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## Flannery O'Connor's Productive Violence

FLANNERY O'CONNOR FAMOUSLY INSISTED THAT THE subject of her fiction "is the action of grace in territories largely held by the devil" (*Mystery* 118). While, as James Mellard notes, O'Connor largely has "had had her way with critics" ("Flannery" 625), her interpreters have been hard pressed to reconcile the signature violence in her fiction with traditional religious beliefs. When called on to explain this seeming contradiction, O'Connor remarked: "Violence is strangely capable of returning my characters to reality and preparing them to accept their moment of grace" (*Mystery* 112). The operative word here is "strangely," and scholars have found very strange, even inexplicable, the redemptive properties of murder, rape, and mutilation.<sup>1</sup> Claire Katz writes that O'Connor "unleashes a whirlwind of destructive forces more profound than her Christian theme would seem to justify" (55); and Preston Browning observes that O'Connor's enigmatic fiction calls for interpretations that go beyond religious orthodoxy: "If it was Christian orthodoxy to which she subscribed, her work is manifest proof that it was orthodoxy with a difference. For her persistent habit of finding the human reality in the extreme, the perverse, the violent calls for closer examination" (56).

Even if the redemptive value of destruction is not immediately apprehensible, O'Connor's insistence on the purposive nature of violence readily maps onto the white, Western logic of difference. This Western, exclusionary logic holds that a sense of individuation and autonomy issues out of a power struggle between opposing terms. The marginalization or violent suppression of one term in a binary guarantees the ascendancy of its opposite. For example, working from this

logic, male authority seems to depend on female subjection, and white supremacy is confirmed by the domination of people of color. As feminist theorist Jessica Benjamin explains, “The ideal of freedom carries with it the seeds of domination—freedom means fleeing and or subjugating the other; autonomy means an escape from dependency” (221).

Critics like Katz and Mellard have argued that one formulation of this Western notion of autonomy, the Freudian/Lacanian psychoanalytic narrative, seems particularly congruent with O’Connor’s insistence on purposive violence. According to Freud, entry into a cultural order organized by polarities begins with a fear of castration, and, for Lacan, “symbolic castration” introduces socialization.<sup>2</sup> Seizing on this notion of symbolic castration, these critics have cited figurative castrations in O’Connor’s stories, like the sodomizing of Tarwater, the theft of Joy/Hulga’s prosthetic leg, or the goring of Mrs. May by a bull, and have suggested that violence functions in O’Connor’s texts according to a Freudian Oedipal formula; that is, it works to stabilize social hierarchy and positions of dominance.

My purpose here is decidedly not to apply a Freudian schema to O’Connor’s texts. Rather, I propose that the Roman Catholic writer, like feminist theorists, rethinks and rewrites a phallogentric, Western, exclusionary narrative of social individuation, which is inscribed in the psychoanalytic master-narrative. As evidence for this assertion, I invoke O’Connor’s admission that her texts bear a complicated, adversarial relation to Freud’s theories. Writing to a friend, she states: “As to Sigmund, I am against him tooth and toenail but I am crafty: never deny, seldom confirm, always distinguish. Within his limitations I am ready to admit certain uses for him” (*Habit* 110). Like a feminist revisionist, O’Connor has “uses” for Freud, but also moves beyond his model. To interpret the changes O’Connor rings on a Freudian Oedipal paradigm, I turn to feminist revisionist of psychoanalytic theory, Julia Kristeva, whose theory of abjection, I propose, can help to untangle the riddle of O’Connor’s redemptive violence.

With an insistence reminiscent of O’Connor, Kristeva argues that violence can be “productive” (*Revolution* 16). Like O’Connor’s shattering violence, Kristeva’s abjection “pulverizes the subject” (*Powers* 5), and, for both writer and theorist, this violence opens onto a sense of powerlessness. Critics have long noted that “the common experience [in all of O’Connor’s fiction] is that of humiliation” (Napier 23); similarly,

Kristeva writes that abjection “is a desire for separation, for becoming autonomous and also the feeling of an impossibility of doing so” (*Women* 136). In addition, for both O'Connor and Kristeva, this destruction is salutary. As Katz astutely notes, early and late in O'Connor's works: “Paradoxically, to be destroyed is to be saved” (61), while Kristeva even applies to abjection terms that invoke Christian redemption: Abjection, she writes, “is a resurrection that has gone through death (of the ego). It is an alchemy that transforms death drive into a start of life, of new significance” (*Powers* 15). But how is this violence transformative? For Kristeva, abjection is a breakdown of alterity—“one has the impression that . . . an external menace . . . may menace us from the inside” (*Women* 136)—which, if properly negotiated with the help of “a third party, eventually the father” (*Powers* 13), instantiates a new, altered social subject aware that the “‘I’ is heterogeneous” (10). Violence in O'Connor seems to serve a similar social purpose. In story after story, O'Connor inscribes violent collisions or convergences: the Greenleaf bull gores Mrs. May; the fierce bird pierces Asbury with its icicle; Mary Grace slams Ruby Turpin with a book; the African American woman from the bus strikes Julian's mother with her pocketbook. In each of these instances, like abjection, destruction “erase[s] . . . borders” between self and other. And, like abjection, which is “death infecting life” (4), these collisions are a confrontation with death, but the dissolution seems purposive: it is a shattering of the ego, a transformative blurring of self and other that enables social change.

In sum, I propose that O'Connor's fiction, like Kristeva's theory, rewrites and corrects a Western assumption that the social order is a hierarchy wholly dependent on separation and division. In her works, O'Connor shows that socialization and civilization depend on a disintegration of the ego, in combination with a resistance to destruction, that forges alliances with others; and this communion is figured as the action of grace. My reading, which imputes a social dimension to O'Connor's violent saving encounters, directly engages with Toni Morrison's insistence that there is a “connection between God's grace and Africanist ‘othering’ in Flannery O'Connor” (13). In turn, Morrison's insight echoes O'Connor herself, who in *Mystery and Manners* suggests that social interaction and, in particular, a harmonious diverse racial society denote the presence of the divine in the human: “It requires considerable grace for two races to live together, particularly when

the population is divided about 50–50 between them and when they have our particular history” (233). A “connection” between the violent action of grace in her fiction and human social relations is also posited by O’Connor’s definition of the devil. While O’Connor insisted that her subject is a struggle between grace and the devil, she describes the devil as “an evil intelligence determined on its own supremacy” (*Mystery* 118). Defined this way, grace works to overcome and dissolve a human will to supremacy, that is, the desire of individuals, nation states, religious and ethnic groups, etc. to achieve power and autonomy by dominating others. I turn now to three stories, “The Artificial Nigger” (1955), “Greenleaf” (1956), and “The Enduring Chill” (1958), which work out O’Connor’s alternative narrative of the authorization of dialectical social difference.<sup>3</sup>

#### ARTIFICIAL RACE DIFFERENCE

Beginning with its title, O’Connor’s “The Artificial Nigger” is problematic. Why did O’Connor choose to foreground an offensive racial slur in the title? When she submitted this work for publication in the *Kenyon Review*, the editor, John Crowe Ransom, suggested that she change the title, but O’Connor resisted and argued that she did not use the term “lightly” (Fitzgerald 182).<sup>4</sup> The title refers of course to the central icon of the story, the yard statue that, at the story’s conclusion, mysteriously reconciles Mr. Head and his grandson Nelson. In the text itself, the racial slur is only used by the racist characters, Mr. Head and Nelson, who consistently refer to the statue as “the artificial nigger,” while the narrator distinguishes her voice from theirs and substitutes the term, “artificial Negro.” Why then abandon this careful narrative practice for the title of the work? As I see it, O’Connor elects to couple the disparaging racial epithet with the word, “artificial,” so as to underscore the artificiality of our assigned cultural labels. Like the statue it refers to, an artificial, grotesque caricature of a real human being, the word, “nigger,” is an attempt by the dominant culture to subordinate the real to an artificial construction of it. In the words of Lacan, it is an attempt to make the signified “disappear” under the weight of the signifier. More simply put, the title suggests that the inferiority and difference signified by the loaded label are artificial, a fiction, fantasy or lie, but a lie that is the basis for white dominance in a binary construction of cultural meanings. The title points, then, to a poststructuralist defini-

tion of cultural meanings. Different cultures assign meanings to visible differences, like gender and race differences, but these meanings are purely cultural productions, which are enforced by language—by words like “nigger”—and by domination.

The subject of “The Artificial Nigger” is the cultural production of dialectical meanings. As the story begins, Mr. Head is a man on a mission. He is taking his grandson, Nelson, to Atlanta to teach him white male authority produced by domination, and this objective is twofold; that is, he means to instruct Nelson in both his own authority over the boy and in white male supremacy. But, as numerous critics have observed, Mr. Head fails miserably to achieve his parallel objectives; instead, in the big city, he is lost and helpless. He has to turn to people of color to help him, and, driven by fear of a group of women, he abandons Nelson when the boy turns to him for help.

The story explores more, however, than a particular white old man's failure to establish patriarchal authority through domination. The journey to Atlanta figures Nelson's initiation into Western culture's assigned polarized meanings, like the black/white dialectic. And this journey takes the two into unstable terrain, to the site of a boundary, where difference is marked in the site of a convergence.<sup>5</sup> Take, for example, the boundary between high and low. The boundary is the site where high and low merge, a fearful, threatening place that is not one thing or another, but both. Boundaries represent, then, exactly the paradox O'Connor is investigating, the fearful site where one identity loses itself in another, but also where difference arises out of this assimilation. If we apply Kristeva's terms, boundaries represent the abject, “the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite,” the site where “it is revealed [to the subject] that . . . loss [of the other] laid . . . the foundations of its own being” (*Powers* 4, 5).

In O'Connor's story, Atlanta's underground system of sewers functions as an image for the boundaries that support language's either/or meanings. Soon after they arrive in Atlanta, Mr. Head and Nelson contemplate the mystery of “how the world was put together in its lower parts,” the part that “underlined” the “entire city” (259). They allude, of course, to the Atlanta sewer system, but this language alerts us to symbolic implications.<sup>6</sup> Just as the upper world of the city is supported by subterranean depths, so also the dominant term in a dialectic is defined in terms of what it is not; i.e., male is not female; white is not black, and

this not-white or not-male is what must be withheld, or driven underground. But, as O'Connor figures these dualisms, she stresses that the two levels of the city, the upper one, symbol for the foregrounded term, and the negated, underground other one are counterparts; they channel one another through "tunnels" or "holes." This porousness, which Mr. Head and Nelson fear—"a man could slide into it and be sucked along down endless pitchblack tunnels" (259)—figures the site where seeming opposites converge, where high and low meet, where self and other come together. When Mr. Head and Nelson visit Atlanta, they fall through these "holes"; that is, they experience a convergence of I and not-I that is a part of boundary-making.<sup>7</sup>

The central act of the narrative, Mr. Head's denial of his grandson, both figures and discredits a Western exclusionary model of race and gender difference. To begin with, Mr. Head disavows his relationship to his grandson out of fear. Nelson becomes panic-stricken when he thinks that his grandfather has abandoned him in the strange city. He dashes down the street "like a wild maddened pony" (264) and knocks down an elderly woman. When his grandfather catches up with Nelson, he finds the boy and the woman lying on the pavement; the woman is yelling that someone will pay for her broken ankle; and a crowd of women are "milling around Nelson as if they might suddenly all dive on him at once and tear him to pieces" (265). These events trigger the grandfather's denial of his grandson. "His eyes glazed with fear and caution," he says: "This is not my boy" (265). Mr. Head's denial reenacts how white Westerners make binary meanings in culture by distancing that which is close, by denying a relationship where there is a relationship. This denial, O'Connor suggests, is an attempt to stave off a threat of fragmentation. Mr. Head lies or creates the fiction of distance and unbridgeable difference so as to save himself from being "t[orn] to pieces" by the women; that is, to secure his male boundaries. In O'Connor's text, however, alienation alone does not make Mr. Head safe, secure, or powerful. Without Nelson, the street ahead of him becomes the very "hollow tunnel" (265) that he was trying to avoid, and he now "wander[s]" in "a black strange place where nothing was like it had ever been before" (267). Exclusionary tactics alone have left him adrift in an alien, because alienated universe in which he has no reference point: "He felt he knew now what time would be like without seasons and what heat would be like without light and what man would

be like without salvation. He didn't care if he never made the train and if it had not been for what suddenly caught his attention, like a cry out of the gathering dusk, he might have forgotten there was a station to go to" (268). In denying his relation to his grandson, Mr. Head has lost interrelatedness, the connection that supports discrete identities, like the relationships between light and heat, time and seasons, and man and salvation.

At the story's end, the enigmatic central icon, the yard statue—a cruel, racist image of an African American—mysteriously reconciles Mr. Head and Nelson as they stand mesmerized before it. For O'Connor, the widespread Southern practice of decorating homes and lawns with grotesque images of African Americans embodies the problem of racial discrimination in the South. In a letter to a friend, dated 28 August 1955, she writes, "And there is nothing that screams out the tragedy of the South like what my uncle calls 'nigger statuary'" (*Habit* 101). Why then should this racist figure have a redemptive effect on the grandfather and grandson?<sup>8</sup> According to the critical consensus, the grandfather and grandson are reconciled because this distorted caricature of an African American is so radically different from the white old man and boy that they are reminded of their similarity. The statue is constructed so as to exaggerate racial difference and thereby distinguish white identity in a polar opposition, a white man/"nigger" binary construction. Accordingly, it is argued, the racist yard ornament unites them in their white solidarity.<sup>9</sup>

This standard reading of the statue's "action of mercy" (269), which essentially argues for racial segregation as the way to preserve white difference, oversimplifies the image of the African American. It fails to observe that, like a boundary, the figure of the African American is a mysterious two-in-one place where opposites, like high and low, join and are differentiated in a disintegrative-transformative fusion. In describing the plaster sculpture, the narrative voice insists that it is not one thing or the other. It is both young and old; both happy and sad: "It was not possible to tell if the artificial Negro were meant to be young or old; he looked too miserable to be either. He was meant to look happy because his mouth was stretched up at the corners but the chipped eye and the angle he was cocked at gave him a wild look of misery instead" (268).

The literary formulation of a boundary is the double. Like a boundary, a site where one pole and its opposite converge, the double is a mirror image of the self, me, but not-me, the uncanny stranger in whom I see the lineaments of the self.<sup>10</sup> In "The Artificial Nigger," the statue is the double of Nelson and Mr. Head; that is, it bears a striking resemblance to them, but is not them.<sup>11</sup> While, as critics have observed, the racist yard decoration is the image of the despised "nigger," the text is also at pains to point out that the sculpture is also the image of Nelson and Mr. Head. For example, Nelson is described as a "small figure" (268) only a few sentences before the statue is introduced as a "plaster figure . . . about Nelson's size" (268). The statue is a mysterious black form, and, throughout the story, Nelson has been feeling a "black mysterious form" (267) rising within him. And, of course, as I have noted, Mr. Head wants Nelson to submit to him in a father/son dialectic in the same way that a segregated South sought to affirm white supremacy by relegating African Americans to a subordinate position. But the plaster figure is not only identified with Nelson, it bears a resemblance to both Mr. Head and Nelson. Its "wild look of misery" (268) reflects the anguish in Mr. Head's face, which "in the waning afternoon light looked ravaged and abandoned" (267). And it leans forward at an angle that mirrors the stance of Mr. Head and Nelson. Like the grandfather and grandson who stand "with their necks forward at almost the same angle" (268), the sculpture is described as "pitched forward at an unsteady angle" (268). Yet another correspondence is the indeterminate age of the image of the African American. Like the statue, which might be young or old, Mr. Head looks like an "ancient child" and Nelson is like a "miniature old man" (269).

At the story's conclusion, through the agency of their black double, the racist yard statue, Mr. Head and Nelson experience an obsessively rehearsed paradox in O'Connor's fiction, the self-destruction that opens onto transformation. Here O'Connor explicitly defines "the action of mercy" as a breakdown of difference between self and other: "They could feel it dissolving their differences like an action of mercy" (269). The act that saves them is an annihilation of the I separate from the other, a dismantling of cultural polarizations. But how is this destruction a saving act?

Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection can help us to understand the transformative possibilities of this disintegration of identity. Confronted



with the yard statue, Mr. Head experiences a relational encounter with otherness that seems to exemplify abjection. Abjection is the recognition of the interdependence of the I and the other, or, as Kristeva puts it, the revelation that the self “is none other than abject” (*Powers* 5), that precipitates the “destruction and construction” of the subject (*Revolution* 16). The figure of the African American triggers in Mr. Head and Nelson this dissolution when it “dissolves their differences like an action of mercy.” Near the end of the story, Mr. Head re-experiences this creative destruction: “Mr. Head stood very still and felt the action of mercy touch him again but this time he knew that there were no words in the world that could name it” (269). There are “no words in the world” for this action because, as Kristeva tells us, this moment is a “destruction of the sign and representation, and hence of narrative and metalanguage,” a “tearing of the veil of representation” that is constructed by culturally and linguistically produced polarities (*Revolution* 103). For Kristeva, this disintegration of either/or meanings is a “dangerous and violent crucible.” “Going through this experience,” she writes, “exposes the subject to impossible dangers of relinquishing his identity, . . . dissolving the buffer of reality in a mobile discontinuity” (104). In O'Connor's story, Mr. Head experiences this disintegration as he now stands “appalled, judging himself with the thoroughness of God, while the action of mercy covered his pride like a flame and consumed it. He had never thought himself a great sinner before but he saw now that his true depravity had been hidden from him lest it cause him despair” (269–70). His true depravity has been “hidden,” or denied and projected on others, on Nelson and people of color.

Resistance to identification, Kristeva writes, also plays a necessary part in fashioning a raced and gendered identity. As I stated at the outset, civilization itself depends on imposing an artificial marker to create a boundary, which is the place where opposites join and then part. At the end of O'Connor's narrative, Mr. Head and Nelson flee the city and retreat to their white, male outpost in the country. With the final words of the story, Nelson articulates this distancing, which throws down the artificial marker of difference: “I'm glad I've went once,” he says, “but I'll never go back again” (270). Nelson's words speak to a deep-seated desire to alienate so as to distinguish the I in terms of the not-I. But, as the story's central icon, the yard statue that is like Mr. Head and Nelson but not them, symbolizes, resistance works together

with a desire for integration—like the desire Nelson experiences when he encounters the African American woman—to construct a social subject. In a letter to a friend, O'Connor attempts to explain the transformation that Mr. Head experiences in "The Artificial Nigger": "Mr. Head is changed by his experience even though he remains Mr. Head. He is stable but not the same man at the end of the story. Stable in the sense that he bears his same physical contours and peculiarities but they are all ordered to a new vision" (*Habit* 275). O'Connor's words point to a tension between sameness and difference. Mr. Head "is both "same," but "not the same."<sup>12</sup> In the story, Mr. Head and Nelson go back to the place where Nelson "come[s] from" (259), the in-between boundary site or "holes," where the culturally defined white man and his grandson run together with the racial other, symbolized by the lawn statue of the African American, and Mr. Head is "changed" by a "new," transforming "vision," the revelation that a fearful fluidity "constitutes [his] very being" (*Powers* 5).

A DIFFERENT KIND OF DIFFERENCE: 'GREENLEAF'

"Greenleaf" provides a textbook example of the redemptive violence that is the signature characteristic of O'Connor's fiction. At the story's conclusion, Mrs. May, a farm owner, is gored by her farm worker's bull, and O'Connor's use of Christ imagery to describe the wounding unmistakably suggests that it is Christ who penetrates the dying woman: the bull's horn "pierce[s] [Mrs. May's] heart" (333), and earlier the farm worker's wife, Mrs. Greenleaf, in the act of faith healing, had called on Christ to "stab [her] in the heart" (317). Aside from this allusion to Christ, however, the violence in the story seems to exemplify domination. Throughout the fiction, Mrs. May has been struggling to assert her superiority to her farm laborers, the Greenleafs, by "k[ee]ping [her] foot on [Mr. Greenleaf's] neck" (321); but, despite her efforts, the class difference between the Mays and the Greenleafs is eroding, and, according to the prevailing reading of the fiction, the penetration of Mrs. May by the Greenleaf bull at the story's end signifies their domination of her.<sup>13</sup> Of course, such an interpretation works from the premises of a binary or Oedipal logic. According to this exclusionary logic, the defining difference of one term in a binary—upper class, for example—is determined by the marginalization of its opposite. This reading, however, overlooks the story's revisionary definition of boundary-making.

Contrary to Freud's Oedipal paradigm, "Greenleaf" suggests that individuation and autonomy are not the effect of domination. Rather, the Greenleaf twins model a different kind of difference, a difference that is composed of a tension between attachment and separation. While Mrs. May has devoted her life to exclusionary tactics to establish her family's class difference from the Greenleafs, at the story's end, when she is pierced through the heart by the Greenleaf bull, she makes the "discovery" (334) that an ego-shattering convergence of herself and the Greenleafs—represented by the violent goring—is part of a boundary-making process.

In "Greenleaf," O'Connor inscribes cultural difference as relational rather than exclusionary. Whereas, according to the psychoanalytic master-narrative, difference is the effect of separation, in O'Connor's text, the identical Greenleaf twins model difference as an oscillation or balance of separation and attachment. As twins, they embody double-ness: they are both identical and two separate individuals. Contrary to the deeply entrenched Western conviction that such an elision is tantamount to indeterminacy, "Greenleaf" insists that difference can exist within similarity and that the twins model social identity as like brother- and sisterhood. This notion of social identities, which I find dramatized in "Greenleaf," has been formulated as a theory by Jessica Benjamin. Benjamin writes that identity-differentiation is a "simultaneous process of transforming and being transformed by the other," "a tension between sameness and difference, . . . a continual exchange of influence" (49). In what follows, I propose to show that O'Connor's story "Greenleaf" and, in particular, the Greenleaf twins seem to exemplify Benjamin's abstract theory.

Unlike the Mays, who are intent on alienation, the identical Greenleaf twins accept that we can share identities with others and still retain our individual gender, race, and other differences. Their names, O.T. and E.T., suggest this combination of sameness and difference. They share an identity: the last half of their names is identical, while the first half is different. And, because they understand that difference can exist within similarity, they are not afraid to risk indistinguishability. For example, when Mrs. May addresses one of the identical twins, she never knows to whom she is speaking: "They were twins and you never knew when you spoke to one of them whether you were speaking to O.T. or E.T., and they never had the politeness to enlighten you" (317). Mrs.

May condemns as rudeness an individuality that is foreign to her, that is, a subject position that does not fiercely guard its borders, but instead submits to its own porousness. O.T. and E.T. seem to personify Benjamin's theory that a "striving for autonomy . . . is realized in the context of a powerful connection" (105–06). And this understanding that difference can coexist with similarities, O'Connor suggests, is the answer to the problem of domination. When Mrs. May asks the Greenleaf's hired man, "Which is boss, Mr. O.T. or Mr. E.T.?", he replies: "They never quarls. . . . They like one man in two skins." In turn, she flatly rejects this answer: "Hmp. I expect you just never heard them quarrel" (326). Mrs. May's rejection assumes that individuation and autonomy are contingent upon a power-struggle. Without domination, there is no margin and no center. But O.T. and E.T. do not struggle. Neither is "boss"; rather they are equals in a relationship that oscillates between subject and object positions.

The Greenleaf twins not only accept a shared identity with one another but also with those who are culturally defined as racially other. This white-black alliance begins with Mrs. May's relentless efforts to derogate them, in the same way that she disparages people of color. But the slippage between the Greenleafs and African Americans is not only the effect of Mrs. May's insistence on her whiteness and their difference from her. For example, unlike Mrs. May, whom we first see with egg-white paste on her face, the Greenleafs are described as less exclusively white. Mr. Greenleaf's face, we are told, is "dark" (329), and the Greenleaf twins are characterized as "red-skinned" (317). More important, the Greenleaf twins are not only doubles for each other, they are also have a black double, their African American hired man. We never see O.T. or E.T. in the story; instead, they are represented by their worker, "a light yellow boy dressed in [their] cast-off Army clothes" (325). When their hired man answers Mrs. May's question about the Greenleaf bull, he consistently refers to himself and the Greenleafs together as "we": "We ain't knowed where he was. . . . He done busted up one of *our* trucks. *We* be glad to see the last of him" (325–26, emphasis added). Wearing the twins' clothes and speaking for them in the first person plural, the black young man is both similar to and different from the Greenleafs, the definition of the double, and this doubling suggests that we can recognize our commonalities with others while still retaining distinguishing differences.

This blurring of different identities even extends to the Mays, who are intent on enforcing their difference from the Greenleafs. For example, Mrs. May recalls that the Greenleaf boys grew up on her place and that “they wore my boys’ old clothes and played with my boys’ old toys and hunted with my boys’ old guns” (328). While Mrs. May’s purpose is to remind the Greenleafs of their indebtedness to her, her words imply that the Greenleaf twins are the mirror-images of her own sons. Reinforcing this connectedness, the May sons, Scofield and Wesley, impersonate the Greenleafs. Using Greenleaf English, Wesley says to his brother: “neither you nor me is her boy . . .” (327). Wesley’s words are meant to hurt and to estrange his mother, but they have the effect of suggesting a relationship between the Mays and the Greenleafs. While not identical, the two families are related.

The Greenleaf twins share an identity with yet another figure in the text—the Greenleaf bull, which gores and kills Mrs. May. Their bull, I propose, embodies the father’s doubling or blurring boundary-making role. Just as the Greenleaf twins father children who are mixed (with French mothers, the children speak both French and Greenleaf English), their bull keeps finding its way into Mrs. May’s herd and breeding with her cows. To perform the father’s linking, transformative function, the father-figure has to be, like a boundary, a site where opposites converge. Accordingly, like the identical Greenleaf twins, who are described as “one man in two skins,” the Greenleaf bull is also two-in-one, not one thing or another, but composed of both. For example, with a hedge “wreath across his horns,” he is “like some patient god come down to woo [Mrs. May].” On the other hand, Mrs. May addresses the animal in a “guttural” tone “as if . . . to a dog” (311). The bull is identified with the Greenleafs—Mrs. May says: “That’s a Greenleaf bull if ever I saw one” (323); and he is also linked to people of color: when Mrs. May first sees the stray bull in her yard, she refers to its owner with a racial slur. This two-in-oneness enables the father’s integrative/distinguishing boundary-making role. In “Greenleaf,” it enables the twins’ bull to be the site where difference breaks down and is constructed anew out of the disintegration.<sup>14</sup>

The terrible wounding of Mrs. May by the bull, which is accompanied by the bull’s violent death, figures the erosion of difference between me and not-me that the Greenleaf twins model and that Mrs. May has resisted all her life. Even in her earliest musings about “Green-

leaf," O'Connor seemed to envision the story's centerpiece, the goring of a woman by a bull, as a site of ambiguity or doubleness. Announcing to a friend that she was working on the story, O'Connor wrote: "I am very happy right now writing a story ["Greenleaf"] in which I plan for the heroine, aged 63, to be gored by a bull. I am not convinced yet that this is purgation or whether I identify myself with her or the bull" (*Habit* 129). Even this brief encapsulation of the story's climactic goring describes it as a tension between oppositions: it may be a "purgation" or an identification, and, if an identification, it may be an identification with the bull or Mrs. May. O'Connor's comments suggest why she elects to narrate the story of a woman penetrated by a bull's horns. The wounding captures an encounter with otherness that is dual, both the one thing and the other. Most strikingly, the wounding collapses sex and death. The unmistakably sexual language used to describe the goring, "the bull . . . buried his head in her lap, like a wild tormented lover" (333), compares this double-death to a sexual union, a union of maternal and paternal figures in a *Liebestod* or dying of the ego into the other. As well, this language, which aligns love and death, "One of his horns sank until it pierced her heart and the other curved around her side and held her in an unbreakable grip" (333), echoes Mrs. Greenleaf's cry during her faith-healing: "Oh Jesus, stab me in the heart" (317), and this association of the bull with Christ suggests that this destruction of Mrs. May is her salvation.

On the surface, the death of Mrs. May on the horns of the bull might seem to invite a Freudian interpretation of male individuation. According to Freud, to achieve autonomy and independence a son must sever his attachment to his mother. But "Greenleaf" clearly revises this solely exclusionary paradigm. While the goring of Mrs. May suggests that she is the abjected or "radically excluded" (*Powers* 2) mother, whose exclusion makes way for a new order, at the same time, this death by penetration is also a commingling, a bonding of maternal and paternal, of May and Greenleaf. And when Mr. Greenleaf, who, as the Greenleaf patriarch, is a double for the bull, shoots the bull, he figures the "symbolic barrier" (*Revolution* 102) that marks a difference in a site of convergence. If we apply Kristeva's theory, this joint death figures what she calls the "father-mother conglomerate" (*Tales* 40), the moment when the father introduces difference into the mother-child relation by serving as a "go-between" (*Powers* 13); that is, the father is "go-between"

in the sense that he both shares an identity with the mother (the bull and Mrs. May are joined) even as he pulls away (Mr. Greenleaf shoots the bull). In O'Connor's story, this marking of difference in a site of convergence is both a disintegration and a transformation that enables the new life or new social forms that the Greenleaf name symbolizes. And this, I think, is Mrs. May's "last discovery" (334), which she seems to be whispering into the bull's ear as she dies.

#### ASBURY'S HOMECOMING

"The Enduring Chill" addresses a dilemma that is the focus of *The Violent Bear It Away*, a novel that O'Connor worked on for eight years before its publication in 1960. In the novel, young Tarwater seeks to be autonomous and self-determined, but he finds himself "with barely an inch to move in, barely an inch in which to keep himself inviolate" (162). More specifically, the boy resists incursions on his identity from two father-figures, his great-uncle, old Tarwater, a prophet, whose identical name suggests the threat of identicalness, and his uncle, an atheist. Each of these father-figures would make the boy the image of himself. The "trap" (159) that Tarwater finds himself in is that all of his efforts to keep himself separate and distinct turn into the opposite, acts which connect him to another. For example, the uncle's child, Bishop, is unbaptized, and his great-uncle Tarwater has ordered him to baptize the child and so begin his calling as a prophet, like his great-uncle. To erase the occasion for identification with the old man, young Tarwater drowns the child, but "the one thing" becomes "another" (157), as the act of drowning Bishop becomes its opposite, the baptism of Bishop. For young Tarwater, the merging of either/or oppositions seems to signal indeterminacy, the annihilation of the difference that defines a separate, autonomous individual. In the novel's final scene, however, O'Connor points to the transformative possibilities of opening up individual identity. The novel ends with an allusion to Christ's multiplication of the loaves and fishes to feed a multitude. This miracle, like the Roman Catholic doctrine it prefigures, the Transubstantiation (the conversion of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ), suggests that the dissolution of a single, intact identity can be productive: it nourishes and sustains a community. In "The Enduring Chill," another young man, Asbury Fox, faces a dilemma like Tarwater's, and O'Connor again explores transformative interchanges between self and other.

“The Enduring Chill” narrates Asbury’s induction into a social order defined by language’s seemingly exclusive either/or oppositions. A young aspiring writer, Asbury, like so many of O’Connor’s protagonists, still seems to be attached to his mother. He is described as his mother’s “little boy” (366), and he compares his imagination to a bird that his mother has “cage[d]” and “pinion[ed]” (364). He feels as if he is her “slave” (364), and believes that his independence and autonomy are contingent upon separating totally from his mother. As the story opens, Asbury, who is ill, has come home to die. In death, he expects “liberat[ion]” (364) in the form of a transcendent, male god-figure, like the Jesuit priest with “the superior expression,” Ignatius Vogle, S.J., who looks “over the heads of the others” (360). This plot development revisits another motif in earlier fiction—a male figure separates a mother and child by an act that is either literally or figuratively deadly. In “A Good Man Is Hard to Find,” a family that is dominated by a grandmother is separated from her when a serial murderer kills them all. In “The Life You Save May Be Your Own,” Shiftlet separates a mother and daughter, both named Lucynell Crater, and abandons the helpless girl far from her mother. In “Good Country People,” Joy/Hulga seeks to assert her independence from her mother by making love with a Bible salesman, Manley Pointer, who then steals her artificial leg and leaves her helpless in a loft.

In “The Enduring Chill,” when the deathly experience arrives, out of this destruction arises “the New Man” (360), a new transformed Asbury; and the father-figures who “assist” (360) this transformation are not the “mysteriously saturnine” (374) figures that Asbury expects, but homely figures, who are like his mother. This blurring of the duality between mother and father introduces culture’s dualisms, which likewise overlap with one another. Each time the formative/disintegrative moment arrives, it is invoked as a transformation that modifies and replaces but does not erase a shared identity with others. A separate, gendered and raced self is not produced solely by alienation, but by a transformation or reunion, like the homecoming Asbury experiences when he returns to the hometown he despises and sees it as the place of “a majestic transformation” where “the flat of the roofs might at any moment turn into the mounting turrets of some exotic temple for a god he didn’t know” (357). In “The Enduring Chill,” Asbury looks to a god-like father-figure to liberate him from a threatening tie to his mother,



and encounters “a god he didn’t know,” a father-figure who models relational difference.

Reduced to its essence, Asbury’s goal of self-determination through death and paternal intervention is identical with a white Western narrative of male identity-formation in female exclusion.<sup>15</sup> In “The Enduring Chill,” O’Connor both parodies and rewrites this masculinist script. For example, Asbury’s notion of death, which is repeatedly undermined in the text, corresponds to Lacan’s notion of the development of subjectivity through the acquisition of language. For Lacan, this event occurs when the signifier—words, laws and social codes—dominates the signified, the material person or thing in the world, a process which he designates with the formula *S/s*. This precedence of the word or symbol over material existence is precisely the experience Asbury seeks in death. His death, he insists, will be an “illumination that was totally out of keeping with the kind of talk he had to listen to from his mother. This was largely about cows . . . and their intimate functions” (367). In death, he believes, he will “triumph” (370) over his mother by having her read a letter he has written to her, “which filled two notebooks” (364). He anticipates the reading of the letter as her subjection to his sign: he thinks that “she might experience a painful realization” as “her literal mind . . . discovers the significance of [the letter]” (364).

Throughout the fiction, however, Asbury not only fails to secure an autonomous male identity through female subjection and alienation, but, more than this, his efforts to extricate himself from his mother’s closeness only tie him more closely to her. Like Tarwater in *The Violent Bear It Away*, Asbury finds that every act intended to alienate becomes another homecoming, another reunion. For example, seeking to rebel against his mother’s rules, Asbury drinks the cows’ fresh milk, an act that “she don’t ’low” (370), and encourages the black farm workers, Randall and Morgan, to join him. As he drinks the milk, which the farmhands refuse, he declares his independence from his mother: “Take the milk. It’s not going to hurt my mother to lose two or three glasses of milk a day. We’ve got to think free if we want to live free!” (369). The gesture is intended to sever his bond with his mother, but, for Asbury, as for Tarwater, acts designed to separate become acts that assert identicalness. When Asbury drinks the milk of his mother’s cows, he is drinking milk that belongs to his mother or, in other words, he is drinking his mother’s milk and thereby eliding the boundary between himself and her.

Asbury smokes with the black workers and offers to drink the fresh milk with them because, he says, he seeks a “moment of communion when the difference between black and white is absorbed into nothing” (368). Clearly, however, he wants no such breakdown of racial difference, since, when the farm workers, Morgan and Randall, visit him in his sickroom he looks “wildly” to his mother to “get rid of them for him” (380). Like Julian in “Everything That Rises Must Converge,” Asbury pays lip service to racial integration only to oppose his mother. Nevertheless, repeatedly throughout the story, his words prove prophetic as “moment[s] of communion” take place, and the difference between binaries like black and white, mother and father, or Asbury and his mother “is absorbed into nothing.” The most striking example of this elision of dualisms is the story’s final disclosure, when Dr. Block, the country physician whom Asbury disdains, reveals that Asbury contracted a cow’s disease by drinking unpasteurized milk. Ironically, the illness that Asbury proudly thought was “way beyond Block” (367) and set him apart from others is a cow’s disease that signals his alignment with his mother’s world of cows.

The story moves inexorably toward a dramatic conclusion, Asbury’s encounter with “a god he didn’t know.” While Asbury is anticipating an alliance with a transcendent father-figure, “a lean dark figure in a Roman collar” (374), “a man of the world” (360), the two father-figures who appear in the story, Dr. Block and Father Finn, are wholly unlike the superior, “worldly” and “cynical” (371) figure Asbury expects. Block, the rural physician, who makes jokes and funny faces to please children, is, Asbury says, an “idiot” (367). As for Father Finn, he is radically unlike the figure Asbury pictures when he asks for a Jesuit priest to visit him. Asbury expects “a man of culture” (371); instead Father Finn is an old, red-faced man, deaf in one ear and blind in one eye, who brushes aside attempts at intellectual conversation “as if he were bothered by gnats” (375). Nonetheless, these homely men, with “literal mind[s]” (364) like his mother, are the agents of the transformation that awaits Asbury. It is Dr. Block who delivers the “shattering” (381) revelation that Asbury’s body is home to a cow’s disease and Father Finn who puts into words the fate that awaits Asbury when he “roars”: “How can the Holy Ghost fill your soul when it’s full of trash? . . . The Holy Ghost will not come until you see yourself as you are—a lazy ignorant conceited youth!” (377). Asbury hopes in death to be liberated from a mater-

nal/material attachment; instead Father Finn's words suggest what is coming: a violent obliteration of his illusions of difference and superiority, which will then be replaced by what the Jesuit calls the Holy Ghost or a new understanding of his "communion" with others.<sup>16</sup>

At the conclusion of "The Enduring Chill," Asbury, "shocked clean" by the irony that the illness that was to emancipate and authorize him is a cow's disease, is "prepared for some awful vision about to come down on him" (382). As the story ends, this vision is pictured when a ceiling image of a fierce bird with an icicle in its beak (the effect of water stains) seems to descend to pierce him. The meaning of this final image has been dramatized earlier in the fiction in a dream that also images the fate that awaits him. As the dream begins, it appears to represent Asbury's death in accordance with his fantasy—death as his triumph over his mother and proof of his difference from and superiority to her world. He sees his funeral bier being borne across a dam away from his mother, who watches "without interest" from the porch. His bier is followed by a Jesuit priest, who "had a mysteriously saturnine face in which there was a subtle blend of asceticism and corruption" (374). This is the superior, transcendent father-figure, with whom Asbury seeks to align himself in death. At this point in the dream, a sudden reversal alerts us to symbolic meanings. The upset occurs when Asbury feels "a presence bending over him," and believes that "this was his Art come to wake him," but, when he looks, he is confronted by a series of uncanny doubles for the mother he thought he left behind:

He sat up and opened his eyes. Across the hill all the lights were on in his mother's house. The black pond was speckled with little nickel-colored stars. The Jesuit had disappeared. All around him the cows were spread out grazing in the moonlight and one large white one, violently spotted, was softly licking his head as if it were a block of salt. (374)

Whereas Asbury anticipates freedom and empowerment through the alienation of the maternal and material, the expected altering experience is not the erasure of a maternal bond; rather, it is a "majestic transformation" of it. The cow that wakes him by gently licking him is a disguised figure for his mother, whose talk is all of cows and their maladies. The "dam" he crossed, presumably to part from his mother, is also a figure for her, since "dam" carries the secondary meaning of mother.

And finally the pond in which his funeral procession is reflected is now “speckled with nickel-colored stars,” a representation for Dr. Block, a father-figure with “nickel-colored eyes” (366), who is Asbury’s mother ally. This doubling suggests that the deathly experience Asbury awaits is not an estrangement from others, beginning with his mother, but a transformation that initiates new and different relations with others.

Within the story, Dr. Block, Father Finn, and Asbury’s mother are also doubled with the ceiling image of the bird, itself an image for the Holy Ghost, and this blurring of the human and the divine implies that the god Asbury awaits is not distinct and detached, but shares an identity with these homely figures. Like the fierce bird, which, at the story’s conclusion, seems about to pierce Asbury with the icicle poised in its beak, his mother, Father Finn, and Dr. Block are all presented as figures who infiltrate Asbury. As noted earlier, Asbury accuses his mother of “pinion[ing]” his imagination; Block “press[es]” a needle into Asbury’s vein “invad[ing] the privacy of his blood” (367); under the gaze of Father Finn, Asbury flails about “helplessly as if he were pinned to the bed by the terrible eye” (377); and, when Dr. Block diagnoses Asbury with undulant fever, this news seems “to reach down like a steel pin” (381) and kill something in Asbury. Like Tarwater in *The Violent Bear It Away*, Asbury finds himself penetrated by others, and in both works, O’Connor explores the possibilities of penetrability. For Asbury in “The Enduring Chill,” this porousness enables a “moment of communion when the difference [between himself and another] is absorbed into nothing” (368) and prefigures the shattering descent of the Holy Spirit at the story’s conclusion.<sup>17</sup>

As Benjamin observes, no matter what theory you turn to, the father is always the way into a world of cultural differences. The “liberator-father,” she writes, “is used to defend against the engulfing mother” (133). The problem, she continues, is that “for children of both sexes, this split means that identification and closeness with the mother must be traded for independence” (135). In other words, independence seems to be predicated on the breakdown of mutual recognition not only with the mother, but then, in later life, with others, with people who do not share our gender, race, or ideologies. In early stories, like “A Good Man Is Hard to Find,” “The Life You Save May Be Your Own,” and “Good Country People,” with her characteristic lacerating wit, O’Connor

exposes the destructiveness of this prevailing Western assumption that self-determination is contingent upon segregation and discrimination. At the same time, these stories also gesture toward the father's transformative role. Manley Pointer separates mother and daughter, but he also merges erotically with Joy/Hulga, and she emerges from this union newly aware of the mutuality of self and other: when she "surrender[s] to him completely," Joy/Hulga feels as if she were "losing her own life and finding it again, miraculously, in his" (289).

In later fiction, O'Connor focuses on father-figures who are figures of elision, like the yard statue of the African American, the Greenleaf bull, and Dr. Block. To be sure, there is still terrible violence in these stories. In "The Enduring Chill," Mrs. May is run through by the Greenleaf bull; in "The Artificial Nigger," as he gazes at the yard statue, Mr. Head feels as if a "flame" had "consumed" (270) him; and in "The Enduring Chill," as the story ends, the fierce bird seems about to pierce Asbury with its icicle. In each of these stories, however, this shattering violence is also a convergence with another—Mrs. May with the bull; Asbury with the bird; and Mr. Head with the yard statue. This disintegration/convergence is the death of the I in the other, the indeterminacy and the loss of boundaries that we fear will follow if we acknowledge our similarities with others, especially the other in a racial or gender binary. But O'Connor's texts insist that this perviousness enables inclusion in a community of different people.

In Christian terms, this permeability is our salvation. In Roman Catholic theology, Christ is dual, both God and man, and this combination of opposites makes Christ the access or passageway between human and divine that enables God's grace to enter us, like the Holy Spirit descending on Asbury at the story's conclusion. In her fiction, O'Connor applies this dualistic model to the father's role in separating a mother-child relation and introducing a child into the community. The father is like the mother but not the mother, a double for her, who introduces a new subject to a world of doubles, strangers who are both like us and different from us. Through such father-figures, whom Kristeva calls "the imaginary father" and "a godsend" (*Tales* 41), O'Connor makes the point that culture's boundaries are the effect of an oscillation, a hovering, between separation and convergence, between likeness and difference, between the imaginary and the symbolic. And the place where

the opposites coexist, the site of mutuality and even sameness, is a site of disintegration. But, like Kristeva, O'Connor encourages us to have "the courage to call ourselves disintegrated in order to [recognize] . . . the other at the heart of what we persist in maintaining as proper, solid 'us'" (*Strangers* 192).<sup>18</sup> In her fiction, O'Connor turns to the language of her faith to articulate this seeming paradox. Her works consistently take us to the borders of identity where self and other converge, and, for O'Connor, these identity-shattering convergences, which drive home the mutual interdependence of self and other, are moments of grace.

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#### NOTES

1. Scholars have struggled to understand why "bodily injury signals the penetration of the divine" (Brinkmeyer, "Jesus" 83). For example, Crawford finds that these violent encounters seem "closer to dissociative moments of panic than glimpses of the divine" (12). Havird describes these aggressive penetrations as "saving rapes"; and writes that, while union with the Holy Spirit makes Asbury in "The Enduring Chill" "at least a sometimes potent male" (17), in "Greenleaf," the bull's violent penetration of Mrs. May is meant to teach her submissiveness. Ciuba interprets the pervasive violence in O'Connor's fiction in terms of Girard's theory that "a compelling sense of unfulfillment at the center of the subject" leads to violence against another "who seems to possess the fullness of being for which the subject yearns" (7). Brinkmeyer argues that O'Connor "shatter[s] the characters' Cartesian worship of consciousness" so as to "return the characters violently to their bodies into which the divine has somehow penetrated" ("Jesus" 84). Discounting O'Connor's insistence that the aggression in her fiction is compatible with Christian tenets, Prown proposes that O'Connor "claims that her writing served the needs of God" to "justify even its most shocking elements—particularly the unrelenting violence—within a context of Christianity and in so doing justify as well the needs of her artistic self" (20–21). Similarly, Yeager "refuse[s] O'Connor's Catholicism as the pivotal focus of her work," and suggests that the mayhem in the fiction is "a painful reenactment of a sadistic world whose sanity is hopelessly compromised by its race and class politics" (187).

2. Freud proposes that the key event in the development of male identity occurs when "the boy's Oedipus complex is destroyed by the fear of castration" (*SE* 19: 179). By means of this fear, "the authority of the father . . . is introjected into the ego, and there it forms the nucleus of the super-ego, which takes over the severity of the father and perpetuates his prohibition against incest" (177). In Lacan's theory, "castration is the symbolic function within the Oedipal complex that establishes the position of father" (Mellard, *Using Lacan* 29).

3. Important earlier studies helped me to form my interpretation. In a seminal essay, Asals perceptively notes the almost obsessive recurrence of doubling in

O'Connor's fiction, and observes that inherent in the double is "a dualistic conception of the self" (51). While the double, in my reading, models a communal identity, Asals follows a Freudian reading of the double as a threatening "unwanted kinship" (49). Crawford's thesis that "'the action of grace' in O'Connor's fiction [is] intelligible from a cultural perspective" (22) parallels my own, but his analysis ultimately concludes that a "religious solution is invoked in order to leapfrog unpleasant social realities and personal failures" (9). John Duvall's astute study of "racechanges" in O'Connor dovetails with my project. Duvall finds a pervasive "figurative blurring of racial binaries in O'Connor's fiction" (64) and argues that this blurring shows "how precarious [social] hierarchy is, threatened as it is by more fluid, transgressive possibilities and becomings" (65).

4. In a letter to O'Connor dated 12 January 1955, John Crowe Ransom questioned "whether we ought to have 'nigger' in the title." In reply, O'Connor wrote: "If this title would embarrass the magazine, you can of course change it." At the same time, however, she defended the title: "I don't think the story should be called anything but 'The Artificial Nigger'" (qtd. in Fitzgerald 180, 181). Fitzgerald addresses O'Connor's title in a letter to the editor, printed with Ransom's letter to O'Connor and O'Connor's reply. In her correspondence, O'Connor explains clearly, I think, the anti-racist purpose of her offensive title: ". . . to have sanitized the title would have robbed the story of its real power, the power to invert racist intention into anti-racist redemption" (*Habit* 111).

5. For Freud, the boundary on which the social order rests is the incest prohibition, which is enforced by the father. Derrida directs us to see that a boundary is "a pure, fictive and unstable, ungraspable limit. One crosses it in attaining it . . . before the prohibition it is not incest; forbidden, it cannot become incest except through the recognition of the prohibition" (267).

6. If we apply Lacanian terms, the upper level is what Lacan calls the symbolic order, the order of language and culture. The lower level represents Lacan's Imaginary or pre-symbolic. It is characterized by completeness and interrelatedness, and is associated with the close or dyadic relationship of a mother and an infant.

7. Nelson slips through "holes" when he encounters both the African American man on the train and the "large" African American woman in Atlanta. For example, when Nelson, who has never in his life seen an African American, views a "coffee-colored man" on the train, he sees no difference. Similarly, when Nelson approaches the large, African American woman, he is overcome by a transgressive desire for reintegration: "He felt as if he were reeling down though a pitch black tunnel" (262). For an analysis of the story's exposure of the cultural production of race and gender difference, see Fowler. Perreault argues that O'Connor attributes "body" to African American woman in the story, and, in so doing, "subverts her own deeply held belief in the necessity of unifying body and spirit for true spiritual integrity" (389-90). For O'Connor, however, the woman represents "the mystery of existence." In a letter to Ben Griffith, dated 4 May 1955, O'Connor writes: "I meant for her in an almost physical way to suggest the mystery of existence to him . . . and

I felt that such a black mountain of maternity would give him the required shock to start those black forms moving up from his unconscious" (*Habit* 78).

8. In her letter to John Ransom, dated 12 January 1955, O'Connor explains the symbolic meaning of the plaster figure of the African American: "I mean him to give a sense of the mysterious suffering of that race to Mr. Head and Nelson, and thereby bring them together again—a kind of redemptive suffering which acts on them without their taking it in as such" (qtd. in Fitzgerald 181).

9. Prown writes that the statuary represents "the signifier against which white identity is defined" (73). According to Perreault, "What is actually achieved in the celebrated end of 'The Artificial Nigger' is a reiteration of the old, sad split between mind and body, male and female, black and white" (410). See also Paulson 81. Scholars often have discussed the racist yard ornament as a figure of the archetypal scapegoat, whose suffering is redemptive. See, for example, Giannone, Okeke-Ezigho, Cheatham, Strickland, Burkman and Meloy, and Wood.

10. In German, the word for uncanny is *unheimliche*, which, literally translated, means unhomelike. Freud defines the uncanny double as some desire, instinct, or fear that is our own, that is, homelike, which we have rejected and made unhome-like or uncanny. See "The Uncanny" SE 17: 217–56. Kristeva insists that the uncanny double is closely related to the self. She writes that "the builder of the other and, in the final analysis, of [uncanny strangeness] is indeed repression itself and its perviousness" (*Strangers* 184).

11. A number of critics have noted resemblances between the yard statue and Mr. Head and Nelson. Asals calls the image their "alter ego" (192). Burkman and Meloy write that, like the crew in Conrad's "The Nigger of the 'Narcissus,'" Mr. Head and Nelson pursue spiritual quests and find salvation through an encounter with a black double. Kahane observes that the "complicated network of psychological involvement and mutual dependency between black and white . . . is one of the more ignored themes of [O'Connor's] fiction" (187). Brinkmeyer maintains that the racist image reveals to the grandfather and grandson that "they share with blacks and with all people a common identity as a fallen people" (*Art and Vision* 80). MacKethan finds correspondences between Mr. Head, Nelson, and the plaster figure of the African American (31). Nesbitt suggests that the grandfather and grandson "perhaps have come to recognize their own essential and shared 'blackness'" (168). In her study of racechanges in American culture, Gubar points to the similarities between the statue and the grandfather and grandson as an example of blackface (84). According to Duvall, the reader recognizes that the "racist statue is another double for Mr. Head and Nelson (who have already been marked as doubles)" (78). For Duvall, this encounter represents another crisis for their whiteness.

12. As Duvall astutely observes, Mr. Head and Nelson go home "physically," but "in a figurative sense, that home is no longer there" because of the newly "compromised sense of white identity that the day has given them" (79).

13. For many scholars, Mrs. May's violent death by penetration signifies that "true male power ultimately wins out" (Smith 45). See also Westling, "Sacred



Groves" 166; Prown 50; and Havird 17–20. Katz finds a pattern of male domination throughout O'Connor's fiction. She writes that fathers in the fiction "are usually sadistic figures, their aggressiveness associated with the sexual role of the male as penetrator" (63). Similarly, in "Mothers and Daughters," Westling observes that O'Connor writes about a "male-dominated culture" (513) where women are "tricked, taken advantage of, jilted, and misused" (518). In my interpretation, paternal penetrations, while destructive, also work to elide and refigure. Accordingly, my reading of the deaths of Mrs. May and the bull as an image for male-female convergence stands in direction opposition to Smith's contention that in "Greenleaf" "any attempt to mix male and female roles is destined to fail" (47).

14. As a figure of elision, the Greenleaf bull can also be read as an avatar of the force toward integration that is analyzed by Teilhard de Chardin, a French theologian, whose work O'Connor greatly admired and whose central tenet she made the title of her collection, *Everything That Rises Must Converge*. For de Chardin, the whole created universe is related and ultimately returns to the Omega point, the creator. Critics have offered various interpretations of the bull. Schiff argues that the Greenleaf bull is a totem animal, that is, a substitute for the dead father, a father-deity. According to Schiff, when Mr. Greenleaf sacrifices the bull, he becomes the "agent of grace" because he "rejects his primitive religion" (60). Shields discusses the bull as a mythic figure. For Walker, who relates O'Connor's illness to Christian doctrines, the bull represents both Christ, to whom we must surrender ourselves completely, and the lupus that was devouring O'Connor.

15. According to Lacan, domination produces gender difference: "For the [male] soul to come into being, she, the woman, is differentiated from it . . . called woman and defamed" (*Écrits* 156).

16. Focusing on "Greenleaf" and "The Enduring Chill," Bleikasten finds that, for O'Connor, grace is the recognition of one's own nothingness and guilt; he then maintains that such a definition is irreconcilable with orthodox Christianity.

17. Thus I disagree with Schleifer who contrasts "The Artificial Nigger" with "The Enduring Chill" and argues that, in the latter story, none of the fiction's plot developments prepares the reader for the supernatural intervention at the story's climactic conclusion.

18. In her discussion of "The Enduring Chill," Walker alludes briefly to Kristeva's theory of abjection and proposes that O'Connor creates in Mrs. Fox an ironic version of Kristeva's death-bearing mother who leads her child to an encounter with death. Walker seems to interpret abjection as solely a destructive experience.

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