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**Violence in William Golding's and Flannery O'Connor's Selected Works:  
A Contrastive and Comparative Analysis**

Belo Horizonte

2019

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Dissertação de mestrado apresentada ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Estudos Literários da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de Mestre em Letras: Estudos Literários.

**Área de concentração:** Literaturas de Língua Inglesa

**Linha de pesquisa:** Literatura, História e Memória Cultural (LHMC)

**Orientadora:** Profa. Dra. Gláucia Renate Gonçalves

Belo Horizonte  
Faculdade de Letras  
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais  
2019

Ficha catalográfica elaborada pelos Bibliotecários da Biblioteca FALE/UFMG

S216v

Sandes, Samira Agnes de Cicco.  
*Violence in William Golding's and Flannery O'Connor's Selected Works [manuscrito] : A Constrastive and Comparative Analysis / Samira Agnes de Cicco Sandes. – 2019.*  
 130 f., enc..

Orientador: Gláucia Renate Gonçalves.

Area de concentração: Literaturas de Língua Inglesa.

Linha de pesquisa: Literatura, História e Memória Cultural.

Dissertação (mestrado) – Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Faculdade de Letras.

Bibliografia: f. 127-130.

1. Golding, William, 1911- – *Lord of the Flies* – Crítica e interpretação – Teses. 2. O'Connor, Flannery, 1925-1964. – *Good Man is Hard to Find* – Crítica e interpretação – Teses. 3. O'Connor, Flannery, 1925-1964. – *Revelation* – Crítica e interpretação – Teses. 4. *Violência na literatura* – Teses. 5. *Literatura e religião* – Teses. 6. *Literatura comparada – Americana e inglesa* – Teses. 7. *Literatura comparada – Inglesa e americana* – Teses. I. Gonçalves, Gláucia Renate. II. Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais. Faculdade de Letras. III. Título.

CDD : 809



*To Maria da Glória, Domingos Sávio  
and Filipe, my partner in dreams and achievements.*

## **Acknowledgements**

Firstly, thank you to the professors of Pos-Lit for the classes that helped me develop my knowledge about English Literature and the inspiration to be as competent as they are. Thank you to my advisor Gláucia, who always believed in me and supported my idea. She helped me with encouragement I have never experienced before. Thank you for the thoughtful guidance of my work and for always reassuring me that I could do it. Thank you to all my classmates that made the task of going to classes a much more fun and enjoyable experience. The support we gave each other will always be one of the sweetest memories from this season of my life.

Thank you to my family, especially my mother and father for the support so that I could continue studying. To my brothers for the continuous love and emotional support. To my love and best friend, Filipe, thank you for your kindness and empathy when writing got too hard. You are the light of my days, thank you for dreaming with me and working so hard in order to build a better life for both of us.

I would also like to thank Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq) for the two year scholarship that provided me financial support to allow me to fully dedicate myself to my research.

### Abstract

Violence in works of literature is manifested in different manners, can have different levels, have different motivations and is experienced in different ways. The goal of this Master's dissertation is to analyze how violence is represented and its implications in selected works of Flannery O'Connor and William Golding. On the one hand, in the case of Golding, the analysis consists mainly of how, in the novel *Lord of the Flies*, society plays a significant role when it comes to shaping human behavior in order to act or not act according to one's innate tendency to commit violent acts. To support this idea of violence being innate to all of us, Freud and his theory on how one is born violent and learns to live in society is used to corroborate the representation found in *Lord of the Flies*, together with the discussion and comparison of the concept of the 'state of nature' found in the works of Locke, Rousseau and Hobbes. On the other hand, the main aspect explored in O'Connor's short stories "A Good Man is Hard to Find" and "Revelation" is how violence is related to religion and to what some critics call 'the moment of grace.' The moment of grace occurs when a character finally has an epiphany, accompanied by a violent act, about a specific aspect of their lives. This work aims at a closer view of the fictional representation of violence, focusing on how the social environment as well as one's beliefs affect one's attitudes toward it.

**Keywords:** Violence; social behavior; religion; Flannery O'Connor; William Golding.

## Resumo

A violência nas obras literárias se manifesta de diferentes maneiras, pode ter diferentes níveis e motivações diferentes. O objetivo desta dissertação de mestrado é analisar como a violência é representada e suas implicações em obras selecionadas de Flannery O'Connor e William Golding. Por um lado, no caso de Golding, a análise consiste principalmente em como, no romance *Lord of the Flies*, a sociedade desempenha um papel significativo quando se trata de moldar o comportamento humano para agir ou não de acordo com a própria tendência inata de cometer atos violentos. Para apoiar esta idéia, de que violência é inata a todos nós, Freud e sua teoria de como se nasce violento e aprende-se a viver em sociedade são usados para corroborar a representação encontrada em *Lord of the Flies*, juntamente com a discussão e comparação do conceito de "state of nature" encontrado nas obras de Locke, Rousseau e Hobbes. Por outro lado, o principal aspecto explorado nos contos de O'Connor, "A Good Man is Hard to Find" e "Revelation," é como a violência está relacionada à religião e ao que alguns críticos chamam de "moment of grace." O "moment of grace" ocorre quando um personagem finalmente tem uma epifania, acompanhada por um ato violento, sobre um aspecto específico de suas vidas. Este trabalho visa um estudo aprofundado da representação ficcional da violência, enfocando como o ambiente social, assim como as crenças, afetam as atitudes de uma pessoa em relação àquela.

**Palavras-chaves:** Violência; comportamento social; religião; Flannery O'Connor; William Golding.



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## Introduction

“People almost invariably arrive at their beliefs not on the basis of proof but on the basis of what they find attractive.”

Blaise Pascal, *De l'art de persuader*

Violence in literature can be manifested in different levels and be committed for different reasons. Many literary works portray acts of violence, and the motives behind them can be perceived through the text as very symbolic. Because of that, it is possible to contrast these reasons and understand the implications behind them in each work. Flannery O'Connor and William Golding are writers who fictionally portray acts of violence in their works in a very different, but, also, characteristic manner; a deeper comparison of this theme in selected works of these authors is essential to understand this aspect of the human condition and how it affects the way we relate to one another and act in society.

The choice of these authors occurred during an undergraduate course I took a while ago. O'Connor caught my attention when I realized that religion was heavily linked to violence in her works, so I instantly found appealing to make an analysis of the significance of this relation. *Lord of the Flies* has always been a novel that interested me, the dark tone of the novel always called my attention, but at the same time I've always found a very subtle message of hope in Ralph's character. Having these two authors in the same course made it easier to see the differences between the acts of violence found in their works. The theme of violence appeared as a meaningful topic to me mostly because I've lived my whole life in Brazil, one of the most violent countries in the world. In fact, Brazil holds the first place when it comes to homicides in Latin America, according to the website InsightCrime. Dealing with the eminence of violence

on a daily basis made me want to understand it more as a manner of facing a constant fear that seems to permeate my life and the lives of my fellow countrymen.

In Flannery O'Connor's works, violence is linked to religion, more specifically to a "moment of grace", while in Golding's works the theme is related to social organization in a more general manner. Nowadays, our culture is fearful of violence; however, we cannot forget that the chronological moment in history, beliefs and how society is organized deeply influence how we perceive violence and, more importantly, how we react to it. The comparison and contrast then is done in order to demonstrate that in these works studied here violence is portrayed fictionally as a social convention that varies according to many aspects, rather than as a fixed concept. Because of the complexity of the subject sometimes it might seem that some quotations are too long, but they are all essential and purposeful for the development of the ideas I want to convey with this Master's dissertation, for they carry specific terms and explanations to get my point across. Thus, taking into consideration the intricacy of the subject, cutting quotes in half would be detrimental to the good explanation of the topics.

In a chapter named "The Extremes of Conflict in Literature: Violence, Homicide, and War," from the book *The Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives on Violence, Homicide, and War*, Joseph Carroll writes about the role of violence in literature:

In answer then, to the question, How important is violence to literature? we can say that violence is as important in literature as it is in life. Like sex, even when it does not take much time, proportionally, it can have a decisive impact on subsequent events (...) The emotional intensity and decisive practical character of homicidal violence invest it with special significance as evidence for underlying force in human mental and

emotional life. Hence the very large role violence plays in literature.

(418)

Taking this into consideration, the works of the two authors chosen to be analyzed, that explore the theme of violence extensively, are William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies* (1954), and Flannery O'Connor's short stories "A Good Man Is Hard To Find" (1955) and "Revelation" (1965, posthumous publication). *Lord of the Flies* tells the story of a group of boys that get lost in a deserted island. As they attempt to survive, the readers get in contact with the evil side of these boys who once lived in a civilized society, showing that human nature is permeated by evil. During a time of war, a group of British school boys ranging between the ages of six to twelve years old get lost in an island after a plane crash. In the very beginning of their time in the island the boys try to copy what they knew about society and they elect a leader, Ralph. Ralph is mostly supported by Piggy, the intellectual of the group. Both of them try to create a safe environment for the boys and their main goal is to maintain a fire signal in order to call attention of anyone passing by the island, increasing their chances of being rescued. Jack is the one who threatens Ralph's leadership because he too wants to be chief of the boys. He, then, leads a group of boys who see pleasure and fun in hunting animals in the island.

As time passes the boys encounter what they believe to be a beast in the island, and the rivalry between Ralph and Jack – the representations of civilization and savagery- only gets worse after that. The beast is actually a dead parachutist and the realization of the parachute opening and closing torments the boys, making them fear the sight and call what they see a beast. Jack, then, forms a group that is seduced by the power of hunting and protection from this beast. This group of boys ends up

slaughtering a pig and offering its head to the monster they believe live in the island, this head is then called 'lord of the flies.'

Simon is the only boy in the island who seeks and gets to know the truth about the beast. On his way to tell the boys what he had found, he has a type of vision or hallucination in which the sow's head talks to him telling him that the beast is a reflection of the fear found inside the boys, and it is also in this vision that Simon receives a message that he does not belong in that island. When Simon goes to tell the truth about the beast to the other boys, he is killed by them during a type of tribal ritual.

The majority of the boys left Ralph's side to join Jack's hunters. Chaos starts to reign when Jack's group steals Piggy's glasses in order to create fire for cooking. Meanwhile, Ralph and Piggy cannot create the fire signal to call attention to the island. As Ralph's little group tries to get the glasses back, Piggy is murdered when Roger releases a huge boulder on him. After that, Sam and Eric, the few ones left on Ralph's side, are manipulated and coerced to join the hunters, leaving Ralph on his own. Jack and his group are determined to kill Ralph, so they start to hunt him. In an attempt to catch him, they set fire to the island, calling the attention of a ship. A British naval officer arrives in the island and saves Ralph's life from his schoolmates.

In "Revelation", by O'Connor, Mrs. Turpin arrives at a doctor's office, with her husband, Claud, for the man needs treatment for his leg. As she enters the room, she starts a conversation with, according to her, a very pleasant lady accompanied by her daughter in the waiting room; the girl's name is Mary Grace. Contrary to her mother, Mary grace is a very unpleasant girl to look at, according to Mrs. Turpin's standards. Ruby Turpin starts conversation with this lady because, judging only by appearance, she is the only one in that waiting room that is worthy of her attention. There are other

people in the room with them: the 'white-trash woman' and a 'dirty boy', as Mrs. Turpin refers to them.

Mrs. Turpin is obsessed with classifying people into categories, and what makes people worthy of being put above others is the color of their skin and if they own valuable things, such as houses and land. As a conversation develops with the 'pleasant lady', Mrs. Turpin and the 'white-trash woman', Mary Grace gives Ruby a look that makes her very uncomfortable. The girl listens as the women talk about sending black people back to Africa, and Ruby Turpin's comments are very unfortunate. As the conversation continues, Mary Grace looks at Ruby Turpin with more and more intensity, as if she could read Mrs. Turpin's thoughts and see her soul. In an attempt to make the girl join the conversation, Ruby Rose talks about college, but the girl offers no response. This makes her mother interfere and say that she is an ungrateful person. Mrs. Turpin, then, makes sure to praise herself and say that, contrary to the girl, she is a very grateful person. Abruptly, the girl throws the book she was reading at Mrs. Turpin telling her to go back to hell.

After that incident, Mrs. Turpin and Claud go back home, and while her husband rests, she cannot stop thinking about what happened in the doctor's office. The woman goes on with her day not sure why she was the target of such violent behavior from that girl, because, according to her, in that room there were other people who deserved that, but not her. Mrs. Turpin serves water to the black people who help her in her farm and once more it is clear how she has racist attitudes towards people with black skin. After that, Ruby goes to the pig parlor to take care of the animals, and as she does her work she keeps thinking about the harsh words Mary Grace said to her. At this point, she even defies God, asking 'who did He think He was' to send her a message like that, and in this moment she has a vision.

In her vision, Mrs. Turpin sees the people she considers that are below her in society entering heaven first, and only after they enter, she and her husband and people like them - white and privileged – get to enter. In her vision she understands she is acting wrong and is truly changed.

In O'Connor's "A Good Man is Hard to Find", Bailey and his family are preparing to go to Florida. The grandmother of the family tries to convince them to go to Tennessee instead by bringing up the news that a misfit is on the loose on the way to Florida. The grandmother, against her son's will, hides her cat in a basket and brings the pet on the trip with her. When the family stops to eat at a restaurant, they talk with the owners of the place about how it is not possible to trust anyone anymore. Talking to the wife of the owner, the grandmother brings up the misfit again, worried that they will encounter him at some point on their trip.

Back on the road the grandmother remembers a house she used to visit, she lies about the house for it to seem more appealing for the kids and make them want to go there. Her scheme works and the children convince their father to take them to the house, but he is not pleased about that. The grandmother leads her son to a dirty road, and suddenly she remembers that the house was in Tennessee not in Georgia. At this moment her cat jumps out of the basket and scares Bailey, who loses control of the car.

While the family tries to recover from the accident, a car stops by them and three men with guns approach them. The grandmother recognizes the misfit and tells him so, which is not smart on her part. The first ones to be executed by the murderers are Bailey and his son, followed by Bailey's wife, daughter and the baby. While her family is being murdered, the grandmother talks to the misfit, trying to convince him to spare her life. This is when we learn about the misfit's life and that the grandmother is a very

selfish person, and she even denies the holiness of Jesus during her conversation with the misfit. Finally, right before she is shot, she realizes that the misfit is just like her.

Given the recurrence of this specific subject — violence — in these works, the aim of the research presented here is to discuss and analyze the symbols, metaphors and other literary strategies used by the authors in order to understand how violence is presented and what it represents in the works according to the selected critical and theoretical texts.

With this in mind, some of the questions the dissertation will pursue include: what are the similarities and differences in the way the theme of violence is presented in these works? What can violence represent? What is the significance of the acts of violence in these selected works? What are the evidences that help us understand the meaning of violence in the selected works? How these works help us understand the many different levels, motivations and how can the many different experiences with violence yield different results in human beings? What are the counter arguments that can be posed to question the motives and reasons behind the acts of violence in the selected works?

The discussion that violence can have different concepts and definitions is extensively considered by authors as a manner to enlighten human beings of their own nature. We all have in common the inherent will to commit acts of violence, as Freud defends, and this specific idea will be discussed in depth in this work; however, what sets us apart from each other is how we justify these acts and how we react to them, thus making violence a word with many different concepts and definitions. These concepts tend to vary according to various aspects, such as the position within society that someone holds, their individuality and the core of their beliefs. In this regard, the discussion of violence in the selected works revolves more around all of these aspects



exactly because one of the goals here is to show how diversely violence can be seen even inside a same social group. This inconsistency in the concept of violence is talked about by Judy M. Torrance in the introductory chapter of her book called *Public*

*Violence in Canada:*

Violence is among the most inconsistently defined concepts found in social science literature. This inconsistency is surprising because it is a robust and overt form of behavior and not an abstraction like “legitimacy.” Furthermore, there is a widely used basic definition of violence: “physical injury to people and their property.” However, when we come to particular cases – does this incident constitute violence? should that incident be included? – we find a wide penumbra of disagreement. (3)

This disagreement that she talks about is what leads us to analyze acts of violence under many different lights in order to have a complex and more elaborate view of it. Of course violence is defined in language, but the concept of it is not something that is set in stone.

As one can notice; how we understand violence varies according to cultural beliefs and, of course, it can be manifested in different ways, such as sexual, verbal, domestic and psychological, to name a few. It is, then, definitely not something that is definitive. Violence itself can be defined, but what is behind it, how people see it, how it affects people differently, these matters are subjects of interpretation and they vary according to different concepts constructed in a lifetime and are influenced by places and how someone is raised, and that is the main focus of my investigation. About this subject Willem de Haan introduces the same idea that violence is socially constructed in

his article called “Violence as an Essentially Contested Concept”, and he also discusses the definition of violence, as we see below:

Nearly all inquiries concerning the phenomenon of violence demonstrate that violence not only takes on many forms and possesses very different characteristics, but also that the current range of definitions is considerable and creates ample controversies concerning the question what violence is and how it ought to be defined (Heitmeier & Hagan, 2002: 15). (28)

De Haan even points out how it is important to take into consideration various factors when classifying different types of violence and that we can study violence from various perspectives, such as from the point of view of "perpetrator, victim, third party, neutral observer" (28). Because of that, the literature and studies revolving violence are filled with a variety of definitions

based on different theoretical and, sometimes even incommensurable domain assumptions (e.g. about human nature, social order and history). In short, the concept of ‘violence’ is notoriously difficult to define because as a phenomenon it is multifaceted, socially constructed and highly ambivalent. (28)

The representation of violence in literature is no different; there are many authors who utilize violence in their works representing various concepts because of how present this theme is in the human condition and how intriguing it can be. We can then say that in both Golding and O’Connor what we find is a literary representation of what Johan Galtung calls cultural violence, as we see his definition of this term in his article called “Cultural Violence,” as follows:

By 'cultural violence' we mean those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence – exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics) – that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence. (291)

Literary works are good instances to study how violence is socially constructed; in the particular case of the works cited and studied here we can say that they belong to this cultural violence spectrum because what is mainly used to justify the acts in these works are exactly these symbolic components of our existence. The discussion of these concepts found in the works of the authors helps us understand how human beings see what is only one aspect of human existence in so many different manners and helps us understand the other possible aspects. Moreover, it helps one understand how her/his own concept reflects in their lives and influences their decisions or judgments when it comes to violent acts.

For instance, while the Grandmother's death in "A Good Man is Hard to Find" is justifiable to someone who has a religious view of life and believes in the grace of God, the same violent death is meaningless to an Atheist. Even in *Lord of the Flies* we have an open discussion about different concepts of violence and murder, since Piggy and Ralph disagree about Simon's death: while Piggy believes that Simon's death was an accident caused by violence, Ralph dares to say out loud that it was murder. There is no final answer to this discussion exactly because there is not a fixed concept that will define these situations. The way we perceive violence is represented in literature and trying to recognize some or maybe all of these different concepts is fundamental to understand these characters and even ourselves. The main focus is not to find who is right or wrong, for of course, for instance, having a corrupted politician murdered in an attempt to make justice is a violent act, or taking the life of others is essentially and

morally a bad thing, but the discussion lies in the fact that some people believe those violent acts are genuine while others condemn it. To understand this phenomena, to understand the reasons behind one's concept of violence is to try to understand their character and their formative convictions and beliefs.

The representation of violent acts in literature is filled with these ambivalences and perceiving them generates discussions that are meaningful to our own condition and social life. Joseph Carroll's chapter "The Extremes of Conflict in Literature: Violence, Homicide, and War", mentioned in the beginning of this introduction, also discusses how literature allows us to read these concepts in different manners as follows:

The value attached to instrumental violence, like the value attached to all depicted behavior, depends on the state of mind of the character, the author's stance toward the character, and the reader's response to both. The stance of the author and the reader's response are in most cases heavily conditioned by the cultural ethos of the character, the author, and the reader, but any given cultural ethos is itself only a particular organization of the elements of human nature. (425)

Furthermore, it is appealing to think about community and individual, if the concept varies from individual to individual it has to do with the community they are inserted in, but if one individual strays from this concept it means that this is an individual characteristic. Piggy tries to convince Ralph that Simon's death was an accident, but from Ralph's point of view what the boys did was murder and their formative vision of violence was created in the same English society before the boys were stranded in the island. Even when part of a community that claims a certain concept about violence tries to impose their convictions on an individual, personal concepts still have an influence in how someone perceives acts of violence. One way of

looking at it, then, is that the concept is built through individual experiences that form different communities, but inside these communities there is also differentiation from individual to individual, which leads us to think about the variety of concepts and definitions. About the importance of taking into consideration different concepts of violence, Willem de Haan writes in his article called “Violence as an Essentially Contested Concept”:

... it could be more appropriate to assume that definitions of violence will always be ‘radically or fundamentally contested’ if only because every definition of violence bears its own theoretical, methodological and moral implications. Recognizing the radically or fundamentally contestedness of any definition of violence seems to be the most realistic as well as the most fruitful starting point for empirical research. While it may be true that the debate about the preferable definition of violence is about whether violence should be defined from the perpetrator’s or the victim’s point of view... One of the implications of definitions of violence being ‘radically or fundamentally contested’ is that locating violence empirically is not a neutral undertaking, solely dependent on what is ‘out there’ to be found. Empirically, violence will always be seen with reference to a particular conception of violence. Instead of trying to conclusively define the concept of violence empirical researchers could considerer the costs and benefits involved in holding a particular view on violence. This means that various concepts or definitions of violence are best being evaluated for their suitability for coming to terms with a particular research problem ... a restrictive, e.g. legal definition is not necessarily a precise definition because even if we focus upon an

extremely limited notion of violence, it will immediately become apparent that ‘violence’ – however narrowly defined – represents a surprisingly broad spectrum of incidents. Restricting a priori what qualifies as ‘violence’ would unduly and unhelpfully limit our understanding of how violence is socially constructed. (36-7)

To finish his argument, the author defends the idea that by allowing a broad perspective of different concepts and definitions of violence researchers have the opportunity to get in contact with a more personal and subjective view of violence including the point of view of the victim or even from the perpetrator.

In this respect, a broad inclusive definition of violence is preferable to a more restricted one because a restrictive definition tends to be a ‘etic’ while a broad inclusive definition enables emergent ‘emic’ perspectives to be integrated in the concept of violence. (37)

Moreover, in both authors discussed here, Flannery O’Connor and William Golding, religion has a significant role in explaining and justifying some of the acts of violence that take place in the selected stories. As briefly mentioned, violence in O’Connor has to do with the moment of grace, but in Golding’s work *Lord of the Flies* it has to do with the duality of a saint represented by Simon and the image of Beelzebub represented by the lord of the flies himself. Johan Galtung also writes specifically about religion in the article “Cultural Violence” and how it legitimizes violence in different manners, since religion is a strong aspect in life in society and it is a relevant and formative element of a culture. About the different concepts that violence assumes in the context of religion he writes:

In all religions there is somewhere the sacred ... A basic distinction can be made between a transcendental God outside us and an imminent god

inside us, maybe also inside all life....With god outside us, as God, even 'above' ('Our Father, who art in Heaven') it is not inevitable but indeed likely that some people will be seen as closer to that God than others, even as 'higher'. Moreover, in the general occidental tradition of not only dualism but Manichaeism, with sharp dichotomies between good and evil, there would also have to be something like an evil Satan corresponding to the good God, for reasons of symmetry... But the focus here is on the hard version, belief in a transcendental God and a transcendental Satan. Whom does God choose? Would it not be reasonable to assume that He chooses those most in His image, leaving it to Satan to take the others... This would give us a double dichotomy with God, the Chosen Ones (by God), The Unchosen Ones (by God, chosen by Satan) and Satan; the chosen heading for salvation and closeness to God in Heaven, the unchosen for damnation and closeness to Satan in Hell. However, Heaven and Hell can also be reproduced on earth, as a foretaste or indication of the afterlife. Misery/luxury can be seen as preparations for Hell/Heaven - and social class as the finger of God... The upper classes referred to as being closer to God have actually traditionally been three: Clergy, for the obvious reason that they possessed special insight in how to communicate with God; Aristocracy, particularly the *rex gratia dei*, and Capitalists, if they are successful. The lower classes and the poor were also chosen, even as the first to enter Paradise (the Sermon on the Mount), but only in the after-life. (296-8)

This passage is worth mentioning because it illustrates the two main reasons behind the acts of violence that have to do with religion in the works of O'Connor and Golding.

We have the explanation of the duality of God and Satan as we see in *Lord of the Flies* with Simon as a saint figure and the bloody head of a pig as the Beelzebub. We also have the explanation of how the division of social classes puts people in a position closer to or further from God that we see in O'Connor, and this division of social classes is what leads the characters to have their violent moment of grace.

Continuing with the discussion on how religion generates violence, Galtung writes about another aspect explored when it comes to violence and religion, which is war, as we can see in the passage below:

For a contemporary example consider the policies of Israel with regard to the Palestinians. The Chosen People even have a Promised Land, the Eretz Yisrael. They behave as one would expect, translating chosenness, a vicious type of cultural violence, into all eight types of direct and structural violence. There is killing; maiming, material deprivation by denying West Bank inhabitants what is needed for livelihood; there is desocialization within the theocratic state of Israel with second class citizenship to non-Jews; there is detention, individual expulsion and perennial threat of massive expulsion. There is exploitation ... Such perspectives are also examples of cultural violence, indicative of how moral standards have become in this century. (297-8)

The main point to take from this passage is that religious people actually see a reasonable explanation to kill others of other belief systems. Mass violence is justifiable in so many different manners and religion seems to be one that is historically very present until now. We have instances of organizations that make allusions to war such as calling youth groups "soldiers of God" or "army of God;" it seems as if the idea of



war is very internalized by religious groups even in small instances that makes fighting for God and for their dogmas very natural.

As briefly mentioned before, in *Lord of the Flies*, the main idea linked to violence is the discussion we find in Freud's work *Civilization and Its Discontents*, in which the author claims that every human being is prone to violence, and society is what keeps us all from committing these acts, as it will be explored further in the third chapter of this work. However, the contradiction that we find when studying it in depth is that the same society that stops us from committing violence against our neighbor by punishing the individual is the one that sends soldiers to war in order to show, among other things, power and a sense of superior civilization of a country over another. *Lord of the Flies*, then, also deals with war and this is also explored in this work. War is indeed mass extermination in the name of an ideology that most of the times is blurry for soldiers and meaningless for people who do not believe in ideologies such as nationalism and patriotism. About violence and ideology in an organized society, Johan Galtung also writes in "Cultural Violence:"

we could expect successors to religion in the form of political ideologies, and to God in the form of the modern state, to exhibit some of the same character traits ... with State as God's successor ... Where did that right of belligerence come from? There are feudal origins, a direct carry-over from the prerogative of the *rex gratia dei* to have an *ultimo ratio regis*... The state was created to maintain the military rather than vice versa, as Krippendorff (1985) maintains. But the state can also be seen as one of the successors to God, inheriting the right to destroy life (execution), if not the right to create it. Many also see the state as having the right to control the creation of life, exerting authority superior to that of the

pregnant woman ... Killing in war is now done in the name of the 'nation', comprising all citizens with some shared ethnicity... Execution is also done in the name of 'the people of the state X'; but like war has to be ordered by the State. (298 - 9)

Additionally, another justification for violent acts in *Lord of the Flies* comes from Jack's rebel attitude towards Ralph as an elected leader of the stranded boys. Jack's will for power and acceptance leads him to commit violence and once he is the one capable of hunting and can provide protection for the boys from what their fear makes them believe is a "beast", some of the children follow him, leaving Ralph and his rules behind. In this instance we see violence as a manner to gain power and it is also what seduces others in order to get protection and comfort. Committing violence in this case is something seen as an advantage to some of the boys. Once Jack realizes that he can be what he wants and have the power he wants through his acts of violence he refuses to kneel before Ralph's guidelines and dominance as an elected leader. Joseph Carroll also writes in "The Extremes of Conflict in Literature: Violence, Homicide, and War" about this subject:

In addition to association by kinship, there are two basic principles in human social organization: dominance and reciprocation (Boehm, 1999; de Waal, 1982; Trivers, 1971; Wilson, 1993). In social groups not related by kinship, if violence does not serve a primarily instrumental function, it usually serves either to assert social dominance, to suppress dominance in others, or to punish transgressions against equitable behavior... Suppressing dominance in individuals blends into punishing transgressions against equity. Individuals typically assert dominance by

harming others; they thus violate an implicit social contract to treat others equitably. (425)

All these different justifications for violence mentioned here take us back to the matter of how literature is an important tool in understanding and discussing these concepts in a thoughtful manner. Now that it is clear that this work deals with concepts of violence and not necessarily with the definition of it, it is compelling to discuss a little how these concepts has been explored in literary works and the importance of it. As we saw before, violence is present in literature because it is an important part of human being's lives. Some people are more attracted to it than others, but it is a fact that everyone at some point in life was or will be affected by an act of violence, it being acted against oneself, someone they love and care about or even a stranger. It is rare to imagine a person who is completely untouched by any concept of violence, and this impact and its consequences and motives are reflected and represented in numerous literary works. About this characteristic of the arts Carroll writes in the abstract of the chapter "Violence in Literature: An Evolutionary Perspective:"

People read literature because they want to understand their own experience and the experience of others. Literature contains much violence because violence reveals the underlying conflicts in all social relationships... Violence is pervasive in literature because literary authors and their readers want to get at the inner core of human nature. All human interests are set in conflict with the interests of others. Even among the closest kin [. . .] Violence is the flash point at which the tensions aroused by conflicting interests reach critical mass. In literature as in life, violence reveals the underlying structure of human motives and passions.

People's morals, values and beliefs are often represented in literary works through well constructed characters, and this is one of the characteristics of literature: the function of transmitting values and allowing readers to empathize and/or sympathize. Through literature we, as readers, have the opportunity to face situations that diverge from our lifestyle, that is why using violence from literary works helps us understand some of the aspects that different cultures and different individuals use to legitimize or criticize violent acts. Arts in general, specially literature, function as a manner to recognize ourselves in others or to help us create a sense of empathy and understanding when we encounter a situation we otherwise would never live other than by reading pages of a novel. In the specific case of violence we are able to get in contact with concepts that are not necessarily what one's cultural values preach, but getting in contact with a different concept and understanding it allows for rapport and even a better understanding of oneself. About this function of literature, Carroll writes in "The Adaptive Function of Literature and the Other Arts," an article found in the [NationalHumanitiesCenter.org](http://NationalHumanitiesCenter.org):

We have all had moments in which some song, story, or play, some film, piece of music, or painting, has transfigured our vision of the world, broadened our minds, deepened our emotional understanding, or given us new insight into human experience. Working out from this common observation to a hypothesis about the adaptive function of literature requires no great speculative leap. Literature and the other arts help us live our lives. That is why the arts are human universals (Brown). In all known cultures, the arts enter profoundly into normal childhood development, connect individuals to their culture, and help people get oriented to the world, emotionally, morally, and conceptually.

Because the concept of violence depends on points of view to be interpreted, these are crucial in order to analyze and give meaning to acts of violence in literature as it is in real life. When one's personal concept of violence is different from the concept of the community they are inserted in, one can find in the literary representation of their concept a reassurance that they are not alone in their way of thinking, for instance. Of course there are concepts that are outdated, but the representation of these concepts is also important to understand how different cultures and communities work and why someone would not agree with it and choose to leave such a community:

Works of fiction situate individual characters in relation to both the particular cultural norms and the primal passions that form the core features of human nature (Boyd 2009; Carroll 2011; McEwan 2005). Epics, novels, stories, plays, and poems sometimes affirm specific cultural norms but also sometimes resist those norms... There is, consequently, only one possible location for “meaning” and “effect” in a story: the perspectives of authors, characters, and readers. Characters have impressions about one another; authors have impressions about characters; and readers have impressions about both characters and authors. Authors anticipate the responses of readers. Even if readers reject an author’s values and beliefs, they register what authors intend them to feel and think. Good interpretive criticism tries to get at the interaction among all these perspectives... Despite differences in labels and differing points of emphasis, all versions of “Theory” share one crucial characteristic: they all presuppose the blank slate model of the human mind. They all suppose that human nature is an empty vessel into

which culture pours all particular content. (Carroll, “Violence in Literature: An Evolutionary Perspective” 3)

Given the above discussion, this dissertation is organized according to the following method: separation of substantial excerpts from the literary selected works by Golding and O’Connor and an in depth examination of these excerpts in light of the previous critical work written about the theme of violence and its relation to some of the aspects cited previously, such as religion and social organization, for instance. Hence, the analysis will try mainly to show the contrast between the use of violence by the two selected authors in order to illustrate with the literary corpus the idea that violence is a construction based on social organization and personal beliefs, such as religion.

A critical approach that is appropriate for the discussion intended here is New Historicism. It is common to misjudge New Historicism as a criticism that disregards the text, but we should be careful when affirming that, since the text is still very important. Going beyond the pages of a work and looking at it with not only historical eyes, but as a historical document itself can call attention to the complexity of works of literature, thus New Historicism “tends to read literary texts as material products of specific historical conditions” (Brannigan 3). For New Historicists, considering and evaluating the historical context of a work of literature is crucial to its interpretation, not only as a background, but as a parallel to the text; there is no hierarchy here, both should be valued as having the same importance.

Stephen Greenblatt’s views on New Historicism was chosen as a theoretical framework to guide this project because of how time in history affects the narrative of the selected works, especially when talking about *Lord of the Flies*, since the Second World War had just ended and the imminence of a nuclear war was hovering over society at that time. The work itself reflects the feelings of an entire generation that was

consumed by violence. Understanding and criticizing New Historicism was crucial to develop ideas and analyze *Lord of the Flies* in a more profound and complex manner. Furthermore, we can study O'Connor's works from the same perspective when we take her selected short stories to be a representation of a religious point of view that reflects the culture, region and time in history into which she was born. These aspects, for both authors, are reflected in their discourse as we see in the construction of the characters and symbols in the works. In *Practicing New Historicism*, Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher discuss the importance of going beyond the 'boundary' of a literary work:

When the literary text ceases to be a sacred, self-enclosed, and self-justifying miracle, when in the skeptical mood we foster it begins to lose at least some of the special power ascribed to it, its boundaries begin to seem less secure and it loses exclusive rights to the experience of wonder. The house of the imagination has many mansions, of which art (a relatively late invention as a distinct category) is only one. But the new historicist project is not about "demoting" art or discrediting aesthetic pleasure; rather it is concerned with finding the creative power that shapes literary works outside the narrow boundaries in which it had hitherto been located, as well as within those boundaries. (12)

As we see above, the main idea is to enrich the analyses of the selected corpus by placing these works in a historical moment, and understanding how it influenced the creative process, but still having the literary text as the focus of the analysis. The historical context here, however, is not something fixed; the fictional characters are agents of their historical moment, they are subjects of a complex discourse: in the case of O'Connor it is not only about the history of the South, but the complex matter of religious discourse, how the characters position themselves towards it and how their

ideology is presented in the text; in the case of Golding it is not only the context of the war, but the representation of an age group and specific gender matters and how war affects those children. It is the consideration of alternative perspectives that are not part of a fixed ideology that allows us to analyze these works of art in a more complex manner.

To conclude this introduction, let me once again resort to Carroll to summarize the idea that violence is seen differently for many particular reasons:

Violence can be heroic, triumphant, cruel, vicious, or futile and ineffectual. The value attached to any particular instance of violence derives from occasions and circumstances, the motives of characters, the author's attitude toward the depicted characters, the author's general outlook on life, and the responses of readers. ("Violence in Literature: An Evolutionary Perspective" 4)

What the present Master's dissertation intends to accomplish is to analyze the characters of the selected works, their relationship with violence, the circumstances in which acts of violence take place in the narrative, and how the representation of these violent acts in literature is a viable and important manner to approach concepts of violence, thus creating a discussion about them, taking into consideration the many aspects that surround these concepts. The many representations of violence and the sometimes contradictory meaning we find in given violent situations are enough to make us wonder about this part of the human mind and how it is represented in literature around the world. Instances of representation of violence that challenge readers and their morals are often portrayed in novels in order to tempt them to look beyond their own beliefs and a lot of times this happens because readers identify themselves, at least to some degree, with these actions. Oftentimes, the judgment of a character that commits an act



of violence is left to the readers, making them perhaps feel uncomfortable, but also making them consider and think about the characters, themselves and everything that surrounds them.

## Chapter One

### Flannery O'Connor: religion, moment of grace, violence justified

"I write to discover what I know."

*The Habit of Being: Letters of Flannery  
O'Connor*

To open this chapter about violence in Flannery O'Connor's work it is necessary to understand her relationship with the themes that are widely represented in her short stories and novels. The themes most commonly found in her fiction are racism, religion, grace, pride, humility and the grotesque. These seem to be the main preoccupations she briefly mentions in the preface of the second edition of her novel *Wise Blood* from 1962: "*Wise Blood* was written by an author congenitally innocent of theory, but one with certain preoccupations." Generally, her characters go through a change in their personality, at least we see a shy beginning of this change happening for the Grandmother in "A Good Man is Hard to Find" and Mrs. Turpin in "Revelation," even though in the first case she does not live to experience this change. However, it is not certain that they are completely changed, for we do not see the continuation of the story, what matters is the moment of grace, the consequences of it are unclear. The main idea of both short stories is that two very proud religious characters come to find humility in life, and for that they are possibly changed, a change that comes through violent moments in her narrative:

Some writers are hard to locate clearly on either side of the divide between psychopathic and sympathetic perspectives. Flannery O'Connor, for instance, a Catholic American writer from the middle of the 20th century, envisions homicidal violence as a means of transcending

ordinary social life, which she regards as hypocritical and spiritually shallow. Her story, “A Good Man Is Hard To Find” – one of the most widely anthologized of all short stories – depicts a psychopathic killer, The Misfit, as a religious skeptic. The protagonist of the story is an old woman who achieves, in terror for her life, a moment of Christian charity toward her killer. The protagonists of O’Connor’s novels *The Violent Bear It Away* and *Wise Blood* both achieve spiritual metamorphosis through acts of homicidal violence. (Carroll 415)

Violence in O’Connor is never really used for its own sake, when there is violence in her stories there is always a complex explanation of the violent act that is a crucial part for the development of the story. There is shock in the murder scene in “A Good Man is Hard to Find,” but the purpose of the scene is not only to shock, but rather it is much more filled with complex meaning to cause the improvement of the character in question. O’Connor turns violence, which is a despicable and crude behavior, into a means of reaching something bigger, which in the case of her writing is surrounded by the myths and doctrines of religion.

In “Revelation” and “A Good Man Is Hard to Find”, for instance, Flannery O’Connor uses violence as a way to reach what critics such as Carter W. Martin and Bob Dowell call “moment of grace.” In their respective works *The True Country: Themes in the Fiction of Flannery O’Connor* and “The moment of grace in the fiction of Flannery O’Connor,” both authors discuss how most of O’Connor’s short stories present to the reader the “moment of grace”, which is a moment when a specific character experiences some kind of revelation related to some religious aspect, and, in the specific case of these two short stories, this moment comes in a violent manner (85; 236).

## 1.1 Religion, epiphany and grace

Noticing the difference between epiphany and the “moment of grace” is also important to understand why violence assumes a very particular role in these selected short stories by O’Connor. Epiphany is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* as “a manifestation of a divine or supernatural being; a moment of sudden and great revelation or realization.” Similarly, *The Online Cambridge Dictionary* defines it as “a powerful religious experience.” These definitions are part of the main idea in O’Connor’s notion of grace; however, violence is exactly what distinguishes an epiphany from O’Connor’s fictional “moment of grace.” Violence is the ultimate device to get the point of the religious revelation across, and this choice is symbolic because violence has a certain effect in human beings.

In “Revelation”, for instance, the violence of words seems to bother Mrs. Turpin more than the physical violence she suffers, which gives us an idea of how the concept of violence changes depending on points of view and on the subject that receives a specific manifestation of violence. Also, in the chapters of the Bible leading to the crucifixion of Jesus He also hears violent words being shouted at Him as He marches to his death:

39 Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads 40 and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!” 41 In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. 42 “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the

cross, and we will believe in him. 43 He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" 44 In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him. (New International Version, Matthew, 27: 39 - 44)

Furthermore, the religious aspect we find in the definition of the "moment of grace" happens as a result of O'Connor openly letting her works be influenced by her religious beliefs, as critics such as Emily Strong, Carter W. Martin and Bob Dowell, among others, have pointed out. To understand the importance of religion in the works of O'Connor we need to also understand her Catholic beliefs, the region, culture and time in history she was born into, for these aspects definitely are reflected on her work. Mrs. Turpin and the grandmother, as we are going to see in more detailed analyses of the short stories, are the ones who need the grace of God the most, for they are the ones who do not necessarily behave and do what they need to do in order to gain God's grace, even though they believe so. They need a real conversion. Because of their behavior they are struck with grace, for they believe in God and Jesus, but not necessarily because they are good people, and it is quite the contrary, with their actions we see that they really need to be humbled. In the Vatican's website one finds the definition of the grace of God according to archives of catechism as follows:

Our justification comes from the grace of God. Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life.

This vocation to eternal life is supernatural. It depends entirely on God's gratuitous initiative, for he alone can reveal and give himself. It surpasses the power of human intellect and will, as that of every other creature.

No one can merit the initial grace which is at the origin of conversion.

Moved by the Holy Spirit, we can merit for ourselves and for others all the graces needed to attain eternal life, as well as necessary temporal goods.

Even though the catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that grace is given by God freely and only by him, as seen in the quote above, we still have instances of believers doing charity or good deeds in order to please God and assure themselves that they are deserving of this grace. Mrs. Turpin and the grandmother represent the contrast found in people who believe they do good deeds, who believe they follow God's teachings, but in reality they are hypocrites who only care about themselves. They need the grace of God not because they deserve it or because they did something good to earn it, but because God, according to the catechism of the Catholic Church, is the only one capable of giving it freely. Grace is always undeserving, but in the case of Mrs. Turpin and the grandmother we have the aggravating matter of their hypocrisy, which makes them even needier of the grace of God to finally become converted.

Interestingly enough, what provides this moment of grace to such characters is the representation of a grotesque notion we so often find in O'Connor's works. Grace does not come from an angel figure or something extremely good and holy, but it comes from other humans that are as scarred as the people receiving their much needed grace. In the case of "Revelation" Mary Grace is the one who commits the violent act making Ruby Turpin think about her life for a while. The girl is described as ugly, maybe with some type of mental illness as we see her being sedated after she throws the book and being led to a hospital as if that was expected from her. In "A Good Man is Hard to Find" grace comes as a result of the actions of a troubled misfit, a senseless murderer, characteristics that are not at all related to pureness, goodness or wholeness.

An important detail to notice for this dissertation is, of course, the violent manner in which grace strikes the characters in the selected short stories. Violence allows O'Connor to present her characters with the harsh truth of the grace of God as she wants, even if these characters do not willingly accept this grace as soon as they get it, for God will give you grace whether you do something to deserve it or not. It is more about the need of the person to receive grace than the deeds they do in order to gain this grace. Mrs. Turpin and the Grandmother need this grace no matter what they do in their lives and they are going to be struck with it violently so they can understand the importance of it. In the case of Mrs. Turpin she gets a chance to live this grace, but for the Grandmother it is too late, however, the grace she receives is, of course, not less important. According to Emily Strong in her article called "Flannery O'Connor's Protestant Grace":

The worshippers she [O'Connor] truly condemns are those who are lukewarm in any religion, not just Protestants... In the specific case in "Revelation" Mrs. Turpin, although allegedly a pious Catholic woman, is in actuality a hypocrite who cares more about worldly possessions than following Christ's example of love and compassion. Her judging attitude is distinctly anti-Christian, when one looks at it from the Bible's description of a true, charitable disciple's perspective. (107)

Thus, Ruby Turpin's actions and beliefs are not in accordance to glorifying God, but she still gets her grace because she needs it the most. What we see, then, about this topic is that what matters in O'Connor's fiction is the conversion of the hypocrite:

Perhaps O'Connor ... was less concerned with the exact doctrine as she was with the conversion itself. It may not have mattered to her what idea of grace was used, as long as it brought the unbeliever to the realization

of their mistakes so they could accept Christ as their Savior and live accordingly. (108 Strong)

One can notice that O'Connor's catholic beliefs are important to her personal life as well as to her writing career, but, according to Strong, she was also influenced by the religion that was predominant in Georgia: Fundamentalist Protestantism. O'Connor was born, raised and spent most of her short life living in the south of the United States of America in a time Catholicism was struggling to gain and maintain followers. Regardless of whether one sees the moment of grace in O'Connor as a catholic element as seen in the catechism of the church or whether one sees it as a protestant ideal, according to Emily Strong cited here, the point I am making in this dissertation is that the moment of grace is a violent means to convert the religious hypocrite.

Furthermore, O'Connor's works are still some of the best examples of what we can call "Southern Literature" not only because she is from the south, but also because her writing embodies the Southern ethos. One of the main characteristics of this type of literature, and that is present in O'Connor's works, is the discussion of religious and racial issues. In the beginning of the chapter entitled "The Sense of Tragedy: Patterns of Southern Experience," from the book *Backgrounds of American Literary Thought* by Herbert W. Edwards and Rod William Horton, we can find an explanation of the historical and social context of Southern literature:

Most views of the South, expressed by both Southerners and outsiders, have accepted the hypothesis that the area was a separate and distinct part of the United States, differing markedly from the rest of the country in background, economy, culture and social attitudes [...] the geographical homogeneity, the agrarian pattern of life based on a largely one-crop economy, the institution of slavery, the Confederacy, the strongly Anglo



–Saxon origin of the white population, the political tradition since the 1880’s of the Democratic Solid South. Equally convincing are such ineluctable matters as racial bias, a lingering agrarian idealism, the dislike or distrust of outsiders, the ascendancy of conservative evangelical Protestantism, and the tendency to take a parochial – or at best regional – view on political and social issues. [...] the south was psychologically a section, both to itself and to the rest of the world, because it believed itself to be unique, because it projected itself as such through its writers and spokesmen [...] and the “peculiar institution” of slavery, of the Lost Cause, of White Supremacy [...] and Southerners repeated this litany so many times that it became true – or almost so.

(367-69)

The main characters of “Revelation” and “A Good Man Is Hard to Find”, respectively Mrs. Turpin and the grandmother, are perfect examples of this sense of racial superiority of the white Southerner. In addition, they represent the belief in faith and religion, however, by analyzing their behavior as their respective stories develop, we are able to find many inaccuracies in what these characters believe are their religious right ways when compared to Christianity/Protestantism and its morals, and O’Connor calls attention to these inaccurate beliefs of what being a Christian/Protestant should really be.

A clear example of this feeling of superiority, which will be discussed in more depth later, can be found in the passage below from “Revelation:”

Sometimes Mrs. Turpin occupied herself at night naming the classes of people. On the bottom of the heap were most colored people, not the kind she would have been if she had been one, but most of them; then

next to them – not above, just away from – were the white-trash; then above them were the home-owners, and above them the home-and-land owners, to which she and Claude belonged. Above she and Claude were people with a lot of money and much bigger houses and much more land. (O'Connor 491)

In the passage above, Mrs. Turpin is constructing a social pyramid as a manner of killing time. She “occupies” her time separating people into classes. The fact that she thinks about this specific subject before she goes to sleep is an example of how concerned she is with shallow and judgmental matters. However, to her, these matters are very important, since she needs that feeling of superiority reaffirmed, contradicting what religion preaches. That sense of being better than others is a very important aspect to take into consideration when understanding the “moment of grace.”

Here again, as in the character Mrs. Turpin from “Revelation”, we do not have in the Grandmother the representation of an extremely evil person, but we do have someone shallow who puts herself above other people. As Carter W. Martin writes about the Grandmother in his book *The True Country: Themes in the Fiction of Flannery O'Connor*:

the grandmother in “A Good Man is Hard to Find” is not evil ... but she does fail to acknowledge her identity ... Like the rest of her family, she is shallow, vulgar, selfish, and generally unattractive. They are a family of the mildly damned – damned not because they are evil, but because they have never seen deeply enough into an experience to be aware that damnation is a possibility or salvation is an issue. (134)

Essentially we have two characters who very proudly say they believe in God and in Christ, but they seem to have a distorted vision of what that could really mean and that

is when violence takes place, to give these people a moment in which they recognize the real meaning of being a Christ follower, according to O'Connor's fiction. However, another intriguing question related to this topic is if these characters behave like that because men are fallen creatures and cannot help being mean, or if they act like they do for social causes, to maintain a status, or even if it is a mixture of both.

Furthermore, to understand the relation of religion and violence in O'Connor's works it is important to consider the fact that the Bible, the foundation of Christian and Protestant beliefs, has some extremely violent passages in it. In the Old Testament, for example, God is often portrayed as violent and vindictive. In numerous instances to teach lessons he punishes humans with the ultimate violent act: death. Examples vary from the flood in Noah's story to the Sodom and Gomorrah tale. But the most violent scene in the Bible, which also can be said to be the most famous one, is the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and all his passion leading him to his death:

... When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!"

25 All the people answered, "His blood is on us and on our children!"

26 Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

27 Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. 28 They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, 29 and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!"

they said. 30 They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. 31 After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

32 As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. 33 They came to a place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”). 34 There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. 35 When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. (Matthew, 27: 24 - 35)

Here we have a historical figure who died in an extremely gory manner, suffering the excruciating pain of being flogged and crucified, together with the humiliation that came from the violence of others, and all of that to convey his sacrifice for humanity.

Some other examples of the violence presented in the Bible also can be found in the selected verses below:

5 The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the Earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. 6 The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. 7 So the Lord said, “I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them.” (New International Version, Genesis, 6: 5-7)

24 Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the Lord out of the heavens. 25 Thus he overthrew those cities and

the entire plain, destroying all those living in the cities—and also the vegetation in the land. 26 But Lot’s wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt. (Genesis, 19: 24-26).

11 One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. 12 Looking this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

(Exodus, 2: 11-12)

22 Then say to Pharaoh, ‘This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son, 23 and I told you, “Let my son go, so he may worship me.” But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son.’” 24 At a lodging place on the way, the Lord met Moses and was about to kill him.

(Exodus, 4: 22-24)

13 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Get up early in the morning, confront Pharaoh and say to him, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me, 14 or this time I will send the full force of my plagues against you and against your officials and your people, so you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth. 15 For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth. 16 But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth. 17 You still set yourself against my people and will not let them go. 18 Therefore, at this time tomorrow I will send the worst hailstorm that has ever fallen on Egypt, from the day it was founded till now. 19

Give an order now to bring your livestock and everything you have in the field to a place of shelter, because the hail will fall on every person and animal that has not been brought in and is still out in the field, and they will die.” (Exodus, 9: 13-19)

Despite the fact that these passages are taken out of context, they nonetheless still present the imagery of violence that appears all over the Bible and its stories, making it a recurrent element. These are some passages that illustrate how this theme is present in the Bible as a whole concept.

Furthermore, it is also worth mentioning that in some versions of the Bible different words are used to convey more suffering and violence. For instance, in the version called *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, widely used by Jehovah witnesses, the cross is called “torture stake,” as seen in Matthew 27: 32, while in the international version online is just the cross. The use of the word “torture” of course enhances the suffering that Jesus went through while experiencing his violent death. Even the choice of words in some different versions and translations of the Bible can demonstrate even more how brutal violence is common in the stories. The contrast between the expressions “to be crucified” and “to be executed on the stake” or “nailed to the stake” are examples of this choice of words, for in the latest expressions the gory aspect of what is going to happen to Jesus is more explicit. Violence in the Old Testament is mostly used to frighten and show how powerful God is and that he can use this power against his creations as he pleases. In the New Testament, however, we can see more of the grace of God and less of his violence and hate towards mankind, especially in the words and actions of Jesus Christ.

For the most part, it's natural and common to realize religion can shape people's characters, personalities and behavior, especially when they are born into it. Particularly

in Christianity there is the belief according to which if an individual suffers and makes sacrifices one is going to be rewarded by God. Violence and suffering are recurrent themes for characters in the Bible to go through and then finally achieve their own moment of grace, like O'Connor's characters, even if it could be considered too late. Hence, her characters are mirroring a very usual notion of Christianity and most religions that follow the Bible. Regarding this subject, in *Understanding Flannery O'Connor*, Margaret Earley Whitt writes:

Borrowing from the violence of Christ's death on the cross, O'Connor once said in a letter to a friend: "What people don't realize is how much religion costs. They think faith is a big electric blanket, when of course it is the cross. It is much harder to believe than not to believe." O'Connor's use of violence was her way of "returning [her] characters to reality and preparing them to accept their moment of grace." By bringing characters to the point of death, the best example of ultimate violence, the character reveals the essence of the best possible self, the truest self, the self most clearly in touch with inner coherence, the self most ready for eternity. Violence is never gratuitous in O'Connor's stories; it is essential as a device to move the reader toward something that could be seen as the embodiment of the story's mystery. (11)

It is also worth noticing in the verse cited above from Noah's story how God reacts to the violence present in the human heart. This observation will relate later to the discussion and analyses of violence in Golding's work, because when we talk about violence in *Lord of the Flies* one of the ideas to be discussed is the one in which every human has evil in them and we're always going to have it, no one is immune to that. In that Bible verse we realize God was always aware of that. God knows the human heart

is full of evil, and the punishment for that in the Old Testament is almost always death coming from acts of violence against the human race. In these selected short stories it is expected that the readers see themselves in the characters receiving the grace, for we all can relate to being proud and shallow. What should be considered an anomaly is how the Grandmother and Mrs. Turpin think about themselves as holy people, better than others. What should be seen as disturbing are the reasons they cultivate inside themselves, especially Mrs. Turpin, to justify how they see and treat black people, for instance. What O'Connor shows is that there is no such thing as perfection in human nature, no human is above anyone else. In the book *Return to Good and Evil: Flannery O'Connor's Response to Nihilism* the author Henry T. Edmondson, III quotes O'Connor's ideas about this topic in a chapter entitled "O'Connor's Use of the Grotesque" as seen below:

... it is only in these centuries when we are afflicted with the doctrine of the perfectibility of human nature by its own efforts that the freak in fiction is so disturbing [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. That this happens frequently, I cannot deny, but . . . it indicates a disease, not simply in the novelist but in the society that has given him his values. (8)

That said, a more detailed analysis of the actions of these characters and how they are constructed is important to understand the flaws in their character and in their faith, thus justifying their sudden moment of realization and possible conversion.

## **1.2 Mrs. Turpin, the Grandmother, and social hierarchy**



The first indication of a religious tone in “Revelation” is the song being played in the background of the doctor’s office: “the radio was softly playing gospel music” (489). From that the reader is prepared to encounter religious features in the story. Ruby Turpin’s shallow personality is shown from the very onset of the story, for the first trait presented of her is how she is worried with her physical appearance. She comments about her own image to strangers as she sits down, comparing herself to her husband:

Mrs. Turpin eased into the vacant chair, which held her tight as a corset.

"I wish I could reduce," she said, and rolled her eyes and gave a comic sigh. "Oh, you aren't fat," the stylish lady said.

"Ooooo I am too," Mrs. Turpin said. "Claud he eats all he wants to and never weighs over one hundred and seventy-five pounds, but me I just look at something good to eat and I gain some weight, and her stomach and shoulders shook with laughter. (489-90)

She follows this comment with several others that continue to prove the point that she is fascinated with labeling people according to their status in society and by the way they look. She does not really know any of the people in that waiting room, except for her husband, for she never talked to them before, but still she seems to have an entire opinion formed about them all just by looking at them and separating them into categories. Ruby Turpin gives the other patients nicknames to identify them — “the well-dressed or stylish lady,” “the ugly girl,” “old woman,” “the white-trashy mother,” and “the poor nasty little thing” — and since we see the situation through her eyes this is all we get to know about these other characters. For instance, the woman she calls white trash shows signs of racism through the whole story, but Mrs. Turpin judges the woman only by her manners and how she looks, but not really by her harsh words about

people of color. It is also crucial to notice the first impression Mrs. Turpin has of Mary Grace:

Next to her was a fat girl of eighteen or nineteen, scowling into a thick blue book which Mrs. Turpin saw was entitled *Human Development*. The girl raised her head and directed her scowl at Mrs. Turpin as if she did not like her looks. She appeared annoyed that anyone should speak while she tried to read. The poor girl's face was blue with acne and Mrs. Turpin thought how pitiful it was to have a face like that at that age. She gave the girl a friendly smile but the girl only scowled the harder. Mrs. Turpin herself was fat but she had always had good skin, and, though she was forty-seven years old, there was not a wrinkle in her face except around her eyes from laughing too much. (490)

Mrs. Turpin's moment of grace comes exactly from this girl she despises so much because of the way she looks.

Furthermore, appearance is so important to Mrs. Turpin that it affects how closely she listens to someone or how much attention she gives to people. While talking to the 'white trash' lady and the pleasant lady, she never really pays attention to the first woman, but is always attentive and responsive to the second:

"This is wonderful weather, isn't it?" the girl's mother said.

"It's good weather for cotton if you can get the niggers to pick it," Mrs. Turpin said, "but niggers don't want to pick cotton any more. You can't get the white folks to pick it and now you can't get the niggers because they got to be right up there with the white folks."

"They gonna try anyways," the white-trash woman said, leaning forward.

"Do you have one of those cotton-picking machines?" the pleasant lady asked.

"No," Mrs. Turpin said, "they leave half the cotton in the field. We don't have much cotton anyway. If you want to make it farming now, you have to have a little of everything. We got a couple of acres of cotton and a few hogs and chickens and just enough white-face that Claud can look after them himself

"One thang I don't want," the white-trash woman said, wiping her mouth with the back of her hand. "Hogs. Nasty stinking things, agruntin and a-rootin all over the place."

Mrs. Turpin gave her the merest edge of her attention. "Our hogs are not dirty and they don't stink," she said. "They're cleaner than some children I've seen. Their feet never touch the ground. We have a pig parlor- that's where you raise them on concrete," she explained to the pleasant lady, "and Claud scoots them down with the hose every afternoon and washes off the floor." Cleaner by far than that child right there, she thought. Poor nasty little thing. He had not moved except to put the thumb of his dirty hand into his mouth. (493)

Mrs. Turpin is harsh and rude in her answers to the 'white trash' lady; her responses to her are filled with criticism and disregard. She treats the woman as if she is ignorant, but not so as to educate her, but in a manner to makes herself feel superior. On one hand her tone is very patronizing towards the 'white trash' lady, on the other hand she is very soft spoken and polite while talking to the pleasant lady. Even the poor little boy, who does not really know what is happening, is used as a target of her judgment towards his mother. However, when the roles are reversed and the judgment comes

from the 'white trash' lady and it is directed to her, Mrs. Turpin simply ignores it, for to her she is nothing as we see in the passage: "The woman looked at Mrs. Turpin as if here was an idiot indeed but Mrs. Turpin was not bothered by the look, considering where it came from" (496). They both do the exact same thing to each other, but to Mrs. Turpin she is the better one, but in reality they both are incapable of looking outside themselves.

Another aspect of her shallow and prejudicial character other than showing her preoccupation with people's appearance is how racist Mrs. Turpin is. When a black boy delivers what seems to be some medication to the secretary in the doctor's office, we see Mrs. Turpin being gentle with him and helping as much as she can, but as soon as the boy goes, the white trash lady starts her prejudicial comments about what, for her, are black people in general: "They ought to send all them niggers back to Africa," the 'white trash' woman said. "That's where they come from in first place" (495). When she listens to this comment, Mrs. Turpin even answers with what seems to be a reasonable comment after the pleasant lady says she could not do without her colored friends: "There's a heap of things worse than a nigger," Mrs. Turpin agreed. "It's all kinds of them just like it's all kinds of us" (495). Here, for a moment, we see Mrs. Turpin putting herself at the same level as black people, but further in the story it is clear that this is only for show and she does not really think like that. She equals herself to them maybe to just agree with the pleasant lady she likes so much. Further in the story it is possible to see how she treats the black people who work for her: "Mrs. Turpin set the bucket down on the floor of the truck. 'Yawl hep yourselves'" (504), she gives them water from a bucket, which is not very sanitary and they have to share amongst themselves. Mrs. Turpin is nice and polite to the people who work for her and her husband, but, nonetheless, she treats them as if they were animals, they are

definitely not equals to her. This is an attitude that is considered normal to her, to treat them politely, but it is not necessarily the right manner to treat a human being. She thinks she is doing a lot, but in reality she is not doing anything extraordinary.

Evidence that she does not take them into consideration is also found the passage that follows:

"She said," Mrs. Turpin began, and stopped, her face very dark and heavy. The sun was getting whiter and whiter, blanching the sky overhead so that the leaves of the hickory tree were black in the face of it. She could not bring forth the words. "Something real ugly," she muttered.

"She sho shouldn't said nothin ugly, to you," the old woman said. "You so sweet. You the sweetest lady I know."

"She pretty too," the one with the hat on said.

"And stout," the other one said. "I never knowed no sweeter white lady."

"That's the truth befo' Jesus," the old woman said. "Amen! You des as sweet and pretty as you can be."

Mrs. Turpin knew just exactly how much Negro flattery was worth and it added to her rage. "She said," she began again and finished this time with a fierce rush of breath, "that I was an old wart hog from hell."

There was an astounded silence.

"Where she at?" the youngest woman cried in a piercing voice.

"Lemme see her. I'll kill her!"

"I'll kill her with you!" the other one cried.

"She b'long in the sylum" the old woman said emphatically. "YOU the sweetest white lady I know."

"She pretty too," the other two said. "Stout as she can be and sweet. Jesus satisfied with her!"

"Deed he is," the old woman declared.

Idiots! Mrs. Turpin growled to herself. YOU could never say anything intelligent to a nigger. YOU could talk at them but not with them. (504-5)

To Mrs. Turpin, the compliments that came from her servants had no value whatsoever because of their position in society. If the praise does not come from people that share the same status as her or above her it is not real or valuable. The way she thinks of the black people that work for her also shows the racism rooted in Mrs. Turpin; she thinks less of them and she justifies it with the color of their skin, nothing else. From this passage it is clear that these people have some kindness for her, but maybe this kindness comes out of ignorance. She treats them like animals after all, but to them most certainly that was as close to respect they got in their entire lives, which is problematic because she does not really respect them or treat them with kindness at all much less consider them equals. Here it is also important to notice how she cannot repeat the words spoken by Mary Grace to her husband nor to her servants for it is too real for her. It feels as if she cannot face the reality, the actuality of the words that were spoken to her. Violence, then, comes also in words in this short story, not only in actions, for the violence of the truth spoken by the girl bothers her more than the physical wound she carries.

There is also a lack of empathy on her part about the situation that black people face in the USA. In the discussion about black people in the doctor's office she says: "It wouldn't be practical to send them back to Africa," she said. "They wouldn't want to go. They got it too good here" (495). It is ignorant of her to assume that black people have

good lives in the USA, for they were violently forced to go to the Americas as slaves, many died in the journey because of the awful, unsanitary conditions in the ships, women were raped, they lost their homes, their culture, were made fun of, violently treated and exploited to make others rich, lived in precarious conditions, treated as less intelligent, less human than the ones enslaving them. By saying that, she shows how ignorant she is of the real situation lived by these people and the suffering that was inflicted by people like her. She thinks that what she does to them is a good deed. She also believes she treats them with respect, but that is not the truth, for she is incapable of looking outside herself and outside her situation to see the reality of the system she is part of. Not only that, but she believes that by doing what she does and treating these people the way she does she is doing a favor to them. Mrs. Turpin lacks empathy, since to her enslaving black people was something good to be done to them and not something extremely dehumanizing as they did not have a choice in the beginning and still the choices they had in the US were very little. She also uses them as a measure of comparison for bad behavior and appearance: "Her dirty yellow hair was tied behind with a little piece of red paper ribbon. Worse than niggers any day, Mrs. Turpin thought" (490).

Another relevant indicator of her attitude of superiority and judgmental character are the lyrics of the gospel song she sings: "The gospel hymn playing was, 'When I looked up and He looked down,' and Mrs. Turpin, who knew it, supplied the last line mentally, 'And wona these days I know I'll we-ear a crown.'" (490). This is a signal that she believes herself to be inherently deserving of privileges or special treatment, for the crown symbolizes richness and a special power that comes with social status. It is only symptomatic that she chooses this line from the song to sing.

Mrs. Turpin's attitude of imagining herself as someone with a different social status than the one she owns is another sign of her trivial preoccupations. She thinks too much about her place in society and which label is more important to be known by. Her thoughts are essentially empty; there is no sign of a more complex discussion going on inside her mind such as why these statuses exist in the first place and how they came to be. They are never questioned by her, just followed, which shows the lack of ability to investigate the real meaning behind them, and how they are rooted in prejudice and judgment. The fact that she does not feel the necessity to question them shows how privileged she is in the first place. It also shows how she conforms to these arbitrary, more than meaningless separations between human beings; maybe because they do not affect her in a bad way, since she believes she is so good. This seems to be a subject that consumes a lot of her life as it is one of the topics she thinks about before she falls asleep:

Sometimes at night when she couldn't go to sleep, Mrs. Turpin would occupy herself with the question of who she would have chosen to be if she couldn't have been herself. If Jesus had said to her before he made her, "There's only two places available for you. You can either be a nigger or white trash," what would she have said? "Please, Jesus, please," she would have said, "Just let me wait until there's another place available," and he would have said, "No, you have to go right now", and "I have only those two places so make up your mind." She would have wiggled and squirmed and begged and pleaded but it would have been no use and finally she would have said, "All right, make me a nigger then-but that don't mean a trashy one." And he would have made her a near clean respectable Negro woman, herself but black. (491)



Again we see evidences of racism in her, for she ultimately chooses to be herself, the only thing different would be her color, and yet she still would be something less than she is now, only because of the color of her skin.

Mrs. Turpin is also contradictory when it comes to her thoughts and actions:

To help anybody out that needed it was her philosophy of life. She never spared herself when she found somebody in need, whether they were white or black, trash or decent. And of all she had to be thankful for, she was most thankful that this was so. If Jesus had said, "You can be high society and have all the money you want and be thin and svelte-like, but you can't be a good woman with it," she would have had to say, "Well don't make me that then. Make me a good woman and it don't matter what else, how fat or how ugly or how poor!" Her heart rose. He had not made her a nigger or white-trash or ugly! He had made her herself and given her a little of everything. Jesus, thank you! she said. Thank you thank you! Whenever she counted her blessings she felt as buoyant as if she weighed one hundred and twenty five pounds instead of one hundred and eighty. (497)

She believes herself a good woman, but the passage above does not make sense, for when she talks about having a good heart and that is all that matters and what she chooses above all, she thanks Jesus for making her who she is, a white decent lady, and not for giving her a generous heart. She is relieved that she is not a black or poor person, because that is what makes her a better person, her status and the things she owns, not really her supposed good heart.

Another contradiction is seen in the passage: "Mrs. Turpin felt an awful pity for the girl, though she thought it was one thing to be ugly and another to act ugly" (492).

This is contradictory because the way Ruby Turpin acts towards some classes of people according to social standards is also ugly, but when the attitude is directed to her, someone who believes herself to be graceful and superior in relation to others, the ugly attitude is condemned and unnecessary; it has no fundament or good reason. She is not able to see that she does the same exact thing the “ugly” girl is doing to her. Ruby looks to other people with harsh judgment, but she is unable to look at herself the same way in order to be a better person.

Not to mention that Mrs. Turpin assumes she is a good woman, yet, when given the opportunity to help people she finds excuses not to do so. She says people in need are lazy, but maybe she is the lazy one who cannot take the responsibility and hard work of helping and educating someone, as seen in the passage below:

That's all you try to get down em, Mrs. Turpin said to herself. Too lazy to light the fire. There was nothing you could tell her about people like them that she didn't know already. And it was not just that they didn't have anything. Because if you gave them everything, in two weeks it would all be broken or filthy or they would have chopped it up for lightwood. She knew all this from her own experience. Help them you must, but help them you couldn't. (497)

Before her moment of grace, Mrs. Turpin really believes she is a type of perfect Jesus follower, and that that alone makes her better than others. Because of that it is unfair that Mary Grace's message was directed to her, she feels really outraged and cannot fathom the idea that she is flawed:

She scowled at the ceiling. Occasionally she raised her fist and made a small stabbing motion over her chest as if she was defending her

innocence to invisible guests who were like the comforters of Job, reasonable-seeming but wrong...

"What do you send me a message like that for?" she said in a low fierce voice, barely above a whisper but with the force of a shout in its concentrated fury. "How am I a hog and me both? How am I saved and from hell too?" Her free fist was knotted and with the other she gripped the hose, blindly pointing the stream of water in and out of the eye of the old sow whose outraged squeal she did not hear. (503, 506)

It is also compelling to notice that while she is angry at Mary Grace's message, she is mistreating an animal and completely ignoring its cry for help for her to stop pouring water into its eyes. Mrs. Turpin is blind to the evidences around her that justify that message, as small as they can be. The only thing she can see is her own judgment about life and how perfect she is.

After a while she finally acknowledges that the message was indeed for her, but she does not receive it with humility, instead she is furious at it: "How am I a hog? she demanded. "Exactly how am I like them?" and she jabbed the stream of water at the shoats. "There was plenty of trash there. It didn't have to be me" (507). Here she is not really worried about her actions and how to better her life, but, instead, she is worried about the comparison with others she believes are less than her. In her eyes she can do no wrong and there were people who deserved to receive that violent message more than her, or even that she does not deserve it at all. She is incapable of looking inside herself with self-criticism; she rather sees the faults in other people, but never in herself. She believes she is perfect for following the church's beliefs, but what she does in her life is the contrary of what is preached by Jesus, a name that she repeats without really understanding his message — this, of course, taking into consideration that she is a

believer in God and a follower of a religion that has the Bible as the main source of her religious behavior.

However, with all that said, it is crucial to notice that Mrs. Turpin indeed is hard working and she is not all bad. She and her husband have land, and she works to keep everything as much as she can. The issue here is that she only sees value in material aspects of life and appearances. She compares herself to black people as if she is better than them and forgets to mention her privileges that black people did not have in their life time, for instance. She talks about being black and uneducated as if it were a choice, as if these people were always meant to be like this and she was chosen to be better than them:

"If you like trash better, go get yourself some trash then," she railed.

"You could have made me trash. Or a nigger. If trash is what you wanted, why didn't you make me trash?" She shook her fist with the hose in it' and a watery snake appeared momentarily in the air. "I could quit working and take it easy and be filthy," she growled. "Lounge about the sidewalks all day drinking root beer. Dip snuff and spit in every puddle and have it all over my face. I could be nasty.

"Or you could have made me a nigger. It's too late for me to be a nigger," she said with deep sarcasm, "but I could act like one. Lay down in the middle of the road and stop traffic. Roll on the ground.' (507)

Mrs. Turpin is so convinced and attached to her classification of human beings that she is not able to even fathom the idea that to God we are all equal regardless of social status and that character is what makes someone worthy of respect and not the position in a social pyramid: "She braced herself for a final assault and this time her voice rolled out over the pasture. "Go on," she yelled, "call me a hog! Call me a hog again. From

hell. Call me a wart hog from hell. Put that bottom rail on top. There'll still be a top and bottom!" (507).

To finish the examples about Mrs. Turpin's flaws of character, it is worth mentioning how Mary Grace's eyes and the affronting look the girl gives her bothers Mrs. Turpin so much. Examples of this discomfort can be found in many passages from the short story:

The daughter slammed her book shut. She looked straight in front of her, directly through Mrs. Turpin and on through the yellow curtain and the plate glass window which made the wall behind her. The girl's eyes seemed lit all of a sudden with a peculiar light, an unnatural light like night road signs give. Mrs. Turpin turned her head to see if there was anything going on outside that she should see, but she could not see anything. Figures passing cast only a pale shadow through the curtain. There was no reason the girl should single her out for her ugly looks...Directly across the table, the ugly girl's eyes were fixed on Mrs. Turpin as if she had some very special reason for disliking her. (492-3)

Mary Grace's eyes are capable of seeing through Mrs. Turpin. When the lady realizes the strange way the girl looks at her, she instantly looks around her to see if there is something other than herself that could be calling the attention of Mary Grace's eyes, but nothing beside her is found. At this moment in the story it is impossible for Mrs. Turpin to understand that there is something wrong with her. Once more, while in the doctor's office, Mary Grace's eyes cause discomfort in Mrs. Turpin:

The look that Mrs. Turpin and the pleasant lady exchanged indicated they both understood that you had to have certain things before you could know certain things. But every time Mrs. Turpin exchanged a look

with the lady, she was aware that the ugly girl's peculiar eyes were still on her, and she had trouble bringing her attention back to the conversation ... the raw-complexioned girl snapped her teeth together. Her lower lip turned downwards and inside out, revealing the pale pink inside of her mouth. After a second it rolled back up. It was the ugliest face Mrs. Turpin had ever seen anyone make and for a moment she was certain that the girl had made it at her. She was looking at her as if she had known and disliked her all her life — all of Mrs. Turpin's life, it seemed too, not just all the girl's life. Why, girl, I don't even know you, Mrs. Turpin said silently. (494-5)

Those are examples of how distressed the lady is when someone sees through her; it is an instance of the traditional idea disseminated that the eyes are the windows to the soul. The girl sees something in Ruby Turpin that Ruby herself is not able to see. Mary Grace's eyes could even represent the eyes of God judging her actions, for it is clear that the girl could see the woman's actions even before she was born. The reader gets in contact with Ruby's inner thoughts, yet from these passages we get the notion that Mary Grace also can hear them. These many examples of how she is uncomfortable with the girl's judgmental look being directed at her are explicit during the scene in the doctor's office, when she is showing a lot of her character flaws through her comments, thoughts and actions.

These flaws give to the reader a reason to understand that look, however, these reasons are subtle, and if the reader does not realize them, then this is a reflection of them, for if they do not see the flaws in Mrs. Turpin they also do not see them in themselves:

The story of "Good Country People," like all of O'Connor's stories... are parables of sin and grace, or the absence of grace. If we fail to understand them, it is because we are not finely tuned to the various temptations of an ingenious and pervasive evil which O'Connor would teach us, nor equal to the lessons and significations of God in a material and mundane world that has forgotten or dismissed Him. Precisely not to let us forget or dismiss – not to let us off the hook of the rugged demands of a faith to which we may only pay lip service – was for O'Connor the challenging, exacting, almost insurmountable cause for her fiction. Even at her most depressed, her most exhausted, and her most anguished moments she never stopped trying to say this, and she never stopped saying it in public lecture... (Kinney 75-6)

From these passages it is clear that Mrs. Turpin does not like it when the judgment comes to her, but she does the same to other people. Furthermore, she believes she is so much better than the majority of the people in that office that the girl's look directed at her is inexplicable and unjustifiable; the lady is incapable of understanding that she is doing to those people the same thing that the girl is doing to her, she is judging other people's characters without even knowing them. For some reason the girl's eyes and judgment bother Mrs. Turpin more than anything; maybe this happens only because she is the daughter of the pleasant lady or because these eyes could be said to represent the eyes of God, for when the 'white trash' woman looks at her in a condescending manner, as mentioned before, she just ignores it exactly because of whom the look came from.

For Mrs. Turpin, the violent act happens as a surprise. She was bothered by Mary Grace's look, but it was impossible to predict the girl's action, thus, violence and

grace came both in the most unexpected form and in the most unexpected environment: first in a doctor's office and then in a pig parlor when she was cleaning pigs:

The book struck her directly, over her left eye. It struck almost at the same instant that she realized the girl was about to hurl it. Before she could utter a sound, the raw face came crashing across the table toward her, howling. The girl's fingers sank like clamps the soft flesh of her neck. She heard the mother cry out and Claud shout, "Whoa!" There was an instant when she was certain that she was about to be in an earthquake. All at once her vision narrowed and she saw everything as if it were happening in a small room far away, or as if she were looking at it through the wrong end of a telescope. (499)

The fact that the act was a complete surprise for the woman says a lot about her lack of ability to perceive her judgment towards others. It is only one more example of Mrs. Turpin unpleasant sense of superiority. All of the time it felt like the situation she was living was not happening to her, because, to her, she did not earn it.

It took Mrs. Turpin a while to understand that she deserved that awakening moment. Ruby has a vision while taking care of the pigs in her pig parlor. The situation she is in when she has her vision is symbolic because is not the typical place for a spiritual awakening and it shows how she finally understands her place between God, man and animals and that she is not better than anyone or anything. The pig parlor can also be seen as a humbling place where she discovers she is much less than what she believes she is:

... she bent her head slowly and gazed, as if through the very heart of mystery, down into the pig parlor at the hogs. They had settled all in one corner around the old sow who was grunting softly. A red glow suffused



them. They appeared to pant with a secret life... Mrs. Turpin remained there with her gaze bent to them as if she were absorbing some abysmal life-giving knowledge... She raised her hands from the side of the pen in a gesture hieratic and profound. A visionary light settled in her eyes. She saw the streak as a vast swinging bridge extending upward from the earth through a field of living fire. Upon it a vast horde of souls were tumbling toward heaven. There were whole companies of white trash, clean for the first time in their lives, and bands of black niggers in white robes, and battalions of freaks and lunatics shouting and clapping and leaping like frogs. And bringing up the end of the procession was a tribe of people whom she recognized at once as those who, like herself and Claud, had always had a little of everything and the given wit to use it right. She leaned forward to observe them closer. They were marching behind the others with great dignity, accountable as they had always been for good order and common sense and respectable behavior. They, alone were on key. Yet she could see by their shocked and altered faces even their virtues were being burned away. She lowered hands and gripped the rail of the hog pen, her eyes small but fixed unblinkingly on what lay ahead. In a moment the vision faded but she remained where she was, immobile. (508-9)

These are some of the main indicators found throughout “Revelation” of how Mrs. Turpin treats people she believes are beneath her and she does it believing she is following the teaching of God. These are the aspects O’Connor constructs in the story to justify her need of a moment of grace. Similarly, then, there is the Grandmother in “A Good Man is Hard to Find,” for she also acts as if she is better than other people, is very

preoccupied with appearances and is not humble enough to admit to a mistake that ultimately led her family to their death. The first indicator of the Grandmother's need for grace is her excessive preoccupation with her own appearance:

The old lady settled herself comfortably, removing her white cotton gloves and putting them up with her purse on the shelf in front of the back window. The children's mother still had on slacks and still had her head tied up in a green kerchief, but the grandmother had on a navy blue straw sailor hat with a bunch of white violets on the brim and a navy blue dress with a small white dot in the print. Her collars and cuffs were white organdy trimmed with lace and at her neckline she had pinned a purple spray of cloth violets containing a sachet. In case of an accident, anyone seeing her dead on the highway would know at once that she was a lady.

(118)

Here it is meaningful to notice how she is worried about her looks in case she dies in an accident. The first aspect of her that she wants people to notice are that she was a lady who dressed well and with modesty, which are not essential qualities in human beings. It is also worth mentioning the contrast between her clothes and the clothes of her daughter in law, who wears simple and comfortable clothing. To the grandmother, then, clothes say more about her than her character.

Another aspect to notice about the grandmother's is that she is old fashioned in the sense that being proud of the place in which you were born is an important builder of character; however, she is not aware that not everybody in the world have the privilege of being born in a place where they have freedom and essential conditions to live like herself. She also sees poverty as an exotic matter to be painted and transformed into art of some sort. There is no empathy for the black child's situation when they see

one on their road trip, but rather a sense of transforming that into something to be shown as exotic and unusual, something different to be seen. However, there is no urge in her to help the child in any way. The image is there only to please her eyes as something poetic, but the reality behind it is somehow ignored since she does recognize the situation of the child, but does not comment on how unfortunate it is and how she could have helped. We could compare this passage to some of the first world tourists who visit Brazil, for example, and are drawn to visit favelas and take pictures of the people who live there as a form of art. They expose those pictures as poetic pieces of art, when, in reality, there is nothing beautiful or poetic about poverty when one lives in it, only to someone who sees it from the outside. It seems from this passage that the Grandmother does not have the sensibility or the knowledge to see beyond the image in front of her:

"In my time," said the grandmother, folding her thin veined fingers, "children were more respectful of their native states and their parents and everything else. People did right then. Oh look at the cute little pickaninny!" she said and pointed to a Negro child standing in the door of a shack. "Wouldn't that make a picture, now?" she asked and they all turned and looked at the little Negro out of the back window. He waved.

"He didn't have any britches on," June Star said.

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

Additionally, appearance and status are her priorities, since it is more important to her that she marries a rich man who can give her expensive things instead of love itself. It seems that she sees in marriage an opportunity to have more things, and not an

opportunity to have a companion for life, for she mentions money and the power to buy things when they first came out, but does not say much about feelings:

She said once when she was a maiden lady she had been courted by a Mr. Edgar Atkins Teagarden from Jasper, Georgia. She said he was a very good looking man and a gentleman and that he brought her a watermelon every Saturday afternoon with his initials cut in it, E. A. T. Well, one Saturday, she said, Mr. Teagarden brought the watermelon and there was nobody at home and he left it on the front porch and returned in his buggy to Jasper, but she never got the watermelon, she said, because a nigger boy ate it when he saw the initials, E. A. T. ! This story tickled John Wesley's funny bone and he giggled and giggled but June Star didn't think it was any good. She said she wouldn't marry a man that just bought her a watermelon on Saturday. The grandmother said she would have done well to marry Mr. Teagarden because he was a gentleman and had bought Coca-Cola stock when it first came out and that he had died only a few years ago, a very wealthy man. (120)

The grandmother is also manipulative and too concerned about having her own way in the situations she is in. She hides the cat in a basket and takes it with her because the creature loves her and she wants to take it on the trip, but she does not care about the opinion of her son and his family and the well being of the animal. She also does not care that her son is nervous about a misfit lose in the area they are traveling, and his will to get to their destination as fast as they could in order to be safe, she insists in stopping at a house and uses her grandchildren in order to convince her son to stop there only because she misses the place. She uses the curiosity of the children to manipulate the situation only for her to have what she wants. She is self centered, deceiving and

inconsiderate with the preoccupations of her own son who is driving anxiously to get to their destination:

She knew that Bailey would not be willing to lose any time looking at an old house, but the more she talked about it, the more she wanted to see it once again and find out if the little twin arbors were still standing. "There was a secret:-panel in this house," she said craftily, not telling the truth but wishing that she were, "and the story went that all the family silver was hidden in it when Sherman came through but it was never found . . ."

"Hey!" John Wesley said. "Let's go see it! We'll find it! We'll poke all the woodwork and find it! Who lives there? Where do you turn off at? Hey Pop, can't we turn off there?"

"We never have seen a house with a secret panel!" June Star shrieked.

"Let's go to the house with the secret panel! Hey Pop, can't we go see the house with the secret panel!" (123)

Not satisfied in setting the children against their own father, the grandmother keeps bringing her own son to a stressful situation while he drives, putting the entire family in danger. She does not help to calm the children, instead she keeps encouraging that the stop in the house would be beneficial for the kids, even though it is something she is doing for herself and lying about it:

The children began to yell and scream that they wanted to see the house with the secret panel. John Wesley kicked the back of the front seat and June Star hung over her mother's shoulder and whined desperately into her ear that they never had any fun even on their vacation, that they could never do what THEY wanted to do. The baby began to scream and

John Wesley kicked the back of the seat so hard that his father could feel the blows in his kidney.

"All right!" he shouted and drew the car to a stop at the side of the road.

"Will you all shut up? Will you all just shut up for one second? If you don't shut up, we won't go anywhere."

"It would be very educational for them," the grandmother murmured.

(123-4)

She is dishonest, she chooses to hide the fact that she was wrong about the location of the house in order to not get in trouble with her son rather than to own up to her mistake and apologize for it. This mistake is serious because if she had done that, they could go back to their original route in time and the accident would not have happened, but because of her stubbornness and pride the entire family gets in trouble:

"It's not much farther," the grandmother said and just as she said it, a horrible thought came to her. The thought was so embarrassing that she turned red in the face and her eyes dilated and her feet jumped up, upsetting her valise in the corner. The instant the valise moved, the newspaper top she had over the basket under it rose with a snarl and Pitty Sing, the cat, sprang onto Bailey's shoulder... The grandmother was curled up under the dashboard, hoping she was injured so that Bailey's wrath would not come down on her all at once. The horrible thought she had had before the accident was that the house she had remembered so vividly was not in Georgia but in Tennessee...The grandmother decided that she would not mention that the house was in Tennessee. (124-5)

When the encounter with the misfit happens, we see an attempt at justifying the former's violence: because he was so exposed to it, it became something normal and he

is desensitized by it. The way he personally sees violence is important to the end of this short story. He was raised in the same society as the grandmother and her family, but he became numb to violence, the path he took in life brought him to be who he is in that circumstance. As he says himself, he was once a follower of God, but for some reason he was arrested for a crime that is not certain if he committed it or not. After that he changed his view on life and also on violence, which was not necessarily a choice:

"I was a gospel singer for a while," The Misfit said. "I been most everything. Been in the arm service both land and sea, at home and abroad, been twict married, been an undertaker, been with the railroads, plowed Mother Earth, been in a tornado, seen a man burnt alive oncet," and he looked up at the children's mother and the little girl who were sitting close together, their faces white and their eyes glassy; "I even seen a woman flogged," he said... "I never was a bad boy that I remember of," The Misfit said in an almost dreamy voice, "but somewhere along the line I done something wrong and got sent to the penitentiary. I was buried alive," and he looked up and held her attention to him by a steady stare. (129-30)

Even after the encounter with the misfit it is still possible to see evidence that shows how selfish the grandmother is, for she tries to save herself, but does nothing in favor of the children, her son and his wife. She keeps repeating "you wouldn't shoot a lady," referring to her as if murdering her was the worst thing he could do, the most sinful, more than murdering an entire family. Of course there is no life more valuable than another, but it seems that for her, hers is more valuable than her family's, for she never says something as "you wouldn't murder a baby" or "you wouldn't murder a mother:" "Jesus!" the old lady cried. "You've got good blood! I know you wouldn't

shoot a lady! I know you come from nice people! Pray! Jesus, you ought not to shoot a lady. I'll give you all the money I've got!" (131-2).

The grandmother feels for her son when he is already dead, but she did not try to save him as she was trying to do with herself. Now, this is the normal conduct of human beings for all of us are fallen creatures and we cannot be perfect, but the hypocrisy here is that religious people believe that they are selfless human beings and more often than not they believe all they do is right by following the Bible, but what O'Connor shows with this character is that this is not true. Even when you are religious and follow the Scriptures you are still a fallen creature and mistakes are going to be made especially in times of stress. The grandmother reveals herself to be arrogant in various moments of the story. What O'Connor teaches is that just being religious does not make someone a good person, but their actions and character do. A non religious person, someone who knows nothing about Jesus or prayer could have handled the situations better than she did and maybe worried about their family more than she did. Violence, then, comes to show the truth of the grandmother's character, because it puts her in a situation in which her true colors are shown.

The misfit uses Jesus as an excuse to be the way he is. Once more we see a criticism of religious people who seem to have good lives and good opportunities and who thank God, or Jesus, for their gains forgetting to take into consideration the privileges they must have had in life. It is easy to thank God when you have a lot, but it is not so easy when you ask for blessings and they never come, which was the case of the misfit. Of course morally there is no reason for the misfit to murder innocent people, but since he is not worthy of what Jesus could give him, he is not going to live the life Jesus preaches in the Bible. This is his personal way of seeing violence and the passage below shows how it is linked to the religious discourse, for he uses the fact that Jesus



had nothing for him as an excuse, or even a justification, to do what he does to people. The misfit finds a way to justify his murder, which of course does not exclude the fact that his actions are barbaric and coward for he is killing an entire family at cold blood, but it is significant to understand that for him that act is justifiable. His reasoning is that if he prayed and Jesus did not get him a better life because he is not worthy of it, he now has the option of being a bad person, for being a good one did not work. He is not worthy of Jesus' mercy, He forgot about him, and that is the danger that O'Connor shows in her short stories. It seems that these stories tell the opposite of what the misfit believes: you can be a religious hypocrite, and most will be since we all are fallen creatures whether we believe in God or not, but even then God will give his grace, for it is not a matter of wanting the grace, but needing it. However, for O'Connor, this grace does not come easy in a lesson in these two short stories; it comes with violence and death:

"Jesus was the only One that ever raised the dead," The Misfit continued, "and He shouldn't have done it. He thrown everything off balance. If He did what He said, then it's nothing for you to do but throw away everything and follow Him, and if He didn't, then it's nothing for you to do but enjoy the few minutes you got left the best way you can by killing somebody or burning down his house or doing some other meanness to him. No pleasure but meanness," he said and his voice had become almost a snarl. (132)

What the grandmother says as an answer to this line from the misfit is the crucial moment we see O'Connor showing the reader how this woman needs grace from God, for she calls herself a believer, but she denies the divinity of Jesus, she does not argue with the misfit, she only agrees in order to save her life: "Maybe He didn't raise the

dead," the old lady mumbled, not knowing what she was saying and feeling so dizzy that she sank down in the ditch with her legs twisted under her (132).

Her moment of grace, then, happens seconds before she is murdered: "grace can come suddenly, violently, leaving in its wreckage for us only grotesquerie unless we are willing to learn, to understand, to respect, even to love the mysterious ways of the Lord" (Kinney 87). The grandmother sees the misfit as her own, as one of her babies - which is symbolic also because he was wearing one of her son's shirts - she sees him as something that also came from her, this is her moment of grace, of recognizing she is not better than him or than anyone:

His voice seemed about to crack and the grandmother's head cleared for an instant. She saw the man's face twisted close to her own as if he were going to cry and she murmured, "Why you're one of my babies. You're one of my own children!" She reached out and touched him on the shoulder. The Misfit sprang back as if a snake had bitten him and shot her three times through the chest. Then he put his gun down on the ground and took off his glasses and began to clean them. (132)

God's grace is pure and comforting to the grandmother even if she received that grace just moments before being murdered. She dies with a smile on her face: "the grandmother who half sat and half lay in a puddle of blood with her legs crossed under her like a child's and her face smiling up at the cloudless sky" (O'Connor 10), even though the moments she spent before her death were filled with fear and stress, but the grace makes up for it.

The last line spoken by the misfit is significant because it gives us the idea that we only realize how bad we are when we do not have another choice than to be good and better: "She would of been a good woman," The Misfit said, "if it had been

somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life" (133). We do not get to see the consequences of the moment of grace either for the grandmother or for Mrs. Turpin, and the fact that the first one dies is meaningful exactly because what really matters is the acknowledgement of their flaws:

That we do not know the outcome is not the point for O'Connor. Indeed, it may even be irrelevant, because what we are to learn... what in fact the story means to make impossible to forget, is that God does allow even those whose selfishness is most rigid a moment in which they can convert their direction and their perspective, a moment in which they can be transformed, if they so choose. (Kinney 78-9)

The main problem shown by O'Connor with all these examples of hypocrisy is not that they are flawed characters, for they are fallen creatures just like anyone else; what is the main problem with them is how entitled they feel in comparison to others and how they are not able to confess and see they are wrong until they receive their moment of grace. There is no humbleness in them; they really believe that they are better than others. The grandmother makes a mistake and because she does not confess it, her entire family ends up dying in the hands of a murderer. Mrs. Turpin feels so uncomfortable with how Mary Grace looks at her, but at the same time she is racist and has an immense sense of entitlement. Analyzing all these aspects is relevant to understand violence in both stories and the meaning linked to religion behind the use of these violent acts, for the behavior of the main characters added to their religious beliefs show how far from Jesus and his teachings they really are. Arthur F. Kinney quotes O'Connor when it comes to this subject in the text "Flannery O'Connor and the Fiction of Grace:" "...O'Connor has proven her own best teacher of her work (in the 1963 letter

to Sister Mariella): ‘The writer has to make the corruption believable before he can make the grace meaningful’” (81).

The Grandmother and Ruby Turpin have in common the fact that both are seduced by the temptation of believing they are superior; in O'Connor's fiction these characters are foolish sinners who need to be converted to the real beliefs of religion. This sense of superiority and lack of humility to look at themselves and their own sins is what permeates the majority of O'Connor's stories; there is first sin and then the reader gets to witness their moment of grace. Not to mention their audacity to defy God when we see Mrs. Turpin questioning "Who do you think you are?" (507) to God and the grandmother denying His holiness in order to try to save her life. O'Connor justifies the violence that comes with the moment of grace in order to convey that the shock assures the seriousness of the matter and to also instruct the sinful readers of her stories:

In an essay on "Catholic Novelists and Their Readers" she added that "the Catholic writer often finds himself writing in and for a world that is unprepared and unwilling to see the meaning of life as he sees it. This means frequently that he may resort to violent literary means to get his vision across . . . the images and actions he creates may seem distorted and exaggerated."...To get away with condemning her readers - to get her readers, even more, to know enough to see themselves in her faltering characters and so condemn themselves: this is the persistent function of her fiction.

The function of O'Connor's fiction is to recognize sin for what it is, to get the reader to recognize and condemn sin. But the subject of her fiction, she persistently said, was the action of grace and the manifestation of that was conversion... But her recalcitrant readers, she

knew from aching experience, would need all she could supply to understand. "When you can assume that your audience holds the same beliefs 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 - to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost-blind you draw large and startling figures." (Kinney 76, 80)

For both Mrs. Turpin and the grandmother, then, violence, and consequently grace, comes from the ones lacking sanity — the misfit is a mad killer and Mary Grace clearly has some type of mental illness — these people are the ones who inflict suffering in the allegedly good, kind ones in order to show that they are not that good and kind. Salvation, the moment of grace, comes from the hands of the grotesque characters:

Flannery O'Connor claimed always to be writing fiction about the extraordinary moments of God's grace, when it touches even the most maimed, deformed, or unregenerate of people - especially those; proper Christian literature, she remarked, is always "an invitation to deeper and stranger visions... In O'Connor's fictional world God seems to us to spend his grace on the unlikeliest of people. Often they do not appear to deserve His blessing; almost as often they appear to learn nothing from it (or, if they do, we are not told about it). Nor is grace dramatized as a dazzling joy, a sweep of awareness. Rather, it can come in an act of random violence, a forceful accident, a blinding pain. It can be unexpected, intrusive, unwanted, ignored, baffling, misidentified,

forgotten. It can bring suffering, wretchedness, even annihilation.

(Kinney 71-2)

In sum, this analysis shows how violence can be related to the religious discourse and justified by it. To O'Connor, the flaws in the characters she constructs are enough to condone the violence they go through, for according to her point of view, as mentioned before, it is worthy to show the grace of God and the hypocrisies found in the kind of religious people represented by the grandmother and Mrs. Turpin. The justification is founded in personal beliefs, since for someone who does not know the Bible and does not believe in God these acts of violence could be considered meaningless. The point is that this violence only has a transforming, powerful meaning if one is in touch and acknowledges the 'ways of the Lord,' otherwise it is just one more random circumstance of life. Here, then, we see how the religious discourse could be used to justify acts of violence in a smaller scale, if we take into consideration the big examples of wars that are initiated by different religious beliefs. To O'Connor, the lesson she wants to convey to her characters could only be learned through the shock of a violent act; religion, then, gives meaning to the acts of violence in these short stories and the actions and thoughts of these two main characters — Mrs. Turpin and the grandmother — justify their need for grace.

## Chapter Two

### Violence in William Golding: innate or social?

“We did everything adults would do. What went wrong?”

William Golding

Distinctive topics can be related to the acts of violence the reader finds in *Lord of the Flies*. This dissertation discusses mainly how the religious discourse, the systematic dissemination of gender roles, the aggression in children, the violence in society and the nurture or nature debate, which I will discuss later in this chapter, are associated with violence in this novel.

To start going deeper in the analysis of *Lord of the Flies* and its association with violence, we observe that one of the ways to limit the violent urge we find in all of us is the way civil society, as we know, is organized. That is, we have laws that punish such acts. Regarding this subject, the dissertation explores Thomas Hobbes' work *Leviathan or The Matter, Form and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil* (1651), more specifically what is known as the “social contract theory,” in which the authority of the state overcomes the individual, making us, as social functioning human beings, give up many rights, such as the right to kill. This right and freedom to kill are present in what Hobbes calls the “State of Nature,” a hypothetical situation prior to the establishment of a society.

For a complete analysis, it is worth mentioning that other fellow philosophers contemporary to Hobbes wrote about the “social contract theory” and the state of nature, such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, but these two disagree with Hobbes's ideas of the state of nature. Having this information in mind, this work also focuses on Locke's and Rousseau's ideas concerning this topic, simply because their arguments relate more to one of the main discussions within *Lord of the Flies*. The essential idea of

the novel is that human beings are almost hostages of the state of nature as Hobbes sees it: according to Hobbes, if there were no society, chaos would rule and amoral men would selfishly act in favor of their best interests only, which is also similar to the idea we find in Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*, that will also be discussed in this chapter.

However, what Locke does in his *Second Treatise of Government* (1689) is to disagree with this definition of the state of nature and to provide a perspective in which even prior to being socially organized, human beings have a sense of moral in them, something we also find in Golding's novel and in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Second Discourse* (1755). This is the compelling aspect of this novel; mainly through the characters Ralph and Jack, readers are able to see fictional representations of these different ideas of the state of nature and from them draw a complex analysis of violence and human nature. It is important to notice here that the division between these philosophers is not made by their ideas about inequality or private property, but rather by their notion about what is the behavior of human beings in the state of nature, for this specific aspect found in the works cited here is what matters the most for the discussion related to violence and Golding's novel.

While for Locke and Rousseau there is a peaceful and moral relationship among humans in the state of nature, Hobbes and Freud, differently, believe that the state of nature is mostly chaotic with self-interested and individual goals, making men live in a constant state of war — although Rousseau and Hobbes share the same view on the state of nature being of the realm of the imaginative.

What Hobbes explains about the state of nature in his work, also known as just *Leviathan*, is that:



Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of Warre, where every man is Enemy to every man; the same is consequent to the time, wherein men live without other security, than what their own strength, and their own invention shall furnish them withall .... no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short. It may seem strange to some man, that has not well weighed these things; that Nature should thus dissociate, and render men apt to invade, and destroy one another ... The Desires, and other Passions of man, are in themselves no Sin. No more are the Actions, that proceed from those Passions, till they know a Law that forbids them: which till Lawes be made they cannot know: nor can any Law be made, till they have agreed upon the Person that shall make it. (96-7)

As we see in the quote above, Hobbes believes that the state of nature and the relation between it and the state and society is that us as humans who have this natural right of violence and destruction have to abdicate from it in order to live our lives in a peaceful manner. By allowing others to manage our lives with laws, we give up the right of violence and destruction against others, but in exchange we gain the protection needed in order to survive in a well functioning society. About that he writes:

And because the condition of Man, (as hath been Naturally declared in the precedent Chapter) is a condition of Warre of every one against every one; in which case every one is governed by his own Reason; and there is nothing he can make use of, that may not be a help unto him; in preserving his life against his enemyes ; It followeth, that in such a

condition, every man has a Right to every thing ; even to one anothers body. And therefore, as long as this naturall Right of every man to everything endureth, there can be no security to any man, (how strong or wise he be,) of living out the time, which Nature ordinarily alloweth men to live... From this Fundamentall Law of Nature, by which men are commanded to endeavour Peace, is derived this second Law; That a man be willing, when others are so too, as farre-forth, as for Peace, and defence of himself he shall think it necessary, to lay down this right to all things and be contented with so much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himself. For as long as every man holdeth this Right, of doing any thing he liketh; so long are all men in the condition of Warre. But if other men will not lay down their Right, as well as he; then there is no Reason for any one, to devest himselfe of his: For that were to expose himselfe to Prey, (which no man is bound to) rather than to dispose himself to Peace. (99-100)

What we see, then, in *Lord of the Flies* is a representation of Hobbes' idea of the state of nature in the characters of the hunters of the island. Jack and his group, followed mainly by Roger, are the representation of this chaotic state of nature being experienced without having society to tame it in a manner in which the rights of the others are also guaranteed. The condition of disagreement found between Ralph and Jack is essentially, through Hobbes' perspective, the disagreement between men who will not give up their right to commit violence against others in order to live a peaceful life, which is what Ralph aspires, and the ones who are willing to do so. This is where the discussion between Hobbes and Locke is raised, since Ralph is the moral one and not corrupted by this state of nature the same way we see Jack and his followers being corrupted.

Ralph, then, fits into Locke's definition of the state of nature in which this real state of the human existence is not completely free from moral, it is free from political and social organization, but not from common sense and righteous, noble and proper actions as see in the following quote from Locke's work *Second Treatise of Government*:

The state of nature is governed by a law that creates obligations for everyone. And reason, which is that law, teaches anyone who takes the trouble to consult it, that because we are all equal and independent, no-one ought to harm anyone else in his life, health, liberty, or possessions... And in the state of nature if anyone may punish someone for something bad that he has done, then everyone may do so. . . . That is how in a state of nature one man comes to have a ·legitimate· power over another. It isn't an unconditional power, allowing him to use a captured criminal according to the hot frenzy or unbridled extremes of his own will; but only a power to punish him so far as calm reason and conscience say is proportionate to his crime, namely as much punishment as may serve for reparation and restraint—for those two are the only reasons why one man may lawfully harm another, which is what we call 'punishment'. By breaking the law of nature, the offender declares himself to live by some rule other than that of reason and common fairness ... And so it is that in the state of nature everyone has a power to kill a murderer, both to deter others from this crime that no reparation can make up for, by the example of the punishment that everyone inflicts for it, and also to secure men from future crimes by this criminal; the murderer has renounced reason, the common rule and standard God has given to mankind, and by

the unjust violence and slaughter he has committed on one person he has declared war against all mankind, so that he can be destroyed . . . . This is the basis for the great law of nature, Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. Cain was so fully convinced that everyone had a right to destroy such a criminal that after murdering his brother he cried out 'Anyone who finds me will slay me'—so plainly was this law written in the hearts of all mankind... the state of nature is intolerable because of the evils that are bound to follow from men's being judges in their own cases, and government is to be the remedy for this. (4-6)

From this long passage we see that Locke's state of nature is guided by a natural type of reason, and this reason is not the exception it is, in fact, the rule. When someone commits an act that goes against this natural reason that all of us are born with he/she must be punished by others and only then an act of violence is justifiable, which goes against Hobbes's theory that in the state of nature humankind is bound to act only with individual reason, thus creating a permanent state of war. However, for Locke the state of war is the exception, not the rule. Analyzing Ralph and Jack from Locke's point of view give us the following conclusion: Ralph is guided by his natural reason of living peacefully with the other boys while Jack is the one who corrupts and goes against the natural rule of reason and conscience, thus Jack should be punished with murder, but this punishment should not be without reason; a reason that is within humankind already and this reason should always be followed in order for justice to take place. For Hobbes, then, Jack and Ralph are naturally evil, while for Locke Jack and Ralph are not good nor evil, for Ralph simply followed his natural reason to live in peace with other humans and Jack did not.

Celeste Friend from Hamilton College also explains this difference between Hobbes and Locke when it comes to the ideas about the state of nature in the webpage of her institution as follows:

For Hobbes, the necessity of an absolute authority, in the form of a Sovereign, followed from the utter brutality of the State of Nature. The State of Nature was completely intolerable, and so rational men would be willing to submit themselves even to absolute authority in order to escape it ... According to Locke, the State of Nature, the natural condition of mankind, is a state of perfect and complete liberty to conduct one's life as one best sees fit, free from the interference of others. This does not mean, however, that it is a state of license: one is not free to do anything at all one pleases, or even anything that one judges to be in one's interest. The State of Nature, although a state wherein there is no civil authority or government to punish people for transgressions against laws, is not a state without morality. The State of Nature is pre-political, but it is not pre-moral. Persons are assumed to be equal to one another in such a state, and therefore equally capable of discovering and being bound by the Law of Nature. The Law of Nature, which is on Locke's view the basis of all morality, and given to us by God, commands that we not harm others with regards to their "life, health, liberty, or possessions" (par. 6). Because we all belong equally to God, and because we cannot take away that which is rightfully His, we are prohibited from harming one another. So, the State of Nature is a state of liberty where persons are free to pursue their own interests and plans, free from interference, and, because of the Law of Nature and the

restrictions that it imposes upon persons, it is relatively peaceful...The State of Nature therefore, is not the same as the state of war, as it is according to Hobbes. It can, however devolve into a state of war, in particular, a state of war over property disputes. Whereas the State of Nature is the state of liberty where persons recognize the Law of Nature and therefore do not harm one another, the state of war begins between two or more men once one man declares war on another, by stealing from him, or by trying to make him his slave... Since the State of Nature lacks civil authority, once war begins it is likely to continue. And this is one of the strongest reasons that men have to abandon the State of Nature by contracting together to form civil government... It is therefore both the view of human nature, and the nature of morality itself, which account for the differences between Hobbes' and Locke's views of the social contract.

The passage above gives us one more explanation on how Locke's idea of the state of nature is not as threatening as Hobbes's idea. From Friend's comment we can also start discussing the role of society and the authority figure — or the lack of this figure— in the island of *Lord of the Flies*. Ultimately, authority, as we know it, does not exist in the island; Ralph is elected, but his election means nothing to Jack because they are all just, so the desire of the ones that voted for Ralph equals to nothing for they are not adults, therefore there is no real reason to obey children like him who have the same level of power that he has. Jack follows his individual desires mainly because there is no authority figure presence which imposes laws and punishment. On one hand we have Jack and his group that sees Ralph as just a symbol that can be taken by their violent manners. On the other hand we have Ralph and his group that accept and try to recreate

the social contract in which they renounce their right to be violent towards others, while Jack and his group does not. However, both of them are reproducing society's behavior because both behaviors are found in the social organization they used to live prior to the accident that led them to live in the island.

Hobbes and Locke have different ideas when it comes to the power of the state and a severing in society, but what matters in *Lord of the Flies* is that this sense of authority is nowhere to be found. Jack takes advantage of that, he does not respect Ralph as a leader, thus he has no commitment with social organization representing the return to Hobbes's concept of the state of nature. What we should also notice is that there is legitimacy in the rebellion once the person with power ceases to do the best for the people. Jack's rebellion, however, does not come from that, it comes from an individual sense of power for himself. He and his group perhaps believe that Ralph is not a good leader, but Ralph was the one elected and by his actions we see how he prevailed for the well being of everyone and not only a specific group. Jack, then, simply refuses to let go of his right of all things we find in Hobbes' statute of nature, thus creating chaos in the circumstance the boys are placed.

Jack and Ralph, then, are the main characters in the novel that help us finish this discussion about the state of nature and the social contract. Ralph is the representation of what Locke believes is the right man follower of the reason of the state of nature, he is not evil or good; he gives in to his violent instincts for a moment in the novel in the scene where Simon is killed, that is true, but ultimately he chooses to be moral. Jack, on the contrary, represents mainly what Hobbes believes is the state of nature; he is violent and cannot help himself when it comes to his desire to hurt others, and he also does not care for authority.

However, something to be thought about Jack is what another philosopher discusses; Jean-Jacques Rousseau writes about human beings being born good and being corrupted by society. This is the complication that this character raises; we cannot declare him as evil because we see him reproducing exactly what society around him is doing, since back home his country is at war. The state of nature is a state in which humans had no contact whatsoever with society yet, but Jack spend part of his childhood in an organized social environment. He could be the representation of evil itself, this is true, but in a more complex analysis he is also corrupted by the environment he was raised in: an England at war. About the contrast between Ralph and Jack, Bülent Diken and Carsten Bagge Laustsen write in their article “From War to War: *Lord of the Flies* as the Sociology of Spite:”

The life of a group of boys on a desert island depicted... with ruthless precision, does not illustrate a case of regress to presocial forms but rather an ever-present possibility of our system, a state of exception. Indeed, in stark contrast to the standard interpretations, the two clans that the boys establish on the island, led by Ralph and Jack respectively, explicate the two sides of the same social bond. The upside consists of the image of society as ruled-governed and institutionalized, the citizens being law-abiding; on the downside, we encounter fantasies of transgression, potlatch, and perversion: democratic utopianism versus fascist violence, society versus the mob. The two topologies coexist, and thus it would be a mistake to see one of them as being closer to nature, more true or more revealing than the other, which is also why there is always a fragile balance between the two topologies. It is this fragility, the split character of authority, that *Lord of the Flies* dramatizes. Ralph



continually appeals to reason and order, while Jack empowers his discursive position through references to an enemy, the "monster" on the hill. Ralph's mistake, and the shortcoming of democracy in general, is his denial of what Bataille called "heterogeneity": the importance of expenditure, play, war, and disorganization in social life. What Jack, on the other hand, can neither predict nor perceive is that his disorganizing lines of flight potentially can turn into an orgy of violence and, ultimately, a spiteful death. (431-2)

In the novel, Ralph makes sure to state that they need to follow the rules they once followed in their organized community before the accident in case they are rescued, but Jack does the opposite when he is sure that there is no hope for them to be ruled by adults again, as seen in the following passage from chapter three of the novel:

"The best thing we can do is get ourselves rescued." [said Ralph]

Jack had to think for a moment before he could remember what rescue was.

"Rescue? Yes, of course! All the same, I'd like to catch a pig first—"

He snatched up his spear and dashed it into the ground. The opaque, mad look came into his eyes again. Ralph looked at him critically through his tangle of fair hair. (44)

Jack is so used to being in the island and having his own way that the prospect of rescue does not make sense to him anymore. This could have two different explanations: the first one being that it is natural for him not to think about rescue anymore because he is where he was supposed to in order to let the violent human nature free and that is why it is so natural for him to be in the island. The second one is that being rescued and going back to the society he knows would take him to the same violence, for prior to the

accident he was living in a period of war and violence just the same, therefore 'rescue' does not really mean anything.

The situation is the following: both characters, Jack and Ralph, were raised by the same organized community during their few years of life, but their behavior is different because human beings' natures fluctuate considerably depending on too many variables to be listed here. This difference between their behaviors could not be deeply analyzed as we do not have enough information about the character's life prior to the island to infer anything about how they were individually raised. The reader only gets to know they are from the same country and school. On the one hand, then, Jack could be seen as the representation of the amoral nature of man, the natural condition that when free from society's chains man is bound to commit brutal violence. However, this behavior is also encouraged in the country in which he lives, which could have been changed inside him. Ralph, on the other hand, represents the moral nature and reason of men, when what he has learned through his short life about community and organization suppresses a natural desire to violence, but we are not sure of this fact. War could have had a different impact on Ralph that it had on Jack for many different reasons we are not able to analyze because we do not have access to this information, what we know is only the final product. The question is, then, are they exclusively guided by what they see and live in the society and environment they share prior to the accident or there is an individual nature inside every single person that guides their actions? When these characters' state of nature varies so much, when we have these debates about good and evil being raised for so long it is almost impossible to separate society and nature. If one asks oneself if they don't commit acts of violence against others because of the consequences of law — that also varies from communities to communities — or

because of their conscience, the answers can vary greatly from person to person and even according to one's convictions in different situations.

Considering the possibility in which many believe that the Bible is the word of God, even God, then, seems to believe in the evil nature of the human heart as we see in the passage below:

5 The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the Earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. 6 The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. 7 So the Lord said, "I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them." (New International Version, Genesis, 6: 5-7)

However, what is also provocative to notice is that the Bible was written by men, and from this point of view not even men believe in their good nature, for they had to create a God — taking into consideration that God is a creation of men— that punishes all of us for our wrongdoings. Ultimately we all have to learn how to be good, otherwise we are all doomed to violent deaths as we see so frequently in the Old Testament, which is contrary to the idea we find in Locke's state of nature since he claims, as seen in the passage taken from his work, that all mankind are born with this rightful law of not killing or harming one another in any way. This reason is given to us from God, and once you do harm a fellow man you are going against those natural instinct that God put in all of our hearts. However, we see that God himself at some point in the Bible admits that human beings are evil by nature in the Old and New Testament. Jesus dies in the cross exactly to save us from our sins that come from evil. It is not really possible to get

to a conclusion about this topic, for the variables are so many and both sides are extremely possible to happen.

We cannot know exactly if Jack was born an evil man and society of his time only made him worse or if he was essentially born with this rightful law in him and society corrupted him. The same way we cannot say with certainty that Ralph is a perfect example of this rightful law to be followed in Locke's state of nature, for he also loses it for a while in the scene in which Simon is killed by the boys, as mentioned before. However, it is appealing to notice how Ralph reacts to the death of his schoolmate by his peers, as can be seen below:

"You're still chief."

Ralph laughed again.

"You are. Over us."

"I got the conch."

"Ralph! Stop laughing like that. Look, there ain't no need, Ralph! What's the others going to think?"

At last Ralph stopped. He was shivering.

"Piggy."

"Uh?"

"That was Simon."

"You said that before."

"Piggy."

"Uh?"

"That was murder."

"You stop it!" said Piggy, shrilly. "What good're you doing talking like that?"

He jumped to his feet and stood over Ralph.

"It was dark. There was that--that bloody dance. There was lightning and thunder and rain. We was scared!"

"I wasn't scared," said Ralph slowly, "I was--I don't know what I was."

"We was scared!" said Piggy excitedly. "Anything might have happened. It wasn't--what you said."

He was gesticulating, searching for a formula.

"Oh, Piggy!"

Ralph's voice, low and stricken, stopped Piggy's gestures. He bent down and waited.

Ralph, cradling the conch, rocked himself to and fro.

"Don't you understand, Piggy? The things we did--"

"He may still be--"

"No."

"P'raps he was only pretending--"

Piggy's voice trailed off at the sight of Ralph's face.

"You were outside. Outside the circle. You never really came in. Didn't you see what we--what they did?"

There was loathing, and at the same time a kind of feverish excitement, in his voice.

"Didn't you see, Piggy?"

"Not all that well. I only got one eye now. You ought to know that, Ralph."

Ralph continued to rock to and fro.

"It was an accident," said Piggy suddenly, "that's what it was. An accident." His voice shrilled again. "Coming in the dark--he hadn't no business crawling like that out of the dark. He was batty. He asked for it." He gesticulated widely again. "It was an accident."

"You didn't see what they did--"

"Look, Ralph. We got to forget this. We can't do no good thinking about it, see?"

"I'm frightened. Of us. I want to go home. Oh God, I want to go home."

"It was an accident," said Piggy stubbornly, "and that's that."

He touched Ralph's bare shoulder and Ralph shuddered at the human contact.

"And look, Ralph"--Piggy glanced round quickly, then leaned close--

"don't let on we was in that dance. Not to Samneric."

"But we were! All of us! (139-40)

This long dialogue between Piggy and Ralph is important because it is clear in the discussion how the two boys perceive what happened to Simon in two different manners. Piggy, on the one hand, tries to argue in favor of it being an accident by blaming the victim, probably because he is in denial of what he participated in. The boy tries to rationalize with his fellow schoolmate, Ralph, but it is clear that what they did was wrong according to the rules of the civilization and community they came from and were once a part of, for Piggy also says to hide what had happened from Samneric, the only boys left on their group that did not leave to be part of the hunters. The fact that they were part of that dance, that ritual that took Simon's life, is something that needed to be hidden because it was ultimately wrong, but still he wanted to deny that. Ralph, on the other hand, is scared after what they did to Simon, and his conscience tells him

that it was definitely murder, for he says this specific word as if in a way to make sense out of it. When we read in the passage above his reaction to Piggy's touch we understand how frightened he is of human behavior and to realize that he, too, took part in that act. Ralph deviates from the natural moral that Locke argues about in his idea of the state of nature, but after it happens and he realizes what he and the other boys have done he is in shock, he is not proud or content nor does he try to deny it. He deviates from that moral, but he knows it is wrong, and we cannot say that the feeling of wrongdoing comes from what he learned in the society he once was part of or if it is in his nature. However, what we can see is Piggy's contrasting reaction to the event. The two boys were raised in the same country and went to the same school, yet they have very contrasting reactions. Piggy wants to hide what they did because he knows it was not just an accident and that kind of behavior would be punished in their community. Yet we do not see in him the natural regret and concern we see in Ralph. Piggy tries to rationally justify their action by blaming Simon for his own murder and that is found by a moral sense to be extremely insensitive.

## **2.1 Violence as an innate urge and the matter of war.**

About the relation between violence and society it is also noticeable the manner in which Golding, in *Lord of the Flies*, shows how this extreme violent state of the human being surfaces when given an opportunity after being suppressed by society, which is what happens with some of the boys in the island. At first, the boys try to organize and delegate tasks. The conch becomes a symbol of order, giving the right of speech to the boys when they run meetings. But, after a while, without the supervision of adults or a society capable of punishing their violent acts, the situation gets out of

control. Jack is the one who suggests hunting first, and from there the reader is presented with scenes filled with blood and terror. Then, the mood of the novel becomes even darker when Simon is killed, as we can see below:

Now out of the terror rose another desire, thick, urgent, blind. 'Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!' [...] Simon was crying out something about a dead man on a hill [...] Along the shoreward edge of the shallows the advancing clearness was full of strange, moonbeam-bodied creatures with fiery eyes. Here and there a larger pebble clung to its own air and was covered with a coat of pearls. The tide swelled in over the rain-pitted sand and smoothed everything with a layer of silver. Now it touched the first of the stains that seeped from the broken body and the creatures made a moving patch of light as they gathered at the edge. The water rose farther and dressed Simon's coarse hair with brightness. The line of his cheek silvered and the turn of his shoulder became sculptured marble. The strange attendant creatures, with their fiery eyes and trailing vapors, busied themselves round his head. The body lifted a fraction of an inch from the sand and a bubble of air escaped from the mouth with a wet plop. Then it turned gently in the water. Somewhere over the darkened curve of the world the sun and moon were pulling, and the film of water on the earth planet was held, bulging slightly on one side while the solid core turned. The great wave of the tide moved farther along the island and the water lifted. Softly, surrounded by a fringe of inquisitive bright creatures, itself a silver shape beneath the steadfast constellations, Simon's dead body moved out toward the open sea. (136-37)



The theme of violence in the social environment can also be related to Freud's work *Civilization and Its Discontents*, as said before. Freud, as well as Hobbes, believes that the nature of the human being is evil, as the quote below suggests:

The element of truth behind all this, which people are so ready to disavow, is that [humans] are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves if attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness. [...] It is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, so long as there are other people left over to receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness. (58)

Arguing in favor of an inherent aggressiveness in human beings, Freud relates this condition to civilization and discusses their connection, as we see in the passage below:

The existence of this inclination to aggression, which we can detect in ourselves and justly assume to be present in others, is the factor which disturbs our relations with our neighbor and which forces civilization into such a high expenditure [of energy]. In consequence of this primary mutual hostility of human beings, civilized society is perpetually threatened with disintegration. The interest of work in common would not hold it together; instinctual passions are stronger than reasonable interests. Civilization has to use its utmost efforts in order to set limits to man's aggressive instincts and to hold the manifestations of them in check by psychical reaction-formations. Hence, therefore, the use of methods intended to incite people into identifications and aim-inhibited relations of love, hence the restriction upon sexual life, and hence too the

ideal's commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself -- a commandment which is really justified by the fact that nothing else runs so strongly counter to the original nature of man. In spite of every effort, these endeavors of civilization have not so far achieved very much. It hopes to prevent the crudest excesses of brutal violence by itself assuming the right to use violence against criminals, but the law is not able to lay hold of the more cautious and refined manifestations of human aggressiveness. The time comes when each one of us has to give up illusions the expectations which, in his youth, he pinned upon his fellow-men, and when he may learn how much difficulty and pain has been added to his life by their ill-will. At the same time, it would be unfair to reproach civilization with trying to eliminate strife and competition from human activity. These things are undoubtedly indispensable. But opposition is not necessarily enmity; it is merely misused and made occasion for enmity. (59)

In *Lord of the Flies*, because none of the kids is older than twelve it is obvious how they still need the society of adults to shape their ways and thoughts in order to create a well-organized, functioning social body of their own. Golding creates a very appropriate allegory to illustrate the main idea that, when left alone without any guidance, human beings are going to fail and let their violent instincts get the best of them, bringing chaos and destruction. One must not forget that a 'perfect' society does not exist and, in a way, the children are also mirroring what they know about Europe, since the plot of the novel makes it clear that they are living in a time when there is a war happening.

However, we need to remember that not all societies are constructed with this mindset of avoiding violence. In different historical times we have registers of societies

that actually pride themselves on committing violent acts against enemies and in which violence is so present that it becomes a norm. In these cases society does not assume the task of controlling and punishing violence so much, which contrasts with Freud's idea of society being the main reason we have to restrain violence. To give an example of this counter argument we have, in literature, the epic poem *Beowulf*, in which *[it]* is clear how these warriors are raised to kill and go to war and this is something natural for the time and social organization into which they were born. It does not mean that violence is free of rules and practiced as one wishes, however it is indeed encouraged more, making the relationship with violence more open and with a different meaning in relation to the relationship of our culture nowadays.

The way in which *Beowulf* prides himself on his violent actions throughout the poem is a clear example of how gory conflicts make these Viking men satisfied instead of making them guilty exactly because their society raises them to be like this. One of the main arguments to say that *Beowulf* is not a hero in this epic poem is that violence is a big part of his culture, and, naturally, he reproduces it since he is a great warrior who kills and tears apart the bodies of many of his enemies in battle. This could be interpreted as extreme cruelty and evil, since killing someone, in our culture nowadays, is seen as an extreme expression of someone vicious and with a deviated character.

This is the main argument that challenges *Beowulf's* status of hero. Human beings are, indeed, full of violence and are fallen creatures, as the Bible points out. However, in order to understand why *Beowulf* is still worthy of being called a hero, even though he sheds so much blood and his actions can be considered monstrous, we need to understand how violence works in the poem and why it is there. About this, Lauren Karp writes in her essay "Complex and Contradictory Themes of Violence in *Beowulf*:"

In the epic poem *Beowulf*, the relation of aggression and heroism is complicated and challenging, especially when a contemporary reader is introduced to views expressed from the perspective of the Anglo-Saxon culture base. The challenge, therefore, is to interpret and understand the complex view of violence that the anonymous Anglo-Saxon narrator presents. The narrator paints a contrasting picture of glorious violence, which brings honor to a warrior, and tragic violence, which permeates the relationships between the Anglo-Saxon tribes.

If this violence is inherent to human hearts, as Freud argues, the difference between violence in our society nowadays that comes free of moral values, and the violence from the time of *Beowulf* that came filled with honor is very noticeable, but it is still violence nonetheless, and the meaning that violence takes depends on a construction around the term, a construction that is built in the society of its time. If we look at *Beowulf* with the eyes of our society, we judge him as a monster, as someone that kills and prides himself for being the most successful warrior, which essentially means killing the most.

Nowadays society is fearful of violence, so, it makes sense to project the fear of it to the shocking and gory violence we see *Beowulf* practicing. We must keep in mind that time in history makes a big difference on how we perceive violence, and, for this reason, we need to be careful to not condemn *Beowulf* as a heartless individual, for in his society he is a brave warrior, and he still is the hero of his time.

In *Beowulf*, then, we have the opposite idea that Freud discusses here in terms of how people deal with violence in society, since violence is not only part of the nature of the human beings in *Beowulf*, but it is part of their traditions. Society in medieval Scandinavian times did not reprehend violence as much as contemporary Western civilization does. In *Beowulf's* society, violence is so present in their lives that it is part

of what makes them appreciate every moment and enjoy life and its pleasures to the fullest, which is considered by many a great way to see life. About that, Lauren Karp also writes in “Complex and Contradictory Themes of Violence in Beowulf:”

The most noticeable examples of violence in the Beowulf epic are the descriptions of Beowulf's battles. These descriptions are lengthy, detailed, and typically filled with gore. While this may be shocking for a modern audience, the framing of these violent descriptions make it clear that these events are something to praise and admire. When Beowulf first boasts to Hrothgar of his honor, he stresses that, "all knew of my awesome strength. They have seen me boltered in the blood of enemies" (Beowulf 418).

The character Jack in *Lord of the Flies* is the embodiment of the evil of his time, he is the moral monster who uses violence freely to achieve power in a "society" that is being built as the reflection of the corrupted society as we know it, that produces war mostly for money. He is part of a social body that is united in not praising violence, that is averse to it, but contradictorily continues to practice it, but not necessarily for those values we see in *Beowulf*, for example. But then again, this concept of violence being worthy and justifiable, as we saw, could be very relative and complex depending on different beliefs. This is why it is important to also consider the event of war, since it is one of the ultimate examples of violence for European culture and it is mentioned in *Lord of the Flies*, for it is part of the historical context in which this novel was published in.

A brief analysis of the literature of war is good to illustrate the discussion about how soldiers face trauma after war, after killing human beings; this is one of the main reasons that makes us believe that human beings actually are not born with the inherent

desire to kill, especially to kill another man, since we tend to need to maintain our species. If we actually have this violent instinct that Freud talks about, the reason for this trauma is exactly how society raises us, together with religion and other beliefs, that make it so unnatural from his point of view. However, in war, one is allowed to kill and still we have instances in which soldiers prefer not to do so. In various situations of war soldiers actually avoid killing, and this is also represented in literature as we see in this passage from Carroll's chapter called "The Extremes of Conflict in Literature: Violence, Homicide, and War:"

Psychopathic cruelty is relatively rare (Baumeister, 1996; Grossman, 2009). Even in genocidal warfare, people seldom regard their own behavior as intentional harm inflicted for pleasure. Instead they rationalize violence as self-defense or as a means toward a greater good. They also minimize or turn a blind eye toward the suffering of victims and instead magnify threats to themselves (Baumeister, 1996; Smith, 2007). Studies of soldiers in warfare support the contention that most people in post agricultural societies are on the whole reluctant to harm others. Even after heavy conditioning, and even when they are themselves in danger, many soldiers never fire their weapons, or they fire to miss (Grossman, 2009; Marshall, 1947). (Wade [2006] and Cochran and Harpending [2009] argue that sedentism, a prerequisite to agricultural and industrial economies, has selected for personalities less prone to violence.) Psychopaths, people who actively enjoy killing and feel no remorse, evidently constitute only about 2% of modern male populations (Swank & Marchand, 1946; cited in Grossman, 2009, p. 44). A similar percentage would probably prevail among male literary

authors, and a still smaller percentage among female authors. Only a very few literary authors clearly invite readers to participate vicariously in sadistic pleasure. (414-5)

We also see this avoidance of killing enemies and the trauma that murdering causes represented in several novels, such as *Company K* by William March, just to mention one. This specific novel is a compilation of many stories from the voices of different soldiers that fought the World War I with one main event linking some of these different narrated fragments of war, that being the murder of German prisoners, which is considered a war crime, but that happens more often than not. William March writes different points of view of this same episode, but Private Walter Drury's is the one that calls the attention the most to his decision to not follow the orders of his superior, as seen in the passages below from *Company K*:

Corporal Foster told us to load our rifles and go to the gravel pit. There were some prisoners there, and Captain Matlock had ordered us to take them into the ravine, and shoot them ... "I won't do it!" I said. -"I might kill a man defending my own life, but to shoot a human being in cold blood... I won't do that! - I won't do it!" I said.

"You'll do what the Captain says or you'll get a court-martial. Then they'll stand you up and shoot you too. - Maybe you'd like that!"

"I won't do it!" I said.

"All right," said Corporal Foster. "Use your own judgment, but don't say I didn't warn you."

Then we took our rifles and walked to the gravel pit. There were about two dozen prisoners, mostly young boys with fine, yellow fuzz on their faces. They huddled together in the center of the pit, their eyes rolling

nervously, and spoke to one another in soft, frightened voices, their necks bending forward, as if too frail to support the heavy helmets they wore. They looked sick and hungry. Their uniforms were threadbare and torn, and caked with mud, and their bare toes protruded through crevices in their boots. Some were already wounded and weak from loss of blood, and could hardly stand alone, swaying back and forth unsteadily.

Then suddenly my own knee got weak. "No," I said; "no - I won't do it..." Corporal Foster was getting the prisoners lined up in single file, swearing angrily and waving his hands about... "Why don't I refuse to do this?" I thought. "Why don't all of us refuse? If enough of us refuse, what can they do about it?..." Then I saw the truth clearly: "We're prisoners too: We're all prisoners ... No!" I said. "I won't do it!" (61,2)

This passage is an illustration of this conflict between the concepts of what is wrong and what is right and how society and its rules and laws confuse these notions in the minds of individuals in different situations. The character Private Walter Drury obviously believes that it is inhumane to kill unarmed prisoners, even though they are in the middle of a war. Those prisoners perhaps also murdered a lot of his fellow allied soldiers, but what predominates in his conscience is the idea that murdering them at cold blood is wrong, even if not killing them means to spend a period of his life in prison. We have a bizarre situation in which an individual is taken from the laws of a society that punishes violence, but in the situation of war there is punishment for not committing the ultimate act of violence that ends in death. This representation from *Company K* shows us that not all human beings in a situation in which killing is actually mandatory to survive will do it; some actually avoid it at all costs. When society demands violence to be practiced and when it is allowed to be committed there is still a





"I shot him dead because —  
 Because he was my foe,  
 Just so: my foe of course he was;  
 That's clear enough; although  
  
 "He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,  
 Off-hand like — just as I —  
 Was out of work — had sold his traps —  
 No other reason why.

"Yes; quaint and curious war is!  
 You shoot a fellow down  
 You'd treat if met where any bar is,  
 Or help to half-a-crown.

The poem explores the idea that war is the only reason for these two men to be enemies of each other, and this war is inflicted in them by others, not by themselves. The speaker shot his “foe” because they were in a bizarre circumstance and this is the only reason, but otherwise they are the same. The speaker sees in the man he killed the same factor for enlisting to go to war, which for him is having no other choice for being unemployed, thus the reason having nothing to do with the necessity or desire to kill freely. The fact that the speaker was the one who survived is recognized as pure luck, since they shot at each other at the same time and he is the one who ends up surviving. This fact also gives us the sense of equality between them; he is alive not because he is a better shooter or smarter or a better fighter, but only because of something neither of them can really control.

With these two examples we see that the majority of privates in these representations of war prefer not to take the lives of their enemies. Violence in war for our contemporary society is complex to analyze, for our culture puts soldiers through the traumatic task of killing others when their whole lives they learned “thou shalt not kill” from religion and that murder is a crime by the law. Even though fighting a war in our society nowadays could also be related to honor and bravery, we still have the opposite idea being taught by the same culture from an early age, thus from this confusion comes the idea that no soldier comes back from war the same, which allows us to question if Freud is really right to affirm that violence is in fact inherent and that society fails to repress it. Even when these soldiers have the opportunity to let this violent instinct surface they prefer not to do so. If the original nature of man is to hate their neighbors it should, in theory, be easy to let go of the teachings of civilization and make murder a pleasure in war, which is true for some, but not for everyone. Violence, then, is not a fixed concept; it rather varies from individual to individual, imposing the question of nurture or nature. In the case of *Lord of the Flies*, Jack could be the proof that violence is indeed inherent and uncontrollable, when Ralph could be the proof that reason can still be stronger, even if he loses it for a while, he chooses to go back to it, which is symbolic in the novel. Even though the majority of the events in the novel are consistent evidences to be used as examples of the representation of this idea found in Freud's theory, Golding seems to contradict it with Ralph's actions and conscience.

## **2.2 Violence related to power, religion and gender roles in *Lord of the Flies***

Moreover, along with the attempt to build a society for these stranded boys, in the very onset of *Lord of the Flies*, the issue of power is introduced. Jack wants to be

the leader, but once Ralph is elected for that position he becomes jealous and goes to lead his own group. The relation of power and violence is discussed in David Spitz's article about *Lord of the Flies* entitled "Power and Authority – an Interpretation of *Lord of the Flies*":

One of the many questions that has plagued political thinkers throughout the ages is the question of the legitimacy of power. In every society known to man, some men exercise power over others. Some issue commands that others are expected to obey. But when we look at those who command, it is not immediately evident that they and not some others should occupy the seats of power. They are not all wiser or better, more intelligent or more informed, richer or stronger, than the rest of us. Why then should they stand at the top, rather than kneel at the base, of the ever-existing pyramids of power? What makes this right? What makes their retention and exercise of power legitimate? (24)

These questions seem to be the foundation of Jack's rebellion against Ralph's command. He is reluctant to obey as he desires to be chief himself. The boy clearly is against the obligation of having to be subordinated to the decision of the majority and having to follow Ralph's rules. In order to achieve his goal of ruling his own group, Jack uses of violence to prove his competence, about that Spitz also writes:

Jack then, is authoritarian man...a Satanic figure...Defeated in an election, he took command of the hunters, the forces of naked power... He was contemptuous of the masses, dismissing the little ones as "useless" ... Madness came often into his eyes, and when as hunter and warrior he again cloaked himself, this time behind a mask of paint, he lost all inhibitions; "he was safe from shame or self-consciousness" he gave full

vent to his passions... To Ralph's plea that he had been chosen chief, Jack replied: "Why should choosing make any difference? Just giving orders that don't make any sense- . . . Bollocks to the rules! We're strong-we hunt! If there's a beast, we'll hunt it down! We'll close in and beat and beat and beat-!" (27)

For Jack, then, violence is synonym of power, he is the one who can provide security to the children, he assures that he can kill the beast and keep everyone safe. This is the representation of violence used as protection in society; being able to prevent the beast from hurting his peers is essential in the boy's decision to follow him and leave Ralph's command behind. Violence as a manner of providing safety proofs to be a powerful tool in their attempt of social organization. Jack's power comes from violence and the ability to hunt and provide meat and protection to the other boys. Rules do not matter when he is strong enough to hunt for himself, because of that he believes that he does not need anyone governing him, for he already can govern himself and the others.

Violence is also linked to religion in *Lord of the Flies*. Some critics such as E. C. Bufkin believe that Simon is a saint figure in the novel, and one of the reasons for this belief is the manner in which he dies. During a type of ritual — in what is considered an accident by Piggy, but is considered murder by Ralph — the hunters kill Simon as he goes to reveal to them that what they believed was a beast was, in reality, a dead parachutist. He is a saint, then, because he is the one who brings the truth about the beast in the island and is not able to share this truth for he is killed before he can do so. The Bible tells that Christ was also murdered by people who were not prepared to listen to the true word of God brought by his son on Earth. Thus, if we connect the death of Simon with the death of this Christian entity we have violence again being associated with what some consider the most important episode of the Bible, also the most gory

and violent one. However, we should notice that Simon dies holding the truth while Jesus spread the truth of the love of God. The meaning behind their deaths is very different, but, nonetheless, their symbolism is equally important. About Simon being a saint figure in the novel, E. C. Bufkin argues in his article called “*Lord of the Flies: An Analysis:*” “Simon, like his namesake Simon called Peter, seeks to bring truth (the "good news"- the gospel) about a "dead man on a hill" and, also like him, is martyred for the undertaking” (56).

Another evidence that shows Simon’s saint symbolism in the novel is the encounter he has with the Lord of the Flies:

Simon’s body was arched and stiff. The Lord of the Flies spoke in the voice of a schoolmaster.

“This has gone quite far enough. My poor, misguided child, do you think you know better than I do?”

There was a pause.

“I’m warning you. I’m going to get angry. D’you see? You’re not wanted. Understand? We are going to have fun on this island.

Understand? We are going to have fun on this island! So don’t try it on, my poor misguided boy, or else—”

Simon found he was looking into a vast mouth. There was blackness within, a blackness that spread.

“—Or else,” said the Lord of the Flies, “we shall do you? See? Jack and Roger and Maurice and Robert and Bill and Piggy and Ralph. Do you.

See? (128)

In this passage it is clear that Simon is different from the other boys. The vision he has of the talking sow’s head is another sign of his sensitive nature. He is the only one the

head 'talks' to, giving the message that he is not welcome in that island where such violent acts took place. He is holy compared to the other boys and he does not belong there. The fun that the boys were having killing would be spoiled by him; Simon was the one who could bring sense and truth to the island, but he is murdered before he could do so. It is important to notice how Ralph's name is included, showing his violent or even evil ways, but that will contradict itself further in the story when the boy elected chief refuses to join Jack's group and admits that what happened to Simon was indeed murdered, as discussed before, setting him apart from the other boys at some level. Ralph is not holy as Simon, but he is moral.

As also seen in the passage above, the Lord of the Flies in the novel, the head of the sow the boys offer to the beast, is also a representation of religious belief and discourse in the novel. Whereas we have Simon as a saint, the Lord of the Flies is the opposite, it is the representation of evil. About this contrast E. C. Bufkin also writes in his article:

His [Simon's] head, having been tilted slightly up, now begins to wobble, and it seems to him that the Lord of the Flies "was expanding like a balloon." Through this experience Simon, the mystic and saint, arrives at the truth about the beast; and that his reason is intuitive, not really rational, is signaled by the fainting fit that affects his head. Moreover, Simon, as saint, is an obvious contrast to the Lord of the Flies as Prince of Devils. Just as the shiny filth-loving flies circle the dead pig's head, so the "strange, moonbeamed-bodied creatures with fiery eyes" in the sea- their effectiveness heightened by the lack of more specific identification- busy themselves halo-like around Simon's head...the pig's head... appeals, through fear, to the emotions or passions.

It speaks "in the voice of a schoolmaster" and teaches a diabolically perverted lesson. (49)

The symbolic evil is also surrounded by violent imagery in the novel. The murder of the saint figure also corroborates to the malicious meaning of the pig's head, for it works as a type of warning to Simon's death. Another extremely violent act to point out is that the hunters did not only kill the pig to eat it, but they beheaded the animal and stuck its head in what could only be a gory scene:

"But we'll leave part of the kill for . . ."

He knelt down again and was busy with his knife. The boys crowded round him. He spoke over his shoulder to Roger.

"Sharpen a stick at both ends."

Presently he stood up, holding the dripping sow's head in his hands.

"Where's that stick?"

"Here."

"Ram one end in the earth. Oh—it's rock. Jam it in that crack. There."

Jack held up the head and jammed the soft throat down on the pointed end of the stick which pierced through into the mouth. He stood back and the head hung there, a little blood dribbling down the stick. (121)

Showing no respect to the creature they killed, the suffering of the animal is a big joke to them: "this time Robert and Maurice acted the two parts; and Maurice's acting of the pig's efforts to avoid the advancing spear was so funny that the boys cried with laughter" (121). Thus, it is clear how the symbolism of the religious discourse found in *Lord of the Flies*, relative to the saint figure or the evil figure, are directly connected to violence.



Furthermore, *Lord of the Flies* raises the discussion about violence and its relation to gender roles, for it is mainly a male story. The fact that there is a lot of brutality in the plot can easily be related to the fact that all the characters lost in the island are boys. If we think about the question ‘what if they were girls?’, we tend to believe that the story would be different. This phenomenon happens because, socially, girls are told to control themselves more and to hide their anger, differently from boys. About this subject Neal Shover, Stephen Norland, Jennifer James and William E. Thornton write in their article called “Gender Roles and Delinquency:”

A somewhat different body of theoretical literature suggests that traditional gender roles are related to criminality indirectly, through the effects of other variables. It argues that, historically, the masculine gender role has afforded males greater opportunity to engage in crime and, simultaneously, has imposed fewer social controls on them. Three such intervening variables have been discussed in the literature: opportunity to engage in delinquency, attachment to conventional others, and belief in the legitimacy of rules and laws... Differential gender-role socialization produces an absolutist stance toward rules and a receptiveness toward generalized moral standards among girls while boys tend to develop a more individualistic and relativistic view of rules. Early socialization steers girls into accepting rules as given but encourages boys to develop "internal standards and personal control" (Lynn, 40; also Chafetz). For girls social control in the form of informal sanctions applied by primary and secondary groups is imposed more consistently and for more minor deviations from accepted standards. This results in a situation where females have been taught to conform to more rigid

standards and rewarded for such behavior, whereas males are told to conform, yet rewarded for flaunting many conventional standards (Hoffman Bustamante,120). Likewise, Turk suggests that the sex differential in delinquency may be explained by "the greater likelihood of female than male agreement with legal norms" (165). Consequently, we hypothesize a positive relationship between traditional feminine role expectations and belief in the validity of rules and law and a negative relationship between traditional masculine role expectations and the latter variable. (163-5)

Many parents, when raising their children, believe that the violence and anger in boys is something natural, and that they don't necessarily need to control it as much as they would in the case of daughters. This happens because violence is part of the traditional role of masculinity in our society, while femininity is the complete opposite. Girls are supposed to always behave and be submissive to authority, and always be calm and collected. Even though being violent is not socially acceptable for girls, it does not exclude the fact that women also can be cruel, fierce and passionate when facing a situation of fear or anger. However, the fact that boys are allowed to feel those feelings more often, freely and more naturally is unquestionable.

Additionally, about violence and gender, it is also curious to notice and analyze how Simon is an exception: he is the only boy who rejects violence, and is out of that mold of male role of being angry and brutal. He is one of the few boys who actually take care of the "littluns" as we see in the passage from *Lord of the Flies* below:

Simon was burned by the sun to a deep tan that glistened with sweat. He picked his way up the scar, passed the great rock where Ralph had climbed on the first morning, then turned off to his right among the trees.

He walked with an accustomed tread through the acres of fruit trees, where the least energetic could find an easy if unsatisfying meal. Flower and fruit grew together on the same tree and everywhere was the scent of ripeness and the booming of a million bees at pasture. Here the littluns who had run after him caught up with him. They talked, cried out unintelligibly, lugged him toward the trees. Then, amid the roar of bees in the afternoon sunlight, Simon found for them the fruit they could not reach, pulled off the choicest from up in the foliage, passed them back down to the endless, outstretched hands. When he had satisfied them he paused and looked round. The littluns watched him inscrutably over double handfuls of ripe fruit. (46)

Simon is kind to the little ones; he helps them, which makes him different from the rest of the majority of older boys who are harsh and unkind towards them, making the younger children almost inhumane. Simon picks the fruit and not only helps them with that, but he is also extremely generous in his action for he only stops when the little children are satisfied. He makes sure to give them what they want and need before going on with his own task.

We have the following passage from chapter seven that show how inconsiderate the older children were in relation to the little ones, especially Jack, in comparison to Simon's behavior towards them:

"We ought to have a drum," said Maurice, "then we could do it properly."

Ralph looked at him.

"How properly?"

"I dunno. You want a fire, I think, and a drum, and you keep time to the drum.

"You want a pig," said Roger, "like a real hunt."

"Or someone to pretend," said Jack. "You could get someone to dress up as a pig and then he could act--you know, pretend to knock me over and all that."

"You want a real pig," said Robert, still caressing his rump, "because you've got to kill him."

"Use a littlun," said Jack, and everybody laughed. (102)

The contrast between how Simon treats the little children and how Jack talks about them is clearly shown in this passage. Jack suggests to dress one of the little children as a pig and hunt them as animals. Since it is implied that killing is involved in the equation they are talking about, we see Jack's perverse intentions surface, because, for him, joking about killing a fellow human being is not a problem or something to be avoided, but it is essentially a joke reproduced and endorsed by the ones who laugh with him at the macabre suggestion. Jack seems to dismiss the fact that those children are equals; to him and the majority of the others they are just in the way and a laugh matter, which is even more disturbing because of the fact that those younger children are helpless and more fragile in terms of strength and reason. They cannot even communicate properly, which shows how they need more attention from the older ones.

In addition, there is another passage found in chapter six that serves to show how the little children are treated that includes the character Piggy. This passage allows us to make an analyzes about this specific character as well. The following passage also serves to consider another aspect related to boyhood and gender roles as seen as follows:

"Let's be moving," said Jack relentlessly, "we're wasting time."

"No we're not. What about the littluns?"

"Sucks to the littluns!"

"Someone's got to look after them."

"Nobody has so far."

"There was no need! Now there is. Piggy'll look after them."

"That's right. Keep Piggy out of danger." (89)

The aspect to be noticed here, other than how Jack is dismissive of the little ones' necessities, is how Piggy also does not fit in the ideal social fantasy of the male gender. He is part of the big ones, however he is left behind to take care of the little children because he is scared; he does not see well without his glasses and he has asthma, thus making him not a manly man that goes hunting pigs or protecting the group from the beast with the other boys who fit these characteristics. Like Simon, Piggy cares for the younger children and shows at least a little respect towards them for he helps them to communicate with the others and cares to know all of their names. However, while Simon goes out hunting with the older boys, Piggy does not. Because Piggy is fragile and not fit enough, he is left out of certain activities and is left to perform tasks that would mostly be the responsibility of a girl or woman if there were any lost in the island with the boys. Violence and hunting is performed by the stronger and healthier boys, while the fragile one is left behind to take care of the 'littluns'. This is also an example of the male and female roles in society that are reproduced by the boys. Violence is directly linked to the roles of the strong and capable boys and once one of them do not fit this mold he is left to perform the role that would most likely be assigned as the responsibility of a female character. It is compelling to notice that if girls were lost in the island the 'littluns' would be cared for by them, for the teachings of motherhood are

passed to girls since an early age, almost giving no choice to a woman to have a life free of children and this specific responsibility. It is only in contemporary times that we find a somewhat new conscience surrounding this topic that does not condemn women for choosing not to raise children, but even so it is still expected from women from certain social groups the obligation of having children and caring for them. It is impossible not to think that for girls raised in England of that time violence and the idea of hunting would only come much later in the story or would not even be an option, simply because they were raised to behave in a different manner than boys and they are, in fact, more mindful and afraid of the consequences of their acts. Being alone in an island could be an opportunity to let their violent instinct show, but they have this constriction more as a demand than boys have, for it is imposed and expected from them more often than it is in boys. What *Lord of the Flies* shows and it is noticeable is these gender roles being reproduced in the island.

To sum up, we see how violence in *Lord of the Flies* is a rich theme that can be explored under many different lights. The discussion of nurture and nature and how society interferes in how we perceive violence is an extensive one. The contrasts in the characters, as analyzed, give us an idea that there are instances in which it is believed that violence is inherent as well as we see evidences that it is not, but that society is indeed capable of taming human beings. With these analyses, we see, then, how literature can be used to bring two opposite lines of thought about the state of nature and relate them to specific characters. The study presented helps us see different representations of the ideas of these philosophers and how the same character can be interpreted differently from distinct points of view. For instance, Ralph goes against the natural state of the human being cited by Locke in the scene in which Simon dies, but ultimately he is a moral character who sees murder and violence against others as

something wrong and amoral. Contrasting, according to Hobbes and Freud, Ralph's participation in Simon's death affirms the idea that human beings are naturally violent and immoral. Furthermore, Jack could also be the representation of what Freud and Hobbes believe is the state of nature, but this is not completely true because we do not get to see how he was raised before the accident happened, thus approximating Jack to Rousseau's idea that we are good by nature but corrupted by society. Rousseau's theory could also be linked to Ralph, since he is good and lawful in the beginning of the story, but then he participates in the killing of Simon, making him corrupted by the hunters, to finally go back to his moral ways. Religion is also linked to violence through the murder of the character Simon and what he represents in the novel, for he is murdered before bringing the truth about the beast alluding to the death of Jesus Christ in the Bible. Furthermore we have the contrast of the saint figure — Simon — and the representation of evil —the sow's head. And, finally, there is the relation between acts of violence and gender roles being analyzed through the characters and their actions and how Piggy and Simon represent the contrast between these roles.

### **Final Considerations**

“There is really nothing more to say — except why. But since why is difficult to handle, one must take refuge in how.”

Toni Morrison

The works by Flannery O’Connor and by William Golding selected for analysis in this Master’s dissertation have in common the fact that they portray violence and raise the question of the cause or origin of violent behavior against the social background. Another matter worth noticing in the selected works of both authors is how violence is associated to the religious discourse. What stands out when comparing this specific relation in Golding and O’Connor’s fiction is how they are portrayed differently. Thus, even when we have violence associated with the same discourse or idea it is still possible to find distinct representations as a result of the complexity of the subject.

In Golding’s novel, Simon is a character who can be compared to a biblical figure, Jesus Christ, due to the brutality of his murder. Likewise, O’Connor’s entire fiction is based on the premise of the religious discourse justifying the acts of violence that take place in “A Good Man is Hard to Find” and “Revelation”, however, the relation between violence and religion serve different purposes to each author. O’Connor uses violence to convey a message she believes in according to her religious convictions; to her it is worth dying violently or to endure violence in order to understand that one is not living according to the religion one is said to follow and rather lives in the materialistic, so-called contemporary manner. Golding, differently, does not use violence and religion to judge or to “teach” a lesson; he uses violence with



a different goal, such as to show how it is significant that the most notorious scene from the Bible is the death of Jesus Christ, a gory and violent scene. Golding uses this idea to represent what is known as the greatest sacrifice made for the sake of human kind.

Simon, like Jesus for believers, carries the truth with him, and is sacrificed before he could save everyone from their fear of the unknown. However, Simon does not rise from the dead and his death is not for a greater good. When we read *Lord of the Flies* under a very pessimist light we understand that what sticks to a large part of humanity from the Bible is essentially its violent discourse, the senseless death of a pacifist, and not its hopeful or humanitarian message.

Furthermore, O'Connor constructs characters with actions and beliefs that justify acts of violence in order to achieve a greater goal, this being God's grace. However, it is worth mentioning that this has a lot to do with her personal view of religion and Christianity. Her opinion is only one in the midst of thousands of other opinions and interpretations of the gospel. To say that she is completely right in her point of view is radical and perhaps naïve, but it is undeniable that she is following a very conspicuous imagery of violence in the Bible and that is disseminated by it. It is undeniable in the history of the world how religion uses violence to recriminate believers and against other religions, which generates wars — the most notorious contemporary religious war is the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, but we can also mention the Pakistan and India rivalry rooted in religion and the conflict between Muslims and Hindu; not to mention the historic rivalry between Protestants and Catholics. Religion is linked to war more often than not, thus creating a history of encouraging or legitimating actions of violence, which results in deaths motivated by the religious discourse. What is seen in O'Connor, then, is an act of violence occurring in hopes of a change in human behavior, however, if we could imagine her moment of grace happening in some other manner — by the

uttering of a kind word, for instance — the use of violence could be left aside. This is not the case in O'Connor's works and it is significant that she chooses violence in order to get her point across. Maybe this happens because the goal is to shock, as I discussed earlier in my work, rather than to teach. However, we cannot condemn her, since the foundation of most religious discourses, and their many interpretations, bring violence as just a means to a "higher" end.

There is a quote by René Girard in his work *Violence and the Sacred* that briefly comments on this prerogative of violence of the gods that often justifies violent acts:

The idea of "limitless" violence, long scorned by sophisticated Westerners, suddenly looms up before us. Absolute vengeance, formerly the prerogative of the gods, now returns, precisely weighed and calibrated, on the wings of science... It seems increasingly clear that the pressure of violence or the insistence of truth (for whom man acts as a kind of torchbearer) has forced modern man to come face to face with this same violence or truth. (253)

The quote applies to my work insofar as the idea that, as a foundation of religion, especially of religions based on the Bible, and what may be shocking to a contemporary point of view is the presence of violence and murder. Killing is used to convey the truth of the gospel and the power of the gods, and this is exactly what we see in O'Connor's works. There is the murder of human beings by a powerful and vengeful God. If death is the ultimate act of violence against the living, then this violent act is essentially evil, but it is justified because God knows better and does no wrong.

Other than religion, violence is also heavily linked to social environment. As said before, in the case of *Lord of the Flies* religion is represented by its most violent act, which is the crucifixion of Jesus. However, there is another important discussion to

be held when it comes to *Lord of the Flies*, that being the nurture or nature debate.

While people from the same social group, as the boys in the island, choose to commit acts of violence against each other, we have the ones who chose not to embrace violence. Steve Bruce states in his work “Religion and Violence: What Can Sociology Offer?” that:

For example, we can offer plausible explanations in terms of motives and opportunities for the social class correlates of the distribution of certain crimes but we cannot explain why, of a large group of people with similar social characteristics, only some commit crimes. (9)

This logic can also be used for religious people, for while there are people of a same religion who have access to the same interpretation of a given religious discourse and choose to defend their beliefs with violence, some decide not to. It is symbolic and significant, then, that these authors choose to represent in their works the violent portion of the religious discourse.

Given the many points discussed in this Master’s dissertation, violence is a constructed concept because we, as complex creatures with complex minds, see it in different ways and what is used to justify and even legitimize violence is a personal matter. As stated before, the grandmother’s death is just a meaningless death in the eyes of an atheist. The misfit can be a gift sent from God in order for the grandmother to get her moment of grace, but from an alternative perspective she is killed in vain by a psychopath. Joseph Carroll writes in the chapter “The Extremes of Conflict in Literature: Violence, Homicide, and War” about literature being a means of seeing life in a deeper manner; a manner that could be different from how we see it:

Conflict and struggle are integral to the evolved and adapted characteristics of human nature. Literature arises out of and depicts

human nature, so conflict is integral to literature, too... The painful character of violence in literature points us toward what is, in the present author's view, the central adaptive function of the arts. We do not read stories primarily because they produce vicarious sensations of pleasure; we read them because they give us a deeper, more complete sense of the forces that motivate human life (Carroll, 2011b)... The arts expand our feeling for why other people act as they do, help us to anticipate how they are likely to respond to our behavior, and offer suggestions about what kind of value we should attach to alternative courses of action.

(413, 431)

The same idea of meaningless deaths is present when someone that is not aware of the dark nature of human beings gets in contact with Golding's story. The belief that children are pure and naïve is still disseminated in certain groups of society; Golding shocks these readers by showing that these innocent creatures can also be infected by the violent urges that creeps on human beings. The reason given for those violent urges to exist varies according to different beliefs, as we saw the diversity of thoughts of scholars and philosophers investigating this issue. The limitation to approximate the main characters from *Lord of the Flies* to these philosophers' ideas is that we do not have access to their lives prior to the accident. It is crucial, then, to remember that it is not possible to make an in-depth analyses of these characters when it comes to their lives prior to what we see as their behavior in the island, but we can theorize by observing the behavior we see in the island.

Literature, then, gives us a sample of the many concepts that violence can assume and of something that is inherent to the history of humankind, for kingdoms were built on violence and wars were fought as a manner to gain power. Violence is

represented in one of the oldest books of all time, the Bible, as it is in Homer's stories, which gives us a sense of how this theme is crucial in understanding humankind and how it fascinates authors to write about it since forever.

Moreover, since new historicism tends to connect works with the period in which they were produced and identify it with the cultural and political movements of the time, to completely understand O'Connor's short stories and Golding's novel it is necessary to recognize what social understanding the works depend upon. For instance, in "Revelation" Mrs. Turpin is a religious person who owns slaves and treats them, human beings like her, as possessions, yet she believes herself to be a good person at heart. The social environment and time in history she is placed plays an important role in her beliefs. The stories told, as well as the characters created by O'Connor are a reflection of the parallel lived in the USA of Christian people who claimed to be devoted believers, yet owned slaves and treated people as inferior. Looking at these short stories with today's eyes is easy to recognize the hypocrisy of the main characters, however it is crucial to take into consideration that these characters are a product of their historical time. This is easier to see in Mrs. Turpin when we realize that, to her, being white is naturally better than being black, a thought that is not tolerated or justifiable nowadays.

New historicism can be applied to the selected works of O'Connor and Golding because the historical periods in which they take place are heavily discussed, and are directly linked to violence. In the case of O'Connor, her short stories were written at the same time in which the Civil Rights Movement took place, thus the subject of racism and slavery were being examined and the fight for social justice for black people was being demanded. What O'Connor does is to use this historical content to contrast the behavior of her main characters and expose the hypocrisy in being religious and still

longing for a time of slavery like the Grandmother or still owning slaves like Mrs. Turpin. The important aspect is not only situating these stories in a time in history, but the criticism that comes with these characters of that time and the hypocrisy that they carry in their beliefs. In the case of Golding, the story takes place after a devastating war happened and the imminence of cold war hovered the minds and lives of people around the world. The historical context in which the novel was written allows us to discuss not only how violence affected soldiers who were directly linked to war, but how it also affected children and their behavior and imposes a reflection about war, its consequences and its motives. For that, new historicism also allows us to understand how violence is socially constructed and historically situated.

A quote from *Lord of the Flies* is appropriate to summarize the central idea of this dissertation: "'Maybe'... 'maybe there is a beast...'" 'What I mean is . . . maybe it's only us'" (77). It all depends on how each one of us individually sees violence and the experiences had with it that will rule over how we react to it and how one justifies it, thus making it acceptable or not. Essentially, these differences are what make it so hard to fight against violence, together with the idea that it is a natural instinct and it is part of human nature. The fact that violence in its various manifestations is represented in literature over and over again shows how relevant it is to discover these meanings and justifications.

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