil and Existential Commitment', *Hibbert Journal*, 63 (1964), 9-12

McFarland, Dorothy, *Simone Weil* (New York: Ungar, 1983)

McLellan, David, *Simone Weil: Utopian Pessimist* (London: Macmillan Press, 1989)

___, *Religion and Politics in the Thought of Simone Weil*, Centre for the Study of Religion and Society, Pamphlet Library, 24 (Canterbury: University of Kent, 1991)

McPherson, Thomas, 'Estrangement from Man', *Theology*, 55 (1952), 299-302

Merton, Thomas, 'Pacifism and Resistance in Simone Weil', in *Faith and Violence: Christian Teaching and Christian Practice* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968)

___, 'Barth's Dream', in *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (New York: Image, Doubleday, 1989), pp.11-61

Milosz, Czeslaw, 'The Importance of Simone Weil', in *Emperor of the Earth: Modes of Eccentric Vision* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), pp.85-98

Muggeridge, Malcolm, 'André Weil, a Scientist, Discusses His Sister with Malcolm Muggeridge', *Listener*, 24 May 1973, pp.673-79

Murdoch, Iris, 'Void', in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (London: Penguin, 1992), pp.498-512

_____, 'Knowing the Void', in *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature*, ed. by Peter Conradi (London: Chatto and Windus, 1997), pp.157-60 (first publ. in *The Spectator*, 2 November 1956, pp.613-14)

Murray, Michele, 'The Jagged Edge: A Biographical Essay on Simone Weil', in *Simone Weil: Interpretations of a Life*, ed. by George Abbott White (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), pp.13-28

_____, 'Simone Weil: Last Things', in *Simone Weil: Interpretations of a Life*, ed. by George Abbott White (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), pp.47-61

Nevin, Thomas R., *Simone Weil: Portrait of a Self-Exiled Jew* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991)

Oxenhandler, Neal, *Looking for Heroes in Postwar France: Albert Camus, Max Jacob, Simone Weil* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1996)

Paul, Leslie, 'The Writer and the Human Condition', *Kenyon Review*, 29.1 (1967), 21-38

Perrin, J.M. and Gustave Thibon, *Simone Weil As We Knew Her*, trans. by Emma Craufurd (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953)

Pétrément, Simone, *Simone Weil: A Life*, trans. by R. Rosenthal (London: Mowbrays, Random House, 1976)

Peyre, Henri, 'Contemporary Feminine Literature in France', *Yale French Studies*, 27 (1975), 47-65

Phillips, D. Z., 'God and Concept-Formation in Simone Weil', in *Simone Weil's Philosophy of Culture: Readings Toward a Divine Humanity*, ed. by Richard H. Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.77-92

Pierce, Roy, 'Simone Weil: Sociology, Utopia, and Faith', in *Contemporary French Political Thought* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp.89-121

Plant, Stephen, *Simone Weil* (London: Fount, 1996)

Rees, Richard, *Simone Weil: A Sketch for a Portrait* (Carbondale: Illinois University Press, 1966)

Rexroth, Kenneth, 'The Dialectic of Agony', *Nation*, 12 January 1957, pp.42-43

Rosen, Fred, 'Marxism, Mysticism, and Liberty: The Influence of Simone Weil on Albert Camus', *Political Theory*, 7.3 (1979), 301-19

Sherry, Patrick, 'Simone Weil on Beauty', in Richard H. Bell, ed., *Simone Weil's Philosophy of Culture: Readings Toward a Divine Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 260-76

Simonsuuri, Kirsti, 'Simone Weil's Interpretation of Homer', *French Studies*, 39.2 (1985), 166-77

Sontag, Susan, 'Simone Weil', in *A Susan Sontag Reader* (London: Penguin, 1983), pp.91-93

Springstead, Eric O., *Christus Mediator: Platonic Mediation in the Thought of Simone Weil* (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1983)

_____, 'Contradiction, Mystery and the Use of Words in Simone Weil', *Religion and Literature*, 17.2 (1985), 1-16

_____, *Simone Weil and the Suffering of Love* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley, 1986)

Sproxtton, Vernon, 'The Pilgrimage of Simone Weil', *Listener*, 24 May 1973, pp.672-73

Summers, Joseph H., 'Notes on Simone Weil's *Iliad*', in *Simone Weil: Interpretations of a Life*, ed. by George Abbott White (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), pp.87-93

Taubes, Susan Anima, 'The Absent God', *Journal of Religion*, 35.1 (1955), 6-16

Teuber, A., 'Simone Weil: Equality as Compassion', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 43.2 (1982), 221-37

Thibon, Gustav, 'Introduction', in Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, ARK edn (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952, 1987)

Tomlin, E.W.F., *Simone Weil* (Cambridge: Bowes & Bowes, 1954)

Van Herik, Judith, 'Simone Weil's Religious Imagery: How Looking Becomes Eating', in *Immaculate and Powerful: The Female in Sacred Image and Social Reality*, ed. by Clarissa W. Atkinson, Constance H. Buchanan and Margaret R. Miles (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), pp. 260-82

Watkins, Peter, 'Simone Weil: Antisemitism and Syncretism', *Church Quarterly Review*, 163 (1962), 463-73

West, Paul, 'Simone Weil', in *The Wine of Absurdity: Essays on Literature and Consolation* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1966), pp.141-57

White, George Abbott, ed., *Simone Weil: Interpretations of a Life* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981)

_____, 'Simone Weil's Bibliography: Some Reflections on Publishing and Criticism', in *Simone Weil: Interpretations of a Life*, ed. by George Abbott White (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), pp.181-91

Williams, Rowan, 'The Necessary Non-Existence of God', in *Simone Weil's Philosophy of Culture: Readings Toward a Divine Humanity*, ed. by Richard H. Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.52-76

Winch, Peter, *Simone Weil: "The Just Balance"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)

Woolger, Roger, 'The Importance of Simone Weil', *Theoria to Theory*, (1970), 27-39

**PHILOSOPHICAL, LITERARY, THEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES**

Abrams, M.H., *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971)

Adams, Marilyn McCord, 'Redemptive Suffering: A Christian Solution to the Problem of Evil', in *Rationality, Religious Belief, and Moral Commitment: New Essays in the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. by Robert Audi and William J. Wainwright (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp.248-67

___, 'Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God', in *The Problem of Evil*, ed. by Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp.209-21 (first publ. in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary vol 63 (1989), 297-310)

___, and Robert Merrihew Adams, eds., *The Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990)

Allen, Diogenes, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology* (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press; London: SCM Press, 1985)

___, 'Natural Evil and the Love of God', in *The Problem of Evil*, ed. by Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 189-208 (first publ. in *Religious Studies*, 16 (1980), 439-56)

Alter, Robert and Frank Kermode, eds., *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (London: Fontana Press, 1989, 1997)

Antonaccio, Maria and William Schweiker, eds., *Iris Murdoch and the Search for Human Goodness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996)

Aquinas, Thomas, Saint, *Selected Philosophical Writings*, selected and trans. by Timothy McDermott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993)

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1985)

_____, *The Poetics of Aristotle*, trans. by Stephen Halliwell (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1987)

Augustine, Saint, *The Essential Augustine*, ed. by Vernon J. Bourke, 2nd edn (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1974)

_____, *Confessions*, trans. by Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)

_____, *On Free Choice of the Will*, trans. by Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993)

Bakhtin, Mikhail, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981)

_____, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968, 1984)

Baldick, Chris, *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-Century Writing* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987)

Barth, Karl, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*, trans. by Grover Foley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1963, 1979)

Barthes, Roland, 'The Death of the Author' in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. by David Lodge (London: Longman, 1988), pp. 167-72

Bettenson, Henry, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963, 1967)

Boff, Leonardo, *Liberating Grace* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1984)

Boone, Kathleen C., *The Bible Tells Them So: The Discourse of Protestant Fundamentalism* (London: SCM Press, 1989, 1990)

Booth, Wayne C., *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974)

___, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 1983)

Botting, Fred, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996)

Bradbury, Malcolm, *The Modern American Novel*, rev. edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)

___, *Dangerous Pilgrimages: Trans-Atlantic Mythologies and the Novel* (London: Penguin, 1995, 1996)

Bradley, Ian, *The Power of Sacrifice* (London: Dartman, Longman & Todd, 1995)

Bretall, Robert, ed., *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, paperback edn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973)

Brogan, Hugh, *The Penguin History of the United States of America* (London: Penguin, 1985, 1990)

Buber, Martin, *Eclipse of God: Studies in the Relation Between Religion and Philosophy* (London: Gollancz, 1953)

Budick, Sanford and Wolfgang Iser, eds., *Languages of the Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987)

Cahn, Steven M., ed., *Classics of Western Philosophy*, 4th edn (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995)

Carson, Clayborne, ed. and others, *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle, 1954-1990* (New York: Penguin, 1991)

Cash, W.J., *The Mind of the South* (New York: Vintage, 1941, 1991)

Chadwick, Charles, *Symbolism* (London: Methuen, 1971)

Chadwick, Henry, *Augustine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986)

- Chambers English Dictionary*, ed. by Catherine Schwarz and others (Edinburgh: W & R Chambers; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988)
- Chase, Richard, *The American Novel and Its Tradition*, paperback edn (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1957, 1980)
- Cohen, Steven and Linda M. Shires, *Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1988)
- Cologne-Brookes, Gavin and Neil Sammells and David Timms, eds., *Writing and America* (London: Longman, 1996)
- Comte, Fernand, *Mythology*, trans. by Alison Goring (Edinburgh: W & R Chambers, 1991)
- Congar, Yves, O.P., 'Christian Theology' ed. by Mircea Eliade, trans. by Matthew J. Connell, in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), XIV, pp. 455-64
- Cooey, Paula M., *Religious Imagination and the Body* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994)
- Cooper, David E., ed., *A Companion to Aesthetics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, 1995)
- _____, *World Philosophies: An Historical Introduction*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996)
- Copjec, Joan, *Radical Evil* (London: Verso, 1996)
- Copleston, F.C., *Aquinas* (London: Verso, 1996)
- Cuddon, J.A., *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 3rd edn (London: Penguin, 1992)
- Davies, Brian, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993)

Derrida, Jacques, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, paperback edn (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976)

_____, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982)

_____, *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, ed. by Peggy Kamuf (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991)

_____, *Dissemination*, trans. by Barbara Johnson, paperback edn, (London: Athlone Press, 1993)

Detweiler, Robert, 'The Moment of Death in Modern Fiction', *Contemporary Literature*, 13.3 (1972), 269-94

Dupuis, Jacques, ed., *The Christian Faith: In The Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, 6th edn (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1996)

Eco, Umberto, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, trans. by Hugh Bredin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988)

_____, *The Open Work*, trans. by Anna Cancogni ([n.p.]: Hutchinson Radius, 1989)

Edmundson, Mark, *Literature Against Philosophy, Plato to Derrida: A Defence of Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

Edwards, Paul, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967)

Èjxembaum, Boris M., 'The Theory of the Formal Method', in *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, ed. by Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), pp. 3-37

Eldridge, Richard, 'Form', in *A Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. by David E. Cooper (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, 1995), pp. 158-62

Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. by Willard. Trask (San Diego: Harvest, Harcourt Brace, 1957, 1959)

___, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, (New York: Macmillan, 1987)

Eliot, T.S., 'Religion and Literature' in *Selected Essays* (London: Faber, 1976), pp.388-401

Fiedler, Leslie, *The Collected Essays of Leslie Fiedler*, 2 vols (New York: Stein and Day, 1971)

___, *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self* (London: Penguin, 1981)

___, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 3rd edn (London: Penguin, 1984)

Fisher, James T., *The Catholic Counterculture in America, 1933-1962* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989)

Flew, Antony, *An Introduction to Western Philosophy: Ideas and Arguments from Plato to Popper*, revised edn (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989)

Ford, David F., ed., *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1997)

Fowler, Roger, ed., *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms*, rev. edn. (London: Routledge, 1973, 1987)

___, 'Anti-Language in Fiction', *Style*, 13.3 (1979), pp. 259-78

Fox, Richard Wightman and James T. Kloppenberg, eds., *A Companion to American Thought* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1995, 1998)

Frankfurt, Harry G., 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of Person', in *Free Will*, by Gary Watson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 81-95

Freud, Sigmund, 'The Uncanny', in *Art and Literature*, ed. by Albert Dickson, trans. by Angela Richards, The Penguin Freud Library, 15 vols (London: Penguin, 1990), XIV, pp.339-76

Friedman, Maurice, ed., *The Worlds of Existentialism: A Critical Reader*, paperback edn (New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1991)

Frye, Northrop, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (San Diego: Harvest, Harcourt Brace, 1982, 1983)

_____, *Words With Power: Being a Second Study of 'The Bible and Literature'* (San Diego: Harvest, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990, 1992)

Gale, Richard, M., 'Some Difficulties in Theistic Treatments of Evil', in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. by Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp.206-18

Gardiner, Patrick, *Kierkegaard* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988)

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., ed., *'Race', Writing, and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985, 1986)

_____, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988)

Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984)

Girard, René, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. by Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977)

Grant, Damian, *Realism* (London: Methuen, 1970)

Grayling, A.G., ed., *Philosophy: A Guide Through the Subject* (London: Oxford University Press, 1995)

Greeley, Andrew M., *The Catholic Myth: The Behavior and Beliefs of American Catholics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990)

Halliwell, Stephen, 'Plato', in *A Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. by David E. Cooper (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, 1995), pp.327-30

Hardon, John A., S.J., *The Catholic Catechism* (New York: Image, Doubleday, 1981)

Hare, R. M., *Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982)

Harpham, Geoffrey Galt, *On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982)

Hawkes, Terence, *Structuralism and Semiotics* (London: Routledge, 1977)

Hawthorn, Jeremy, *Unlocking the Text: Fundamental Issues in Literary Theory* (London: Edward Arnold, Hodder & Stoughton, 1987)

Hebblethwaite, Brian and Edward Henderson, *Divine Action: Studies Inspired by the Philosophical Theology of Austin Farrer* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990)

Heidegger, Martin, *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. by David Farrell Krell, rev. edn (London: Routledge, 1993)

Hewitt, Andrew, 'The Bad Seed: "Auschwitz" and the Physiology of Evil', in *Radical Evil*, ed. by Joan Copjec (London: Verso, 1996), pp.74-104

Hick, John, *Evil and the God of Love* 2nd edn, new preface (London: Macmillan, 1977, reissued 1985)

Hilfer, Tony, *American Fiction Since 1940* (London: Longman, 1992)

Hill, Samuel S., 'The Uses of Religion in the South', *Cross Currents*, 16.3 (1966), 339-48

Hirschkop, Ken and David Shepherd, eds., *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989)

Honderich, Ted, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995)

- Hospers, John, 'Aesthetics, Problems of', in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Paul Edwards, (New York: Macmillan, 1967), pp.35-56
- Howard-Snyder, Daniel, ed., *The Evidential Argument from Evil* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996)
- Iser, Wolfgang, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, paperback edn (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980)
- Jackson, Rosemary, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Routledge, 1981)
- Jakobson, Roman, 'The Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles', in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. by David Lodge (London: Longman, 1988), pp.57-61 (first publ. as 'Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances', in Jakobson and Morris Halle, *Fundamentals of Language*, 1956)
- James, Henry, *The Critical Muse: Selected Literary Criticism*, ed. by Roger Gard (London: Penguin, 1987)
- Jameson, Fredric, *The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972)
- _____, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Routledge, 1981, 1989)
- Jantzen, Grace M., *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)
- Jaspers, Karl, *Plato and Augustine*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Ralph Manheim (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1962)
- Jefferson, Ann, 'Body matters: Self and Other in Bakhtin, Sartre and Barthes', in *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989)
- _____, and David Robey, eds., *Modern Literary Theory: A Comparative Introduction*, 2nd edn (London: B.T. Batsford, 1986)

The Jerusalem Bible: New Testament, 4th edn (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973)

John of the Cross, Saint, *Dark Night of the Soul*, trans. by Allison Peers, 3rd edn (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1953)

Jung, C.G., *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, trans. by R.F.C. Hull, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, 20 vols, IX, Part I, 2nd edn (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; New York: Princeton University Press, 1969)

_____, *Modern Man In Search of a Soul*, trans. by W.S. Dell and Cary F. Baynes, ARK edn (London: Routledge, 1984)

_____, *Answer to Job*, trans. by R.F.C. Hull, ARK edn (London: Routledge, 1984)

_____, *Psychology and Western Religion*, trans. by R.F.C. Hull, ARK edn (London: Routledge, 1988)

Kayser, Wolfgang, *The Grottesque in Art and Literature*, trans. by Ulrich Weisstein (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963)

Kennedy, Eugene, *Tomorrow's Catholics, Yesterday's Church* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988)

Kenny, Anthony, *Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980)

Kermode, Frank, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, paperback edn (London: Oxford University Press, 1968)

_____, *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979)

Kierkegaard, Søren, *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, ed. by Robert Bretall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946, 1973)

_____, *Gospel of Sufferings*, trans. by A.S. Aldworth and W.S. Ferrie paperback edn (Cambridge: James Clark, 1982)

Komonchak, Joseph A., and Mary Collins and Dermot A. Lane, eds., *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987)

Kristeva, Julia, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980, 1982)

Labrie, Ross, *The Catholic Imagination in American Literature* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997)

Lang, Berel, *The Anatomy of Philosophical Style: Literary Philosophy and the Philosophy of Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1990)

Lawson, Lewis A., 'The Grotesque in Recent Southern Fiction', in *Patterns of Commitment in American Literature*, ed. by Marston La France (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), pp.165-79

Lee, Brian, *American Fiction 1865-1940* (London: Longman, 1987)

Leitch, Vincent B., *American Literary Criticism: From the Thirties to the Eighties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988)

Lentricchia, Frank and Thomas McLaughlin, eds., *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990)

Levin, David Michael, *The Opening of Vision: Nihilism and the Postmodern Situation* (New York: Routledge, 1988)

Lewis, R.W.B., 'Hold on Hard to the Huckleberry Bushes', in *Trials of the Word: Essays in American Literature and the Humanistic Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965) pp.97-111

Lodge, David, ed., *Twentieth Century Literary Criticism: A Reader* (London: Longman, 1972)

___, *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature* (London: Edward Arnold, Hodder Headline, 1977)

___, ed., *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* (London: Longman, 1988)

Maritain, Jacques, *Art and Scholasticism With Other Essays*, trans., by J.F. Scanlon (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1930)

_____, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (New York: Meridian, 1955)

Marx, Leo, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964, 1967)

Masters, Brian, *The Evil That Men Do* (London: Doubleday, 1996)

Matthews, Eric, *Twentieth-Century French Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996)

McBrien, Richard P., *Catholicism*, 3rd edn (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994)

McElroy, Bernard, *Fiction of the Modern Grotesque* (London: Macmillan, 1989)

McFague, Sallie, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1993)

McGrath, Alister E., ed., *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993)

_____, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994)

_____, ed., *The Christian Theology Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995)

McIntire, C.T., 'Fundamentalism', in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Basingstoke: Morgan & Scott, 1985), pp.433-35

McIntosh, Mark A., *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1998)

Melling, David J., *Understanding Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1987)

Merton, Thomas, *The Ascent to Truth* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1951, 1976)

___, *No Man Is an Island* (Tunbridge Wells, Burns & Oates, 1955)

___, *Mystics and Zen Masters* (New York: Noonday Press, 1967)

___, *Faith and Violence: Christian Teaching and Christian Practice* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968)

___, *The Literary Essays of Thomas Merton*, ed. by Patrick Hart (New York: New Directions, 1981)

Miles, Margaret R., *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1989, 1992)

Minter, David A., *A Cultural History of the American Novel: Henry James to William Faulkner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

Mitchell, W. J. T., 'Spatial Form in Literature: Toward a General Theory', *Critical Inquiry*, 6.3 (1980), 539-67

Moltmann, Jürgen, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1974, 1991, 1993)

Morgan, Iwan W. and Neil A. Wynn, eds., *America's Century: Perspectives on U.S. History since 1900* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1993)

Murdoch, Iris, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge, 1970)

___, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (London: Penguin, 1992)

___, *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature*, ed. by Peter Conradi (London: Chatto and Windus, 1997)

The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language: Deluxe Encyclopedic Edition, ed. by S. Stephenson Smith and others (Naples, Florida: Trident Press International, 1996)

Nichols, Aidan, O.P., *The Shape of Catholic Theology: An Introduction to Its Sources, Principles, and History* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991)

Norris, Christopher, *Derrida* (London: Fontana Press, 1987)

_____, *Deconstruction Theory and Practice*, rev. edn (London: Routledge, 1991)

O'Connor, William Van, *The Grotesque: An American Genre and Other Essays* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press,)

O'Meara, Thomas F., O.P., 'Grace', in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. by Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), pp.84-88

Onega, Susan and José Angel García Landa, eds., *Narratology: An Introduction* (London: Longman, 1996)

Oppenheimer, Paul, *Evil and the Demonic: A New Theory of Monstrous Behaviour* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1996)

Ortony, Andrew, ed., *Metaphor and Thought*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

Ott, Ludwig, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, trans. by Patrick Lynch, ed. by James Bastible, 4th edn (Rockford, Illinois: Tan, 1960)

Percy, Walker, *The Message in the Bottle: How Queer Man Is, How Queer Language Is, and What One Has to Do with the Other* (New York: Noonday Press, 1954-75)

Plato, *Phaedrus and The Seventh and Eighth Letters*, trans. by Walter Hamilton (London: Penguin, 1973)

_____, *The Republic*, trans. by Desmond Lee, 2nd edn, rev., (London: Penguin, 1974, 1987)

Poggioli, Renato, 'Form', in *Dictionary of World Literary Terms*, ed. by Joseph T. Shipley (London: Allen & Unwin, 1970), pp.127-31

Rahner, Karl, 'Grace: Theological and Structure of De Gratia', in *Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, ed. by Karl Rahner (London: Burns & Oates, 1975), pp.587-98

___, 'Grace and Freedom', in *Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, pp.597-601

Reising, Russell, J., *The Unusable Past: Theory and the Study of American Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1986)

Richardson, Alan and John Bowden, eds., *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1983)

Rickman, H.P., *Philosophy in Literature* (Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1996)

Ricoeur, Paul, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. by Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967)

___, 'Religion, Atheism, and Faith' in *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. by Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), pp. 440-67

___, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. by Robert Czerny, Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello, S.J., paperback edn (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977, 1986)

___, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, trans. by David Pellauer, ed. by Mark I. Wallace (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995)

Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Routledge, 1983)

Rist, John M., *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)

Ronen, Ruth, *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)

___, 'Space in Fiction', *Poetics Today*, 7.3 (1986), 421-38

Rowe, William L., 'The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism', in *The Problem of Evil*, ed. by Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp.126-37 (first publ. in *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 16 (1979), 335-41)

Rubin, Louis D., and Robert D. Jacobs, eds., *South: Modern Southern Literature in its Cultural Setting* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1961)

___, *Southern Literary Study: Problems and Possibilities* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975)

Ruland, Richard, 'Form and Meaning in American Literary Criticism', in *American Literature*, ed. by Boris Ford, *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature: vol 9* (London: Penguin, 1988, 1991), pp.478-500

___, and Malcolm Bradbury, *From Puritanism to Post-Modernism: A History of American Literature* (London: Penguin, 1992)

Russo, Mary, *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1995)

Sartre, Jean-Paul, *What is Literature?*, trans. by Bernard Frechtman (London: Methuen, 1986)

Scarry, Elaine, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985)

Scruton, Roger, *Modern Philosophy: A Survey* (London: Mandarin, 1994, 1996)

Selden, Raman, ed., *The Theory of Criticism: From Plato to the Present A Reader* (London: Longman, 1988)

- Sheppard, Anne, *Aesthetics: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987)
- Shklovsky, Victor, 'Art as Technique', in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. by David Lodge (London: Longman, 1988), pp.16-30
- Sonnenfeld, Albert, 'The Catholic Novelist and the Supernatural', *French Studies*, 22.4 (1968), 307-19
- Sontag, Susan, *A Susan Sontag Reader* (London: Penguin, 1983)
- Stierle, Karlheinz, 'The Reading of Fictional Texts', in *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation*, ed. by Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp.83-105
- Stiles, T.J., comp., *The Citizen's Handbook* (New York: Berkley Books, 1993)
- Stump, Eleonore, 'Aquinas on the Sufferings of Job', in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. by Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp.49-68
- Swinburne, Richard, 'Some Major Strands of Theodicy', in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. by Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp.30-48
- Sykes, S.W., ed., *Sacrifice and Redemption: Durham Essays in Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)
- Tallack, Douglas, *Twentieth-Century America: The Intellectual and Cultural Context* (London: Longman, 1991)
- Tarnas, Richard, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our World View* (London: Pimlico, 1991, 1996)
- Tatarkiewicz, W., 'Form in the History of Aesthetics', in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, ed. by Philip P. Wiener, (New York: Charles Scribners, 1973), II, pp.216-25

Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre, *The Divine Milieu*, rev. edn (New York: Harper & Row, 1968)

_____, *The Phenomenon of Man*, trans. by Bernard Wall (New York: Harper & Row, 1975)

Thomson, Philip, *The Grotesque* (London: Methuen, 1972)

Tindall, George Brown and David Emory Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, Brief 4th edn (New York: W. W. Norton, 1984-1997)

Todorov, Tzvetan, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. by Richard Howard (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1973, 1975)

Tolstoy, Leo, *What Is Art?*, trans. by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (London: Penguin, 1995)

Tompkins: Jane P., ed., *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980)

Turner, Denys, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

Underhill, Evelyn, *The Mystic Way: The Role of Mysticism in the Christian Life* (Atlanta, Georgia: Ariel Press, 1913, 1992)

Vaihinger, H., *The Philosophy of 'As if': A System of the Theoretical, Practical and Religious Fictions of Mankind*, trans. by C.K. Ogden (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1924)

Warburton, Nigel, *Philosophy: The Basics* (London: Routledge, 1992)

Watson, Gary, ed., *Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982)

Wellek, René and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*, 3rd edn (London: Penguin, 1963)

Wildiers, N.M., *An Introduction to Teilhard de Chardin*, trans. by Hubert Hoskins (London: Collins; New York: Harper & Row, 1968)

Williams, David, *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Mediaeval Thought and Literature* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996)

Williams, Raymond, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, rev. edn (London: Fontana, 1983, 1988)

Witt, Charlotte, *Substance and Essence in Aristotle: An Interpretation of Metaphysics VII-IX* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1989)

Wright, T.R., *Theology and Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988)