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Mary Grace and the Warthog from Hell: Violent Redemption in Flannery O'Connor's "Revelation"

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Scholarship on the works of Flannery O'Connor is divided concerning her depiction of divine grace as a violent force. Some scholars worry that her insistence on the violence of grace makes God a violent God or excuses the pain and brokenness of the world. Despite the arguments of those who oppose O'Connor's view of violent grace, this paper will argue that O'Connor is right to depict violence in her short stories because, although it might be counterintuitive to think of divine grace wounding before it heals, being torn from an old life of sin is painful. While not excusing violence or the perpetrators of violent acts, O'Connor's theology shows how God uses violence for God's purpose, making the effects of brokenness in this imperfect world into conduits for divine perfection and wholeness. This paper makes this argument through a close reading of O'Connor's short story "Revelation," along with examinations of O'Connor's essays. O'Connor not only shows violence in her stories, but enacts a mimicry of violence upon the reader through her use of the grotesque. The idea of violence therefore permeates the shape of the narrative and the relationship between writer and reader.

Information about the Author:

Halina Hopkins is a junior, majoring in biology, environmental science, and humanities. Her current project began as a term paper for Professor Edward Upton's seminar *Theology and Literature*, informed by her interest in O'Connor and her relevance for modern Catholics. When she began expanding her paper into a longer research project, she read Flannery O'Connor's major works of fiction, essays, and letters. Halina presented her research on O'Connor at the 2012 National Conference on Undergraduate Research.

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