

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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This thesis is an exploration of how male trickster figures operate in the Gothic fiction of 20<sup>th</sup> century American female authors. Specifically, I look at the short stories “The Daemon Lover” by Shirley Jackson, “Good Country People” by Flannery O’Connor, and “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” by Joyce Carol Oates. In each of these stories, a male trickster figure functions as an enforcer of patriarchal standards of women’s roles by punishing those female characters who exist outside prescribed gender boundaries. By writing of the ways in which, and the reasons why, these female characters are punished by male trickster figures, these authors demonstrate the pervasive and oppressive nature of patriarchal systems in Post-World War II United States. The trickster trope is a productive lens through which to view gender politics in these stories and this reading allows for new feminist interpretations of each text.

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Patriarchal Power and Punishment: The Trickster Figure in the Short Fiction of  
Shirley Jackson, Flannery O'Connor, and Joyce Carol Oates

by

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Patriarchal Power and Punishment: The Trickster  
Figure in the Short Fiction of Shirley Jackson,  
Flannery O'Connor, and Joyce Carol Oates

One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature . . . which is described as feminine.

--Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

*Introduction*

I read Joyce Carol Oates's short story, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" in an introduction to literature class taken during my first year of college. Our class, normally talkative and goofy, was somber the day we discussed the story; we were all troubled, yet excited, by the possibilities of the story. Long after class concluded, I felt myself haunted by the story of Connie and Arnold. A few years after that class, I had the same experience upon first encountering Flannery O'Connor's short story "Good Country People" in another class. This time, though, my classmates and I had very different experiences of the story. They laughed at the theft of Hulga's leg; I found myself the only reader genuinely upset over what happened to her. I returned to this story over and over, trying to decide what I thought about it, writing

about it in class after class, trying to understand why I felt the way I did about Hulga. Once more, I was haunted. Shortly after finishing my undergraduate degree, I encountered Shirley Jackson's short story, "The Daemon Lover" for the first time. Again and again, I found myself imagining the unnamed main character standing outside an apartment, waiting for her fiancé, all the while believing he is just on the other side of the door, laughing at her longing. These women's stories are the tales I cannot get out of my head.

Though each of these pieces is unique, the thematic similarities are notable. Each tells the story of a male character who appears, seemingly from nowhere, as a possible suitor for a central female character. However, while these stories have the potential to become romances, as in the Gothic tradition, they quickly turn into horror stories. The male characters, Jamie, Manley, and Arnold, prey on the females' desires, or needs, for romance and, instead of acting as lovers, these men destroy the women in the stories. There is no love involved on the part of the male characters; there is only the desire to penalize the female characters for operating outside the boundaries of "acceptable" female behavior. In each piece, the promise of romance quickly fades and the male characters are revealed to be enforcers of patriarchy, rather than the lovers they originally appear to be.

In these stories, Jamie, Manley, and Arnold are reminiscent of the archetypal Trickster figure: their purposes are to challenge and disrupt the status quo. In his seminal text on trickster traditions, *Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth, and Art*, Lewis Hyde describes trickster characters' fundamental nature, "trickster is a boundary-crosser. Every group has its edge, its sense of in and out . . . and trickster is



always there” (7). However, while tricksters typically challenge social norms, in these stories the male characters work to disrupt individual lives, specifically the lives of the female characters. While traditional trickster stories are used to impart knowledge or instill values, Jackson, O’Connor, and Oates use their trickster characters to demonstrate flaws in the prevailing patriarchal value system which devalues women.

The decades following World War II were rife with changing messages about what was expected of American women; these messages came from popular culture, such as radio, magazines, and television but they also came from the government, local communities, churches, and family. The notion of femininity in this era was unstable to say the least and the authors discussed in this thesis saw this changing message and the marginalized women of this era as rich source material. In their use of trickster characters who reinforce patriarchal standards, Jackson, O’Connor, and Oates interrogate the rapidly changing notions their culture held about gender roles and how women who did not live up to those standards were penalized. The trickster archetype and patriarchy share many characteristics; both are cruel, uncaring, and have the power to shape and/or transform the world. Jamie, Manley, and Arnold, as trickster characters, are therefore perfect enforcers for gender role boundaries. In this way, these authors and their stories perform important political inquiries through their fictional work.

Even in trickster myths, the world is, and remains, patriarchal; Hyde acknowledges “all the canonical tricksters operate in patriarchal mythologies” (8). It is no surprise, then, that these characters act to reinforce the hegemony which is fundamental to their understanding of the world. Jung describes the trickster trope as

one which “possesses no values, moral or social, is at the mercy of his appetites, yet through his actions all values come into being” (qtd. in Reesman xii). While trickster characters have no personal value systems, their stories work to circumscribe ours.

### *Historical Context*

The message about what it meant to be a normal woman changed rapidly in the 1940s and 1950s. During World War II, women who had previously been encouraged to stay in the home and tend to their husbands and children were called to work outside the home in order to support the war effort. Whereas, before the war, the work they were called to do had been “men’s” work, during the war it was patriotic to take over where the men left off. A February 1942 *Good Housekeeping* article describes (and presumably prescribes for its readership) the ideal female attitude about this change in expectations, “Cheerfully we set aside our routine duties to undertake such emergency tasks as are assigned to us” (qtd. in Zuckerman 193). Once the war ended, though, and men returned, ready to resume the jobs they had left in the hands of American women, these women were displaced. Notions of acceptable femininity, which had expanded during the war, appeared to be contracting.

Popular messages about women’s roles were unclear, especially when compared to how women really lived. One problem in writing about this era is that, as Rickie Solinger points out, “so many people—including historians themselves—‘remember’ the [1950s] through the great, iconic women of that time: TV matrons.... such as June Cleaver and Harriet Nelson” (610). When we think of women from the post-war era, we tend to picture these television characters, smiling while cooking,

cleaning, and mothering; we do not imagine the single working women of the era or the married women who worked outside the home, whether by choice or out of necessity. Our collective memory of the cultural representation of women moves swiftly from Rosie the Riveter and her “We Can Do It!” message to the image (notably devoid of explicit speech) of the happy mother, dreaming up the night’s menu while vacuuming.

In a collection of essays edited by Joanne Meyerowitz, appropriately entitled *Not June Cleaver*, authors explore the fallacy of assuming that Rosie the Riveter, quickly followed by June Cleaver, represents the experience for American women in this era. Meyerowitz writes, “while some women fit the stereotype, many others did not. To state the obvious, in the years following World War II, many women were not white, middle-class, married, and suburban” (2). Susan M. Hartmann points out that, “along with the celebration of women’s traditional roles in the dominant discourse, opinion-leading individuals and groups worked to make practices and attitudes more congruent with women’s increasing labor force participation” (85). There was an effort to expand the definition of accepted femininity to include working outside the home, however, that effort is ignored in the popular culture of the time. This contradiction between the reality of working women and the domestic ideal, so glorified in popular culture, resulted in convoluted notions about women’s roles in society.

Overwhelmingly the message portrayed on television, in magazine articles, in politics and in advertising was that married, white, middle-class women who were exclusively homemakers were the norm. As noted by Meyerowitz, though, this was

not the experience for all women living in the postwar U.S. Though we know that some women did live outside this idealized role, their stories are infrequently told. Female fiction writers of this era, however, recognized the women who existed in this sort of cultural limbo as valuable source material. Who were these outsider women? How did they live and think? How were they treated by society? These issues are addressed in the works of Jackson, O'Connor, and Oates.

*Shirley Jackson and "The Daemon Lover"*

One of Jackson's most haunting pieces is the 1949 short story, "The Daemon Lover." This story follows a single woman, presumably living in the United States in the late 1940s. This character, who goes unnamed throughout, is marginalized because of her inability to live up to the patriarchal standard of femininity which, at this time, entailed marriage. The day depicted in the story is to be a happy one, as she is finally about to be validated and normalized through marriage. Her single status obviously causes her distress and she feels devalued; marriage, she believes, will establish her as a whole person who matters. That is, of course, until the trickster character, Jamie Harris, intervenes. Though this female character is attempting to reconcile herself to the patriarchal definition of the perfect, or at least acceptable, woman, she is nonetheless tormented by him for being an outsider. As her dreams of normalization fall apart, she begins to panic, realizing that she might never attain acceptance in her hegemonic culture.

This seemingly simple short story is actually quite sophisticated in its attitude toward the insidious nature of hierarchical structures. In any society controlled by a

dominant group (men, in this instance), those without power are oppressed by, yet still reliant upon, the powerful for survival and acceptance. “The Daemon Lover” is a demonstration of the extent to which oppressive systems can be internalized and an investigation into the psychological damage that such internalized hegemony does.

*Flannery O’Connor and “Good Country People”*

Whereas Shirley Jackson is only recently gaining recognition as an important figure in American women’s literature, Flannery O’Connor has been a literary favorite for decades and with good reason. Her stories are deep, dark, and disturbing; they have the ability to tap directly into the shadowy recesses of the human psyche, revealing social anxieties and tendencies toward cruelty which most of us do not necessarily wish to acknowledge. Interestingly, critics have historically been reluctant to explore O’Connor’s work as political in nature, choosing instead to focus on the religious and grotesque elements of her texts. However, within the last two decades or so, the political implications of O’Connor’s work have been of much more interest to critics.

While interest in the politics of her work has dramatically increased, O’Connor scholars are reluctant to claim that her writing is feminist. In fact, O’Connor seems to discourage this type of reading herself, in a letter she wrote, collected in *The Habit of Being*: “I just never think . . . of qualities which are specifically feminine or masculine” (176). While O’Connor does not confess to consciously exploring gender differences in her texts, Margaret Bauer contends that reader responses indicate an awareness of issues of gender in O’Connor’s work: “readers have perceived . . . most of O’Connor’s fiction [as] androcentric” (40). Clearly, the author’s feelings about her

own work and the prevalent reader responses must be taken into account when interpreting her works. However, while the author and other readers might not see her texts as feminist, I believe there is still some value to be found in looking at her works through a feminist lens.

The 1955 short story “Good Country People” is particularly fertile material for a feminist investigation. Written shortly after Jackson’s “The Daemon Lover,” “Good Country People” also features a trickster character whose sole purpose appears to be tormenting another marginalized female character. Whereas Jackson’s female character works to become an accepted member of the culture which oppresses her, O’Connor’s heroine, Hulga, believes that she has taken what she can from society, in the form of her education, and then rejected the patriarchal culture which constructs her as an outsider. However, when the trickster character, Manley Pointer, enters the story, we find that it is truly impossible for Hulga to reject the dominant culture; patriarchal culture ultimately proves to be so pervasive as to be inescapable. By the end of the story, Hulga’s image of herself as an independent intellectual, above the petty differences between the sexes, is destroyed as is, indeed, her entire conception of herself. As with the nameless protagonist in “The Daemon Lover,” Hulga, through the machinations of a male trickster character, experiences just how damaging and downright cruel patriarchy can be.

*Joyce Carol Oates and “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?”*

The final story I will be looking at is Joyce Carol Oates’s legendary “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” Published just over a decade after “Good

Country People,” the tone of “Where Are You Going” is much freer than that story and “The Daemon Lover.” The main character, Connie, goes out with friends, flirts with boys, and seems to enjoy life much more than the unnamed fiancée and Hulga. This female character’s relative freedom is a reflection, perhaps, of the progress being made by women’s rights groups by the time “Where” was written. Whereas the female character in “The Daemon Lover” is panicky and clingy and Hulga of “Good Country People” can afford to be haughty in her self-imposed exile, Connie is fifteen, flirtatious, and fun.

The youngest of all three characters, Connie appears to have a better grasp of what it means to live in a patriarchy and, moreover, seems to play by societal rules. While the unnamed bride of “The Daemon Lover” is aware of patriarchal power over her life, she believes that, by fully buying into the notion of how she “should” be, she can avoid further ostracization. Conversely, Hulga, of “Good Country People” simply removes herself from the world and refuses to play by the rules laid out for her by patriarchal culture. Connie, however, “knew she was pretty and that was everything” (Oates 25). She understands that women in her culture are only valued by men based on appearance and, perhaps because she is beautiful and therefore somewhat socially appreciated, she is able to accept patriarchal expectations more readily. Connie knows that she is beautiful but, moreover, she is aware that her beauty and flirtatious nature give her some power within patriarchy. What Connie does not know, until the trickster character Arnold intervenes, is that her power is fleeting and minimal when compared to the control that men have over her and her world. As with “The Daemon Lover” and “Good Country People,” when Arnold arrives, he reinforces the potency of

American patriarchy at this time by punishing Connie, who exists on the boundaries of acceptable behavior.

While she prefers not to limit herself or her work by identifying as a “woman writer” or “feminist writer,” Oates often deals with issues of oppression in the United States during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Often, characters in her numerous novels and short stories suffer from oppression based on their gender, race, political ideologies, and/or economic status. In reading an author who, like Oates, is sympathetic to the plights of oppressed characters, it makes sense to take a feminist approach to her work. A feminist reading of “Where Are You Going” is particularly productive as the story revolves around issues of beauty, value, and gendered violence. The fact that these issues are all intensified by a trickster’s appearance in the story make it a perfect complement to “The Daemon Lover” and “Good Country People.”

These three stories build on a tradition of gender-conscious Gothic stories, such as can be found in the works of Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Kate Chopin. Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” and Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour,” for example, certainly evoke terrifying feelings regarding strict gender roles. While we do not necessarily think of horror stories as politically important, the Gothic writer as political commentator is not unknown. In his introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, Jerrold Hogle writes

the longevity and power of Gothic fiction unquestionably stem from the way it helps us address and disguise some of the most important



desires, quandaries, and sources of anxiety, from the most internal and mental to the widely social and cultural. (4)

Our cultural and political values are clearly influenced by our fears and anxieties regarding who and what is acceptable. These Gothic tensions about belonging and being rejected for existing outside expectations are explored in each story. “The Daemon Lover” operates as a psychological profile, much in the same way as “The Yellow Wallpaper” and “The Story of an Hour” work. “Good Country People” is a combination of the psychological and a move into a semi-public sphere, while “Where Are You Going” moves even further into the public sphere. As these stories move from interiority to exteriority, they become increasingly politically overt, mirroring the growth of the feminist movement itself.

### *Terms*

Dealing with such a nebulous term as “gender” can be difficult. Therefore, I believe it is important to address some of the terms of investigation which appear in the following pages. First, I will be using the term “gender” as described by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble*; Butler writes of gender as “an enactment that performatively constitutes the appearance of its own interior fixity” (89). That is, in my reading, gender is not an innate sensibility which regulates our tastes, thoughts, and behaviors; rather it is a way in which we *learn* to act in order to meet societal expectations of our respective sexes. A major component of learning acceptable gendered behavior is having one’s behavior checked by others when one steps outside

those boundaries. This policing function is performed by the male characters in these stories.

Butler's definition has implications for other terms related to gender, which will appear in these articles. Operating on the belief that gender should be considered performative, this belief affects the terms we use to express ideas associated with gender, such as "feminine" and "masculine." As someone who believes that notions of femininity and masculinity are constructed, I am loathe to use these terms, lest I give them credence. However, while I do not wish to validate these terms, I believe that they are useful shorthand for the archaic notions associate with gender roles. Therefore, these terms will appear throughout the following articles to indicate when I am speaking of archaic, repressive notions of what it means to be a man or a woman.

In terms of the male characters, I do not argue that they represent the mythological trickster. Instead they are simply trickster characters, in that each of these antagonists embodies basic trickster characteristics such as playfulness, some measure of power, amorality, and an ability to change the lives of others. A major distinction between these characters and mythological tricksters is their respective circles of influence: mythological tricksters can change society's views of itself. Jamie, Manley, and Arnold, on the other hand, only change individual characters' views of themselves as members of society. Most importantly, while they are disruptive to the lives of these women, these characters ultimately support the societal status quo whereas mythological tricksters frequently challenge the societal status quo.

Franchot Ballinger, in his book *Living Sideways*, argues that often, instead of working outside of social norms, tricksters operate within cultural expectations, “the trickster often pursues no uncommon desires but rather socially acceptable goals or values” (75). In these stories, the trickster characters operate in such a way and, thus, represent the ways in which tricksters can be rewritten from feminist perspectives. Therefore, the trickster trope is a useful lens through which to read these characters and texts.

By writing stories which demonstrate just how easily and devastatingly these female characters’ lives are destabilized by these trickster characters, these authors call readers’ attention to the fragile position of women in their culture. The women in these stories are vulnerable simply because they are women. Though the individual authors do not necessarily identify themselves as feminists, by drawing attention to the pervasive influence of patriarchal structures, these texts do important feminist work.

## Marital Status and Madness: An Exploration of Patriarchy in Shirley Jackson's "The Daemon Lover"

American author Shirley Jackson is, perhaps, best known for her short story "The Lottery" and her novel *The Haunting of Hill House*. While much is written about these two pieces, she wrote much more which has not yet attained the same level of popularity or critical attention. Her 1949 short story, "The Daemon Lover," for example, has only been addressed in depth by one critic, Joan Wylie Hall. Hall has done important critical work in her exploration of "The Daemon Lover" but I believe there is still more to be done. While Hall finds this story to be one of psychological terror, I believe that the truly frightening elements in "The Daemon Lover" are the political implications of gendered power structures as explored by Jackson. In this story, Jackson examines the effects of living as a subjugated woman in a patriarchal culture by allowing the lead female character's world to be disrupted by patriarchal expectations. This type of destabilization is reminiscent of that which occurs in many trickster tales; I, therefore, find it useful to explore "The Daemon Lover" as a type of trickster story.

Just as with predecessors, Gilman and Chopin, Jackson invokes deep-rooted Gothic anxieties about who belongs, who is in control, and how gender relates to these issues. It is useful, therefore, to read Jackson's work as a 20<sup>th</sup> century Gothic tale which addresses the darker side of human nature and politics. "The Daemon Lover" is a particularly powerful example of this type of Gothic tale. In it, Jackson weaves

together elements of the supernatural, by evoking the possibility of a trickster character, with contemporary gender politics, represented by a spurned woman panicked because she is on the verge of becoming a “spinster.” In addition to her unmarried status, this character challenges the accepted housewife role, she supports herself by working. Patriarchal values work in this story to penalize the near-spinster for living outside the accepted boundaries for women, despite her obvious desire to fit in by getting married and, thus, becoming validated. This combination of the possibility of the supernatural and the political allows Jackson to explore the tenuous role of women in Post-World War II United States and the ways in which women’s behavior was regulated in this era.

### *The Fiancée*

“The Daemon Lover” is a third person narrative, very closely aligned with the experience of an unnamed “older” woman (she is 34) on the morning of her wedding day. From the moment she wakes, she is anxious, even worrying “unnecessarily, at the window, over whether it would be a fine day” (Jackson 9). As the story progresses, readers sense the ever-increasing nervousness the fiancée experiences while preparing for her wedding. This anxiety, readers quickly realize, stems from a fear of not being good enough for others, especially for her fiancé, Jamie Harris.

In a letter written to her sister, the fiancée expresses disbelief that anyone would want to marry her: “Dearest Anne, by the time you get this I will be married. Doesn’t it sound funny? I can hardly believe it myself, but when I tell you how it happened, you’ll see it’s even stranger than that” (Jackson 9). The fiancée is surprised,

and even expects her sister to be surprised, by the “strange” notion that anyone would want to marry her. This letter clearly represents her feelings of being undesirable to others. Instead of writing about happy and exciting news, words we would expect to be used in an announcement of marriage, the fiancée writes of her engagement as funny and strange, almost unbelievable. Her surprise and the surprise she expects her sister to feel indicate that she has, to this point, seen herself as unmarriageable; this disbelief is likely indicative of the way she has been treated up to this point. Had she been treated as attractive, or even as normal, it is unlikely that she would believe herself quite so unmarriageable. This belief about herself is not innate; she has learned from the words and treatment of others that she is undesirable. Even after the engagement to Jamie, these deep-rooted anxieties about her worth continue to plague the fiancée.

In particular, much of the anxiety she feels relates to her age and appearance, indicating that she perceives herself as valued primarily based on her looks. Before she even gets dressed, Jackson provides readers with a view to the fiancée’s perception of self, indicating to readers just how much she has internalized patriarchal notions about her value. One of the dresses she considers, for example, is a print dress that she worries is “too young for her” despite the fact that “she had worn [it] the summer before” (Jackson 9). It seems unlikely that she has physically aged so drastically in a single year that the print dress is no longer appropriate for her. Instead, her perception is that *others* will think that she has aged noticeably in a year; it is much more likely that she worries that *others* will think it too young for her. This concern for others’ opinions demonstrates an anxiety and possibly even a fear of how

others will perceive her, indicating that previous judgments have been negative and, likely, hurtful.

Despite these anxieties, the fiancée decides to wear the print dress; her thinking is, “This is my wedding day, I can dress as I please” (Jackson 11). This seems to be a promising step in the direction of independence from the concerns of others. However, when trying on the dress, her inner dialogue is hyper-critical:

Looking at herself in the mirror she thought with revulsion, It’s as though I was trying to make myself look prettier than I am, just for him; he’ll think I want to look younger because he’s marrying me; and she tore the print dress off so quickly that a seam under the arm ripped.

(11)

The fact that she tears her dress in taking it off indicates a level of anxiety that is quite high; she is almost in a panic over her appearance. Additionally, her concerns about the dress continue to stem from what others think, rather than from her own perceptions.

Anxiety about her appearance does not end with the dress. When considering her makeup, she decides it is

another delicate balance between looking as well as possible, and deceiving as little. She could not try to disguise the sallowness of her skin, or the lines around her eyes, today, when it might look as though she were only doing it for her wedding, and yet she could not bear the

thought of Jamie's bringing to marriage anyone who looked haggard and lined. (Jackson 12)

Her dependence on others' opinions of her for validation is quite prominent in these excerpts. Clearly, this character is invested in being physically pleasing to her fiancé and even wants to look good, not for her own sake, but because she wants Jamie to marry an attractive woman. Though the fiancée wants to look good, she is worried about appearing as if she is *trying* to look too young. This is a no-win situation for her: she can either try to appear natural and, therefore, less attractive or use makeup and look like she is trying too hard. In either case, she will be judged by others and those judgments are what matter.

Though she does not directly address "The Daemon Lover" specifically, it is useful to look at Angela Hague's "A Faithful Anatomy of Our Times: Reassessing Shirley Jackson." In this article, Hague writes of Jackson as a quintessential writer of women's experiences in the 1950s. Hague describes Jackson's female characters as "lacking a core of identity [which] forces them to seek meaning and direction in the world outside themselves" (76). The fiancée's concerns about what others think about her appearance place her squarely in this group of characters who lack a self-defined identity. Jackson further indicates this lack of self-definition in several ways. In the whole story, we never learn the fiancée's name, we never get a physical description of her, we do not know about her work and the only mention of family made is two and a half lines of a letter written to a sister which is immediately torn up (Jackson 9). Jackson ensures that the defining feature of the fiancée is that she is reliant on others, specifically on Jamie, for her identity. Doubts about self-worth, stemming from



confusion about who and what women are to be, are absolutely reflected in Jackson's unnamed fiancée and the characters described by Hague who must look outward for their identities.

In marrying Jamie, the fiancée will fulfill the gender role expected of her and, presumably, will be valued as a "normal" woman. With all her hopes resting on this marriage, it is no wonder she is riddled with anxiety. One mistake or flaw could lead Jamie to leave her. This is the worst fate she can imagine because if she does not become Mrs. Jamie Harris, a female character who at least has a name, if not an identity, she will remain herself, an unnamed, nondescript, single woman. As the story progresses, it becomes clearer that this desperation to be married stems from the way the fiancée is treated, as an unmarried woman at her age, by society.

#### *Psychosis in the Fiancée*

While preparing for the wedding, the fiancée appears to be perhaps abnormally critical of herself, but not necessarily unstable. As the day progresses, however, and Jamie does not show up at the appointed time, the fiancée becomes increasingly anxious and even "frightened, and felt an urgent need to hurry" (Jackson 14). As the fiancée's fear and anxiety build, her feelings begin to seem possibly unreasonable. Once she begins her search for him and is told by person after person that they have never seen him, it begins to seem as though perhaps Jamie never actually existed. It is possible that this character dreamt her fiancé into existence. The evidence for a sort of psychosis leading the fiancée to create Jamie in her mind is substantial; this is Joan

Wylie Hall's preferred reading, as expressed in her book, *Shirley Jackson: A Study of the Short Fiction*.

The story opens with the fiancée tired, waking from a night of bad sleep: "she had slept fitfully, stirring awake to open her eyes and look into the half-darkness, remembering over and over, slipping again into a feverish dream" (Jackson 9). She is clearly not at her best mentally and the possibility that she created the entire evening, the proposal and, possibly, even the man out of her own fantasies seems strong. Joan Wylie Hall enumerates the many other factors which could support the reading that the fiancée is psychologically fragile, "a sleepless night, a lack of food, a headache, a surplus of caffeine from her many cups of coffee, and, finally, the trail of snide remarks that follows her urgent search through the city" (12-3). This list, for Hall, represents the number of reasons the fiancée's anxiety increases; this extreme anxiety and fear may explain why she might not be in her right mind and why the line between reality and fantasy could, for her, be blurred.

The fiancée is sure, though, that Jamie exists and fully intends to marry her. She begins her hunt for Jamie, certain that something bad must have happened to him; otherwise, he would have shown up for the wedding. She goes to his house, looking for him, only to learn that no one named Harris lives at the address he has given her (Jackson 15). This hunt continues as the fiancée searches up and down the street, asking anyone she sees if they have seen Jamie, only to be laughed at, misdirected, and even outright lied to by the people she encounters. Everyone she meets treats her with open derision. This short time spent hunting for Jamie, for whom she is genuinely concerned, is just a glimpse into the way the fiancée is treated as a single woman. Her

extreme anxieties regarding her appearance and her incredulity regarding Jamie's proposal indicate that she is accustomed to, and even expects, others' disdain; this is certainly what she receives as she searches for Jamie. Readers can only imagine the kind of psychological damage a lifetime of, as Hall describes them, "snide remarks" can do.

The scene in which the fiancée, panicked, makes her way up and down the street looking for Jamie is a prime example of Jackson's ability to find and describe the little horrors in everyday life. Hall, in an argument against a supernatural reading of "The Daemon Lover," argues that Jackson is more concerned with the terrifying psychological elements of the story:

Although references to James Harris . . . frame and punctuate [*The Lottery and Other Stories*] with the supernatural, most of the collection's unsettling moments are more mundane. Even the most incredible experiences, those of the jilted fiancée in "The Daemon Lover" and the runaway housewife in "The Tooth," could be explained in psychological rather than supernatural terms (8).

However, Hall's reasons for the fiancée's instability, as enumerated above, are nearly all short-term problems: sleeplessness, hunger, headaches. These circumstances are short-lived: one can sleep, eat, take an aspirin to remedy these short-term difficulties. However, the "snide remarks" are not short-term: the fiancée receives them from every person she meets, indicating that this is a normal, if not acceptable, way for her to be treated. As the story concludes, we see that the fiancée firmly believes in Jamie's

existence, in perpetuity. A connection between the continued contemptuous treatment the fiancée receives and the possibility of continued mental instability, leading her to continue to search for Jamie, seems likely.

After all the pressure and panic of her search for Jamie, the fiancée is finally directed to an attic apartment where he might be. The story concludes with the fiancée knocking on the door of the apartment she has been directed to, only to have her knock go unanswered, though

she was sure she could hear low voices and sometimes laughter. She came back many times, every day for the first week. She came on her way to work, in the mornings; in the evenings, on her way to dinner alone, but no matter how often or how firmly she knocked, no one ever came to the door. (Jackson 28)

Clearly, the fiancée does not get a good night's sleep and wake to realize that Jamie was just a dream; she is haunted, seemingly for the rest of her life, by the notion that he is hiding from her behind a door, laughing at her.

If we are to accept a reading that Jamie is simply a manifestation of the fiancée's psychosis, we must acknowledge that such a long-term delusion is caused by long-term circumstances, such as the "snide remarks" of those she encounters on the street and her anxieties about her desirability, looks, and her potential to be normalized through marriage. There is much evidence that her instabilities are related to insecurities about her role as a woman in a culture which does not value unattached women.

Societal disdain is explicitly expressed as she searches for Jamie. Those she asks about him laugh at her, roll their eyes in exasperation and a newspaper vendor even exchanges a “knowing” smile over the fiancée’s shoulder with a customer standing behind her, indicating that she and her problems are laughable (Jackson 20). The people she encounters, men, women, and even children, see her as a joke; she is pathetic, so desperate for a man that she makes a fool of herself chasing after him. When she recognizes the look being exchanged between the newspaper vendor and the other customer, she becomes overly self-conscious: “she was suddenly horribly aware of her over-young print dress, and pulled her coat around her quickly” (20). She realizes that they are mocking her and her only defense is to try to hide herself. As she moves off from the two men, “both men began to laugh [and] she moved hurriedly on across the street”; as an outsider woman, she has no authority to defend herself or even respond outside of removing herself from the situation (21). As Hall writes of the fiancée, “as the characterization develops, the unnamed subject appears more clearly schizoid” (36). Characterization, in this example, is developed by the fiancée’s move from her apartment to the street, where she interacts with other members of her society. These interactions demonstrate the vulnerable role the fiancée holds within the society which devalues her as a single woman; others are free to mock her and laugh at her problems, with no consequences. This persistent cruelty, which the fiancée can only try to avoid, works to unravel her sanity.

A psychological investigation of this story leads one to believe that, as a victim of these strict standards for women’s behavior and roles, the fiancée is not mentally strong enough to tolerate the scorn she experiences as a single woman at her age and

creates an imagined male savior. In this reading, the fiancée's own broken mind creates Jamie Harris who acts as a trickster character, by destabilizing her world. This imagined character does so by convincing her of a false reality, playing with her expectations, and policing her behaviors as a woman. This manifestation of internalized patriarchy works to convince her that she has no authority or agency as a single woman. Unfortunately, she is so culturally devalued that even her imagined savior is an enforcer of patriarchy who sees her as an object of contempt and torments her. In a reading which posits the story as a psychological profile, "The Daemon Lover" can be read as a condemnation of a society which values women based only on their relationships with others. This condemnation is a compelling feminist argument for women's intrinsic value. The power of this condemnation is particularly notable when we consider the repressive era in which this story was written.

Though there are multiple explanations for the fiancée's instability, it is certain that there are political implications manifest in her individual social and psychological experiences. As Darryl Hattenhauer writes in his book, *Shirley Jackson's American Gothic*, "The first error of Jackson criticism is the same as that applied to other proto-postmodernists such as Kurt Vonnegut and John Barth: the notion that they write private, apolitical fiction. . . . Even the unconscious, of course, is political" (191). Assuming that "The Daemon Lover" is simply the exploration of one woman's mental breakdown, we must look to the society which victimizes her to such an extent that her mind subverts itself. She is vulnerable psychologically because she is vulnerable socially.

However, as in most trickster tales, it is exceedingly difficult to determine how, exactly, to read “The Daemon Lover.” As Hattenhauer writes,

The third-person narration looks so thoroughly through the protagonist’s perception that the narrator reports on the protagonist’s delusions as if they are verifiable. Consequently, the narration creates the same illusion in both the protagonist’s mind and in the reader’s mind. (35)

That is, readers are susceptible to disruptive deception, just as the fiancée is.

Therefore, it is imperative readers question their own initial experiences of this story and remain open to alternative interpretations.

#### *An Exploration of the Source Material*

While there is obviously much evidence to support a reading of the fiancée as creating Jamie out of her own broken mind, there is also the possibility that Jamie *does* exist in a world outside of the fiancée’s creation, if not as a real man, then at least as a force of disruption. In determining which of the two is the strongest reading, it is important to consider the source material for “The Daemon Lover” and its place in the trickster tradition. Both the story and the character James Harris are named after a traditional British ballad, “James Harris (The Daemon Lover).” This ballad is part of a group of Scottish and British ballads called the Child ballads, so named because they were collected and published by Francis James Child. In the ballad, “The Daemon Lover,” James Harris leaves his lover to travel at sea; Harris voyages for seven years and his lover waits as long as possible but, eventually, marries another and has

children with her husband. After his lengthy absence, James Harris returns, an almost ghostly entity, outside his lover's window in the middle of the night. With some difficulty, he finally convinces her to leave her family and join him on his ship; they will sail away together, see the world and revel in their love. They board the boat, happy to finally be together. However, the two are at sea but a short time when things begin to go horribly wrong for the lover:

“O what hills are yon, yon pleasant hills,  
That the sun shines sweetly on?”

“O yon are the hills of heaven,” he said,  
“Where you will never win.”

“O whaten a mountain is yon,” she said,  
“All so dreary wi frost and snow?”

“O yon is the mountain of hell,” he cried,  
“Where you and I will go.”

(Child Ballad No. 243 qtd. in Jackson)

The James Harris of the ballad operates as a trickster in that he deceives the lover into believing that, by leaving her family and setting sail with him, their love will be rekindled and she will know nothing but happiness. Once they set sail, though, she quickly learns that they are headed to hell; just after revealing their destination, James breaks the ship in half and the couple goes down with the ship.

Jackson was so intrigued and influenced by this ballad and its many versions that she even included an excerpt (from which the above is extracted) as the epilogue



to *The Lottery and Other Stories*. In fact, Jackson's intended title for this collection, which can be found on the copyright page, was *The Lottery or, The Adventures of James Harris* and characters named James, Jamie, Jim or with the Harris surname can be found throughout the collection. Jackson's husband, Hyman, wrote an article during their marriage, discussing the unfortunate disappearance of many of the Child ballads from popular culture. Additionally, Hyman laments the mutations that some ballads underwent as they made their way from Great Britain to the U.S.:

Those ballads that do survive the ocean voyage suffer curious sea changes. Magic and the supernatural slough off readily, even when they seem the ballad's point, and demons, ghosts, elves, and mermaids rationalize and humanize. . . . None of the enormous number of American versions of "James Harris (The Daemon Lover)," so far as I know, keeps the lover convincingly demonic.... (236)

Jackson also seems to have also been concerned with the disappearance of the supernatural or more Gothic elements in these ballads as they made their way into American culture. Her writing of "The Daemon Lover" can be read as an attempt to reintroduce the original ballad's supernatural elements into her modern, seemingly realistic story. In fact, she published two versions of "The Daemon Lover"; the first was called "The Phantom Lover." In "The Phantom Lover," it is clear that Harris is a real man who leaves his fiancée. Jackson, however, obscured this straightforward reading by rewriting the story as "The Daemon Lover." In the rewritten version, the third person point of view moves much closer to the fiancée, as pointed out by Hattenhauer; in this second version, readers only know Jamie from his fiancée's point

of view. This obscuration makes it unclear as to whether Harris is truly just a man, a figment of the fiancée's imagination, or something more sinister (Friedman 50).

Jackson's blurring of the line between the realistic and the supernatural creates a more ominous tone than if she had left the story as "The Phantom Lover." If Jamie acts as an individual who spurns the fiancée, then his actions amount to little more than a juvenile prank. However, due to Jackson's obscuration, Jamie's actions seem more sinister. We, as readers, only experience Jamie through the filter of the fiancée; as far as readers are concerned, he can be anybody or everybody. Since we do not experience him as an individual character, his cruelty, while certainly more intense, is not dissimilar from that mockery and psychological punishment which is meted out by the people the fiancée encounters on the street. Jamie's rejection of the fiancée is yet another instance of her rejection and psychological punishment by patriarchy.

Jackson's purposeful reintroduction of the possibility of the supernatural in her story connects her piece with the overtly supernatural ballad. Both feature male characters who operate on the behalf of patriarchal cultures by punishing women who exist outside the boundaries of acceptable femininity. The fiancée of "The Daemon Lover" is mocked and psychologically punished for her single status and her desperation to find a man, while the female lover of the ballad is punished for abandoning her husband and children for an illicit affair. In the case of the ballad, it is quite obvious that the lesson to be drawn by women is to be faithful to their husbands or risk a horrible fate. In fact, before this ballad was included in Child's collection, its title changed to a number, and before it was Americanized and its title became "James

Harris (The Daemon Lover),” it was originally called “A Warning to Married Women” (Olson, “Ballads and Chapbooks by Laurence Price”).

However, while the intent for the ballad is very clearly cautionary, Jackson’s piece can be read as social commentary. By demonstrating the fiancée’s tremendous desperation, her hyper-awareness of others’ opinions, and her extreme social and psychological vulnerability, as a single woman, Jackson draws attention to the strained and fragile position of women in American culture after World War II.

Readers’ empathy is elicited by the narrative which is so closely aligned with the fiancée’s. The punishment of the fiancée seems extraordinarily cruel because, unlike the adulteress in the ballad, the only crime she has committed is not fitting into a prescribed gender role. Moreover, the punishment is even crueler in that this character *wants* to be married; she *wants* to fit into the role prescribed for her. The fiancée dreams of a “future, when Jamie was established with his writing and she had given up her job, the golden house-in-the-country future” (Jackson 12). She buys into patriarchal ideologies wholesale, but still exists outside that ideology and, as such, is punished. By allowing a woman who agrees with patriarchal ideology to be persecuted, Jackson indicates that all women are vulnerable to hierarchical systems of oppression. The potential for victimization does not lie in being outspoken against the hierarchy, or even *trying* to exist outside the hierarchy; those who are fully invested in the ideology are still vulnerable. This element of the story reinforces its political nature and intent and serves as further commentary on the vulnerability of women in these oppressive systems.

In “The Daemon Lover,” Jackson cleverly crafts a story which appears to be a straightforward tale of one woman’s desperation to be married, but which upon further inspection, is really a story of all women’s vulnerability in patriarchal systems. Whether we accept the reading that patriarchy is represented by the fiancée’s internalization of its standards, as represented by her extreme anxieties about others’ perceptions of her, or by an actual character in the story, the results are the same: a woman is punished by a patriarchal enforcer for existing outside the prescribed guidelines of behavior. By recalling the ballad, Jackson points to the long history of this type of policing of women’s behavior and roles, but she modernizes the theme by demonstrating the effect this policing has on the psychology of one woman who undergoes it. This story, which seems that of a single woman, is truly the story of many.

While the fiancée in “The Daemon Lover” internalizes patriarchy to such an extent that it can be argued that her trickster is actually her own mind, the trickster characters which appear in “Good Country People” and “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” operate in very different ways. Jackson’s trickster character functions psychologically in order to represent the fiancée’s vulnerability to the internalization of patriarchal beliefs and, perhaps, to represent a culture in which women’s concerns often remained unexpressed. As we will see, O’Connor’s and Oates’s trickster characters operate through material artifacts and in increasingly public arenas. While the trickster characters in each story do operate in differing ways, their purposes remain the same: each reinforces patriarchal structures and standards.

Prosthetics and Patriarchy: The Castration of Hulga Hopewell in  
Flannery O'Connor's "Good Country People"

Flannery O'Connor's 1955 short story, "Good Country People," is simply awe-inspiring in the amount and depth of topics it addresses, a major factor in its popularity amongst critics and in the college classroom. O'Connor, herself, described *A Good Man is Hard to Find* (the collection in which "Good Country People" first appeared) as "stories about original sin, with my compliments" (qtd. in Johansen 34). While "original sin" is left open to interpretation and is, in itself, a compelling point of departure for interpretation, these stories are about so much more. "Good Country People," for instance, involves such complex themes as mother-daughter relationships, issues of class and education, illness and sexuality. O'Connor also addresses issues of normalcy, control and gender in this dark story, indicating that "Good Country People" is part of the same Gothic tradition in which Gilman, Chopin, and Jackson participate. Recently, much critical work has been done exploring the themes of gender roles and patriarchal society in "Good Country People"; this has been a particularly productive area of study and one that, I believe, still needs exploration.

I am especially interested in what the trickster trope, as represented by Manley Pointer, can teach readers about gender roles in "Good Country People." I believe that O'Connor intended for readers to see the theft of Hulga's prosthetic leg not as a rape act, as previous critics have contended; rather, when combined with the considerable evidence of gender role slippage, one must read Hulga's leg as a phallic symbol and

its theft, therefore, as a castration. While O'Connor claimed an ignorance of "qualities which are specifically feminine or masculine," Hulga's castration and other challenges to gender role rigidity combine to demonstrate an astute awareness of gender's constructed nature in the story (*The Habit of Being* 176). Moreover, by leaving Hulga victimized at the end of the story, O'Connor demonstrates that even those who are isolated from patriarchal culture are susceptible to its power.

### *Hulga's Gender Role Rebellion*

Long before Manley Pointer enters the picture, O'Connor challenges gender norms through the character of Hulga Hopewell. Natalie Wilson describes "Good Country People" as "reveal[ing] the confining and warping aspects of patriarchy. In particular, [O'Connor's] fiction explores the limiting role of southern womanhood" (99). Though Hulga never overtly discusses her feelings about the gender stereotypes of her time or location in the southern U.S., the evidence overwhelmingly indicates a disconnect between the gender role Hulga chooses for herself and the one she is expected to play in the patriarchal culture in which she lives.

O'Connor explores Hulga's rejection of traditional gender roles in several ways. The first, and perhaps the most noted, challenge to gender norms is Hulga's decision to change her name. O'Connor introduces her readers to Hulga as Joy Hopewell, her given name and, perhaps, one of the most optimistic and feminine names in literary history. Joy Hopewell is a pretty, feminine name: "Joy" is bright and cheerful and "Hopewell" can be nothing but hopeful. However, Hulga rejects the prettiness and stereotypical femininity of her given name and legally changes it. Her

mother, Mrs. Hopewell, is “certain that [Hulga] had thought and thought until she had hit upon the ugliest name in any language. Then she had gone and had the beautiful name, Joy, changed” (O’Connor 274). O’Connor explains Hulga’s choice, “She had arrived at it first purely on the basis of its ugly sound and then the full genius of its fitness had struck her” (275). The genius of the name, of course, emanates from its lack of femininity; Hulga chooses to be associated with a clunky, ugly, masculine name. She seems impervious to gendered expectations, which would oblige her to retain her feminine name.

Interestingly, in the case of her name, Hulga does fall into one instance of stereotypical thinking about gender roles. She envisions her chosen name as a masculine entity, to which the feminine must acquiesce: “She had a vision of the name working like the ugly sweating Vulcan who stayed in the furnace and to whom, presumably, the goddess had to come when called” (275). Clearly, Hulga is aware of the ugly and masculine connotations her new name evokes; this is precisely the reason she has chosen it. It is important to note that she sees her name as masculine and, furthermore, as dominant over the feminine, clearly thinking in terms of traditional gender roles. David Havird sees Hulga as “play[ing] Vulcan to Joy’s Venus”; that is, Joy becomes the masculine Hulga and sublimates the feminine Joy (22). In Hulga’s mind, it is acceptable for a female to incorporate these traditionally masculine connotations into her persona through association with such a name as Hulga. Therefore, though she imagines her name in terms of traditional gender roles, for Hulga, these traditional, imagined roles do not necessarily extend into her reality.

Though she is biologically a woman, she does not necessarily need to be feminine, as is evidenced by her choice of name.

In addition to her name, Hulga rejects the feminine ideal through her appearance. She is already seemingly aesthetically cursed by her weight and poor eyesight and is described as “the big spectacled Joy-Hulga” (O’Connor 275). In addition, Hulga goes out of her way to appear unattractive, a clear rejection of feminine standards, which require some level of beauty or at least an attempt at being beautiful. One would think that a woman challenging stereotypical gender roles would dress androgynously or, perhaps, in masculine garb; instead, Hulga chooses to wear ugly feminine clothes ironically: “she went about all day in a six-year-old skirt and a yellow sweat shirt with a faded cowboy on a horse embossed on it. She thought this was funny” (276). Instead of simply ignoring the expectations of a woman’s dress and appearance, Hulga pokes fun at the ridiculous clothes designed for women by constantly wearing the same absurd costume. The notion that she needs to be beautiful has little sway over Hulga.

The best indicator for Hulga’s rejection of traditional gender roles is a comparison between her and the other female characters in the story. In addition to her mother, the women Hulga comes into contact with most frequently are Mrs. Freeman, Mrs. Hopewell’s employee, and Mrs. Freeman’s daughters, Glynese and Carramae. This female community is divided into two groups: there are the two older women who have been married and have already had children. The Freeman girls are obviously much younger, yet they still pursue the same path of marriage and reproduction as the older women: “Glynese, a redhead, was eighteen and had many



admirers; Carramae, a blonde, was only fifteen but already married and pregnant” (O’Connor 272). By choosing to remain single, Hulga is excluded from both groups. Mrs. Hopewell contends that Hulga “didn’t like . . . nice young men. She looked at nice young men as if she could smell their stupidity” (276). Carramae and Glynese live up to the standards of southern femininity, as judged by Mrs. Hopewell, who “liked to tell people that [they] were two of the finest girls she knew” (O’Connor 272). Obviously, as single woman who has no interest in marrying, Hulga does not measure up as a “fine girl.”

Naming, again, is important in understanding Hulga’s thoughts on southern femininity. Hulga expresses her disdain of the limited and limiting roles for women in her society, and for the women who fill those roles, by giving Mrs. Freeman’s feminine daughters nicknames. Glynese becomes Glycerin and Carramae becomes Caramel in Hulga’s mind (O’Connor 272). Glycerin is sweet and is used in baking as a sugar substitute; Hulga pokes fun at Glynese’s sweetness and disingenuousness with the nickname. In assigning Carramae the name Caramel, Hulga indicates that Carramae is overly sweet. In giving these two “fine” girls such comical, yet cutting, names, Hulga disparages notions of “proper” southern womanhood.

Another prominent aspect of Hulga’s androgyny is her education. There is no mention that anyone else in her female community has even attended college; Hulga has completed her doctorate in philosophy (O’Connor 276). Unfortunately, instead of feeling proud of her daughter’s academic accomplishments, Mrs. Hopewell is unhappy about Hulga’s education. One explanation for this displeasure is explained by Margaret Bauer, who writes “women whose attitudes and ambitions do not reflect and

thereby support the norm. Women like . . . Hulga threaten the social order and thus are denounced so as not to be perceived as positive role models for others of like minds” (43-44). The ambition of attaining a Ph.D. is not the norm for Hulga’s female community; such an ambition is not only odd, it threatens the social order in which the best women should hope for is marriage and motherhood. Hulga, though, has a deep appreciation for her education and knowledge in general, as is evidenced by the way she spends her time, “All day Joy sat on her neck in a deep chair, reading” (276). She embraces and revels in this androgynous aspect of her identity and, to her mother’s chagrin, would rather read than date.

The most salient challenge to Hulga’s feminine status is her prosthetic leg. This prosthetic, for many critics, has represented Hulga’s phallus, in that it is so strongly associated with Hulga’s difference from the other women of the story. It is certainly a major component in Hulga’s construction of herself as an outsider; she uses her prosthetic leg to distinguish herself from that which is pretty and delicate, that which is feminine. Readers learn that she makes a daily show of wearing the prosthetic, “Hulga stumped into the kitchen in the morning (she could walk without making the awful noise but she made it—Mrs. Hopewell was certain—because it was ugly-sounding)” (O’Connor 275). Rather than attempting to become daintier in an effort to draw attention from that which makes her different, Hulga works to make this distinctly unfeminine characteristic louder and more noticeable.

Hulga challenges what is expected of her by defiantly reveling in this physical manifestation of her difference. Sarah Gleeson-White sees Hulga’s prosthetic as “marking her difference, her dissent” (53). Hulga’s body, Gleeson-White contends,

when dissociated “from the feminine ideal transforms...into an androgynous, sterile one, [a] type of ugly body” (46). Natalie Wilson also sees the material body as related to social constructs in O’Connor’s fiction: “outsider status allows [O’Connor’s] characters to question, subvert, and transgress patriarchal authority. And, significantly, this outsider status is often tied to being a *body* that patriarchy defines as inferior or abnormal” (96). Not only does Hulga’s leg, a strap-on in every sense of the word, move her away from the ideal, feminine body, it is a way for her to physically demonstrate her rejection of the ideal, feminine behavior expected of her. Hulga’s body is rejected by patriarchal standards of beauty; rather than attempting to fit the standards set for her, Hulga rejects patriarchal standards as a way to define herself and she embraces that which marks her as unfeminine. This approach works for her until Manley Pointer enters the story.

#### *Manley Pointer as Trickster Trope*

Manley Pointer’s arrival into this cloistered female community appears, at first, to be short-lived and accidental. He is a Bible salesman and is, presumably, one of the boys whose stupidity Hulga can smell. As such, it is expected that he will be dispatched quickly and without ceremony. However, he enchants both the Hopewell women and quickly insinuates himself into their home. In fact, Manley’s charms are almost inexplicable, unless readers interpret him as a trickster figure. He is able to fool Mrs. Hopewell into thinking he is simple and helpless the moment they meet. First, he calls her by the wrong name, Mrs. Cedars. When Mrs. Hopewell corrects him, readers must be suspicious of him: “‘Oh!’ he said, *pretending to look puzzled* but with his eyes

sparkling, ‘I saw it said “The Cedars” on the mailbox so I thought you was Mrs. Cedars!’” (O’Connor 277; emphasis added). Since the house has a mailbox marked “The Cedars,” it is perfectly natural to assume that the woman who answers the door would be Mrs. Cedars. However, Manley is not genuinely puzzled by the inconsistency, but *pretends* to be, as if he already knows that she is not Mrs. Cedars, though there is no reason he should know this before speaking with her. A travelling salesman must encounter such a thing occasionally but, instead of simply taking this mistake in stride, Manley makes a show of pretending to look puzzled; presumably, he performs this bewilderment in order to disarm Mrs. Hopewell.

Manley continues his charming performance as the unsophisticated Bible salesman as he practically forces himself into the Hopewell home. Though he intrudes quite rudely, Manley does so in such a way that he cannot be blamed. The poor manners which allow him to intrude seem to belong to the luggage, rather than to the man. Unlike Jamie Harris in “The Daemon Lover,” who is very rooted in the psyche of the fiancée, Manley is very real and operates through the material world, as is evidenced in the use of his luggage to manipulate his way into their home: “He picked up the satchel and under cover of a pant, he fell forward into her hall. It was rather as if the suitcase had moved first, jerking him after it” (O’Connor 277). Before he even enters the living area, O’Connor has given readers much information about this character and what we can expect from him; we can see that he is deceptive, he is adept at covering his deception, and furthermore, Mrs. Hopewell is vulnerable to his trickery.

Though Manley is able to get into the home, it appears as if the real trick is staying there. Readers are led to believe that Mrs. Hopewell will do away with Manley before he and Hulga can even meet; his spell over her appears to be fleeting. Shortly after he enters, Mrs. Hopewell attempts to dismiss Manley: “‘Well, young man, I don’t want to buy a Bible and I smell my dinner burning’” (O’Connor 278). However, Manley responds in such a way that his spell is almost instantly recast: “‘I know I’m real simple. I don’t know how to say a thing but to say it. I’m just a country boy.’ He glanced up into her unfriendly face. ‘People like you don’t like to fool with country people like me!’” (278). These words have an almost magical effect on Mrs. Hopewell, who constantly praises those of classes lower than her own, as with her statements about the Freeman girls. She cannot tolerate the implication that she does not appreciate the goodness of those in the lower class and feels the need to defend herself to this stranger: “‘Why, I think there aren’t enough good country people in the world!’ she said, stirred. ‘I think that’s what’s wrong with it!’” (279). With this sweet, simple speech, Manley has placed Mrs. Hopewell into an apologetic position and she is not even aware of what he has done in his persuasive, self-deprecating way. In this manner, Manley creates an opening for a continuation of their conversation and, instead of insisting on his leaving, Mrs. Hopewell asks him to wait while she checks her meal (279). In this scene, Manley’s words operate on Mrs. Hopewell like a magical incantation or spell, and readers see his powerful intuition and speech at work.

During the course of his afternoon visit, Manley furthers his advantage with Mrs. Hopewell by continuing his down-to-earth country boy routine. He tricks her by convincing her of his honest simplicity, though readers can see just how eerily

knowledgeable Manley is about Mrs. Hopewell and Hulga. He keeps his spell working by telling Mrs. Hopewell,

“I guess a lot of boys come telling you they’re working their way through college,” he said, “but I’m not going to tell you that.

Somehow,” he said, “I don’t want to go to college. I want to devote my life to Chrustian service. See,” he said, lowering his voice, “I got this heart condition. I may not live long.” (O’Connor 279)

In this short speech, Manley has tapped into several of Mrs. Hopewell’s favorite topics and, seemingly unknowingly, demonstrated agreement with Mrs. Hopewell’s opinions. Like a good country boy, he has eschewed the academic life (toward which, because of Hulga, Mrs. Hopewell has, at best, an indifferent attitude) for the religious life, a choice Mrs. Hopewell respects coming from a good country boy. Furthermore, Manley has a heart condition, as does Hulga and, more than simply coincidentally, he has the *exact same* heart condition Hulga has (279). Manley has worked his magic in charming Mrs. Hopewell; not only does she desist from her attempt to send him away, she insists that he join her and Hulga for dinner and, eventually, allows him to stay and chat for two hours (279-280).

Melita Schaum notes that one of the trickster archetype’s defining features is “knowing precisely the right lure that will work with each victim” (14). As a trickster character, Manley knows just how to act and just what to say to get his way; his intuitive reading of Mrs. Hopewell is eerily accurate. Manley’s country bumpkin act appeals to her sense of open-minded superiority; the rejection of higher education

appeals to her notion that college has played a part in the ruination of her daughter; his claim that he has a heart condition (in fact, he claims to have the exact heart condition Hulga has) appeals to her sentimentality. In fact, O'Connor's description of her reaction to Manley's heart condition confession conveys Mrs. Hopewell's sense of a lack of control: "she knew that her eyes were filling with tears but she collected herself quickly and murmured, 'Won't you stay for dinner? We'd love to have you!' and was sorry the instant she heard herself say it" (279). Mrs. Hopewell immediately regrets the invitation and it is almost as if she unaware that she is speaking; she is not sorry the instant she speaks the words, she is sorry the instant *she hears herself* speaking the words. This is an almost out-of-body experience for her; Manley's spell has elicited the invitation he wanted, seemingly without any agency on the part of Mrs. Hopewell. He demonstrates an uncanny level of knowledge and control, indicating that there is more to the character than the obtuse rube he plays for Mrs. Hopewell's benefit.

### *The Meeting of Manley and Hulga*

Perhaps the best argument for Manley's ability to make himself appealing to any target is the fact that he is able to trick intelligent, obstinate Hulga into an attraction to him. Clearly, O'Connor, up to this point, has worked to detail the many, many ways in which this mother and daughter disagree. It is, therefore, quite surprising when Manley, who has so effectively ingratiated himself with Mrs. Hopewell, appears also to get along with Hulga. After the meal, Manley meets Hulga near the road as he is leaving; knowing how Hulga feels about boys, Mrs. Hopewell,

witnessing the meeting from afar, “trembled to think what Joy would say to him,” she must be surprised when Manley and Hulga speak, apparently without incident (O’Connor 281).

O’Connor reveals to her readers shortly thereafter the conversation between Hulga and Manley and we can see that he has shifted from pleasing Mrs. Hopewell to pleasing Hulga. Even “his look was different from what it had been at the dinner table,” as if he is a shape-shifter (O’Connor 283). Outside the house, face-to-face with Hulga, Manley seems to have suddenly become smitten with her: “He was gazing at her with open curiosity, with fascination, like a child watching a new fantastic animal at the zoo, and he was breathing as if he had run a great distance to reach her” (283). This obviously appreciative appraisal of Hulga, combined with the feeling of urgency conveyed by his fast breathing, appeals to Hulga’s idea of herself as different and special. Manley is enthralled by her, as she feels someone should be. Knowing as we do how much this mother and daughter differ from one another, the simple fact that Manley is able to endear himself to both women is quite an achievement.

Manley demonstrates that he is not only attracted to Hulga; he understands her. In addition to “his gaze of complete admiration,” he is able to pinpoint exactly what it is that makes Hulga so special. Interestingly, all the characteristics he appreciates are those which make Hulga androgynous; the characteristics which no one but Hulga appreciates are the ones he praises. He tells Hulga, “I like girls that wear glasses,” and “I think a lot. I’m not like these people that a serious thought don’t ever enter their heads” (O’Connor 284). Manley again knows the appropriate enticement for his target. He demonstrates to her that her intelligence is apparent to all who meet her by so



obviously trying to appeal to her academic interests. He is not threatened or put off by her education, one of the many things that make her different from the other girls; he is attracted to her *because* of her intelligence.

In addition to demonstrating an attraction to Hulga's unconventional appearance and her obvious intelligence, Manley reveals an innate ability to understand Hulga as she imagines herself to be. He is the only character who expresses anything even close to appreciation for her chosen name. After she tells him her name, Manley meditatively repeats her name, then concludes, "I never heard of anybody name Hulga before" (O'Connor 284). While not an out-and-out compliment, Manley at least appreciates the originality of the name, which is as complimentary a reaction as she has heard about her name.

Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, within moments of getting Hulga to himself, Manley cleverly acknowledges her prosthetic leg (O'Connor 283). Instead of politely ignoring or overtly insulting Hulga's prized prosthetic, Manley associates it with compliments: "I see you got a wooden leg," he said. "I think you're brave. I think you're real sweet" (283). Though, throughout the afternoon, he has presented himself as a simple-minded country boy, in this short conversation, Manley proves to Hulga that he is the only one who truly understands who she is at her core.

This interaction between Hulga and Manley represents the moment when the issue of Hulga's attitudes toward gender becomes more complex and even more interesting. Before meeting Manley, Hulga rejects and even mocks all the trappings of southern femininity. However, as soon as he meets Hulga, Manley calls her a "girl,"

calls her a “brave sweet little thing,” sweet terms we have come to expect she would reject but which she accepts when they come from Manley (O’Connor 284). It seems that, as soon as she is complimented and admired by a man, Hulga forgets all her precious objections to strict gender roles and falls into the role of the desirable woman she has previously rejected as laughable. However, O’Connor does not allow her characters, or her readers, off so easily. Following the meeting of Manley and Hulga, there is still a substantial amount of slippage in the gender roles played by these two characters.

### *The Castration of Hulga Hopewell*

In addition to expressing an attraction to all the androgynous things that make Hulga unique, Manley brings an element of romance to her world, though the romance he brings is anything but traditional. Perhaps his greatest achievement in trickery is convincing Hulga that he worships her and that she, therefore, is in control of their relationship. After he convinces her to make a date with him, he leaves and “During the night she had imagined that she seduced him,” though it is obviously the other way around (O’Connor 284). Manley allows Hulga to feel that, as the seducer, she occupies the traditionally masculine role; this atypical romance, so cleverly constructed by Manley, appeals to Hulga precisely because it allows her to maintain her stance in an androgynous comfort zone.

Manley allows Hulga to feel as if she is in control and, after climbing to the hayloft of a barn while on their date, she even thinks to herself, “that for the first time in her life she was face to face with real innocence. This boy, with an instinct that

came from beyond wisdom, had touched the truth about her” (O’Connor 289). This is true, but in a way that Hulga cannot understand. Manley, as a trickster character, recognizes that Hulga sees herself as special, as superior and above patriarchal norms. However, once alone with her in the hayloft, he works to quickly disabuse her of the notion that she is in control of their relationship or, for that matter, of herself.

The scene in the hayloft appears to be a seduction and Hulga, still operating on the assumption that she is in control, even thinks to herself, “She had seduced him without even making up her mind to try” (O’Connor 288). However, while she believes she is seducing him, Manley is stripping her of all that makes her different and, thus, of all her power. Unlike Jamie Harris in “The Daemon Lover,” who operates psychologically, Manley’s trickster characteristics are displayed in his interest in and control over Hulga’s material possessions. He begins by removing her glasses, then moves on to compelling her to admit that she loves him, a notion she finds silly; Manley begins to take control here (287-8). First, he literally blinds her by removing her glasses, then he presses her into a compliant role by demanding she declare her love for him. In so doing, he cleverly guides her into a position of weakness and submission, a traditionally feminine position. Hulga acquiesces to his demand that she affirm her love for him. Manley, again operating through the material, asks her to prove it by showing him where her prosthetic leg attaches. When she hesitates, he explains his interest, “it’s what makes you different” (288). The pivotal moment of the story, when Hulga allows Manley to remove her leg and he refuses to return it to her, follows.

The removal of her leg, that which makes her special and which represents her rejection of femininity, is often read as a rape act, even by critics who acknowledge that the prosthetic is phallic. The first critic to read this theft as a castration was David Havird in his 1993 article, "The Saving Rape: Flannery O'Connor and Patriarchal Religion." Havird argues that, through the removal of her leg, "an outraged Hulga discovers anew her vulnerable female self, which O'Connor . . . seems to define as a castrated dismembered male" (24). Havird's castration argument is often cited in the gender-focused readings which follow, including Christine Atkins's "Educating Hulga: Re-Writing Seduction in 'Good Country People.'" Strangely, though, while both authors see the theft of Hulga's leg as a castration they also use Hulga's case to explore rape in O'Connor's fiction; there is a lack of distinction between castration and rape.

For Havird, Hulga's castration acts as a "saving rape" in that it opens her to the possibility of "receiv[ing] the Word" of God (24). Atkins adopts Havird's argument when she writes, "without the leg, Hulga's masculine persona disappears" (126). Atkins also argues, though, that "O'Connor has entrapped [Hulga] in a 'rape script'" (120). Both critics treat rape and castration as interchangeable and read this assault as an anti-feminist punishment for Hulga's atheism; both argue this punishment leaves her a "normal girl" (Havird 24, Atkins 121). While Havird sees rape in O'Connor's work as "saving," as evident in his article's title, and Atkins writes that "O'Connor leaves Hulga aptly violated and shamed," neither sees "Good Country People" as possibly critical of Manley as a rapist. Atkins's evidence that Hulga is ashamed, for example is that O'Connor describes Hulga's face as "churning" (O'Connor 291).

O'Connor does not indicate that Hulga does, or should, feel shame; it is certainly possible to read her "churning" face as a reflection of anger, frustration, or fear. However, these critics, despite their own acknowledgements of the theft's connection to castration, insist on O'Connor punishing her female character for her atheism and ignore the indications of reading this assault solely as a castration, as would be indicated by the leg's phallic quality.

If, instead of conflating rape with castration, we perform a reading of Manley's assault on Hulga as a straightforward castration, the possibility for a feminist reading opens up. It is clear that, by removing her leg/phallus, Manley castrates Hulga; even in their articles on her castration-rape, Havird and Atkins acknowledge that Manley emasculates Hulga. If we consider this trickster figure a representative of patriarchal culture as a whole, not just patriarchal religion, the castration truly does operate as Atkins argues about the rape-castration, "In stealing Hulga's leg, Pointer emasculates her and reestablishes the 'natural' order of things—a paradigm of male dominance and female submission" (127). Manley Pointer does not emasculate a feminine character, he emasculates a woman who dares to think and act outside the boundaries set for her. In this way, he reinforces patriarchal norms.

By isolating herself in the country within a community of women, Hulga has been able to persist in the belief that gender roles do not matter in her life: she can be intelligent, churlish, single, childless, and willfully unattractive without suffering societal repercussions. However, within a single day of a man entering her world, Hulga suffers the consequences of her actions and beliefs. Removal of her leg results in an immense and immediate loss of self for Hulga: "Without the leg she felt entirely

dependent on him. Her brain seemed to have stopped thinking altogether and to be about some other function that it was not very good at” (O’Connor 289). Even her mental faculties, such a definitive element of her identity, begin to fail her with the loss of her leg. Her leg is truly the locus of her power; Manley strips her of the self she knows when he steals that part of her.

Ultimately, Hulga is tricked by Manley into allowing her world to be destabilized. She is tricked into believing that she is fine, even attractive, as she is. She is tricked into trusting Manley. She is tricked into allowing Manley access to the core of who she is. As Melita Schaum writes, “He lures her by way of her own vanity into crossing boundaries from the world she thinks she knows and claimed to be master of to one both unpredictable and revelatory.” (7). When Manley castrates Hulga, he does not just destroy her understanding of the world she thought herself master of; he destroys who she is and, furthermore, he destroys her notions of who she can become. Before this devastation, Hulga has considered herself free of petty gender role restrictions. However, her castration will serve as a permanent reminder that, though she might think herself above gender role restrictions, she will never be safe from patriarchal punishment. It does not matter how she thinks of herself, dresses, or acts; she is, and will remain, “just” a woman. Any future endeavors at becoming more than “just” a woman are moot once she realizes that her work at androgyny can be dispatched quickly and easily.

In another of O’Connor’s clever name games, through his castration of Hulga, Manley Pointer “points” out who is “manly.” In so doing, he makes Hulga painfully aware that she is not the master of anything, even her own mind and body are out of

her control. In “Good Country People,” O’Connor illustrates that even Hulga, who has to this point been impervious to gender roles, is vulnerable in a patriarchy. At a time when other women aspire to be married mothers, Hulga considers herself to be a whole person as she is. We learn, though, that even when she removes herself from society, intelligent, powerful Hulga is still vulnerable to objectification. By allowing Manley to wreck Hulga’s world and demonstrating just how devastating this brief encounter is for Hulga, O’Connor illustrates the power and pervasiveness of patriarchy. Though she has adopted masculine thought and behavior and has isolated herself from patriarchal society, ultimately Hulga is still a woman and, as such, is still subject to patriarchal rule.

The move from the intensely psychological focus of “The Daemon Lover” to a more material focus in “Good Country People” indicates a change of focus within the Gothic tradition. While “The Daemon Lover” is closely associated with the psychological profiles found in the works of Gilman and Chopin, “Good Country People” moves to a space between the psychological and the material. As this shift occurs, so does “Good Country People” shift to a more overtly political message than is found in “The Daemon Lover.” By creating a character who is so clearly a challenge to patriarchal norms and allowing her to be robbed of her power, O’Connor is more direct about the gender politics in her piece. This focus on the material and the political increases in the way the trickster figure, Arnold Friend, operates in Joyce Carol Oates’s “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” As we will see, Arnold Friend’s power is rooted in the increasingly impersonal material world and the political message continues to grow in its insistency.

## Power Plays: Masculinity and the Trickster Figure in Joyce Carol Oates's

### “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?”

Joyce Carol Oates's 1966 short story “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” is, more than 40 years after its original publication, still one of the most well-known, well-liked, and anthologized pieces of American short fiction. The story reads like a demented sort of fairy tale: Connie, the beautiful girl, is “rescued” by Arnold Friend. However, readers' expectations of a happy ending are inverted when Connie is terrified by Arnold's appearance at her door. While he initially appears to Connie as hip and attractive, as he entices her to join him, the façade that he is desirable falls apart and she becomes terrified by his advances. As in the Gothic works of Jackson and O'Connor, Oates mines our deepest fears about female sexuality, erosion of familial connections, power imbalances, and the unknown. G.F. Waller writes of Oates's work, “Some of the most compelling writing in contemporary fiction, her stories force upon readers an often frightening sense of our own fears, obsessions, and drives” (9). As with “The Daemon Lover” and “Good Country People,” “Where Are You Going,” features a trickster character in Arnold, who swiftly shifts from a character with heroic possibilities to a villain. Unlike the trickster characters in the work of Jackson and O'Connor, though, Arnold is firmly rooted in, and operates through, the world of the material; “Where Are You Going,” the only



piece to be written after the beginning of second wave feminism, is also a more direct piece of political commentary.

After reading “The Daemon Lover” and “Good Country People,” the story of Arnold and Connie is a familiar one: an unfulfilled female is about to be saved from her dreary existence by a stranger that fairy tale narrative is quickly disrupted by trickster character Arnold and his less than heroic intentions. In *Trickster Makes This World*, Lewis Hyde writes that “tricksters upset the old cosmos and create (or reveal) the lines of demarcation that shape the new one, this world” (261). In Connie’s world, at the age of fifteen, “the new world” is adulthood. This unfamiliar territory is one of sexual growth and experimentation. Connie, still a naïve adolescent, thinks that she has learned to play the game of the sexes and that she has the upper hand; this belief, though, is subverted by Arnold. As a trickster figure, he works to reinforce patriarchal standards by punishing Connie for acting outside prescribed gender role boundaries, by assuming a level of power that is not hers to claim. The possibility of Arnold as a rapist and/or murderer is felt as a threatening undercurrent throughout the entire seduction scene. As such, he is, of course, a terrifying character. However, the power he wields over Connie, the fact that his threats go unchecked, and the messages readers glean about women’s roles and vulnerability are truly some of the more frightening elements of this story. Through his speech and actions, Connie is initiated into the adult world when she is made to learn that, no matter how powerful she might believe herself to be, as a woman, she is subject to the desires of men.

*Connie and Gender Concerns*

As a young girl, growing into adulthood, Connie must negotiate between the adult world and her teenybopper existence. As such, she is very aware of some of the ways in which others judge her value as a female and, conversely, the ways in which they find her to be lacking. Some of the information she receives about expectations of her come from her mother, who yells at Connie regularly, but just as regularly commends Connie's sister, June who

was so plain and chunky and steady that Connie had to hear her praised all the time by her mother and her mother's sisters. June did this, June did that, she saved money and helped clean the house and cooked and Connie couldn't do a thing. (Oates 26)

Clearly, for this group of older women, being helpful, giving, selfless, is valued in women, whereas appearance seems to be valued, or at least unworthy of criticism, only when it is unremarkable, as in June's case.

Despite the opinions of those who *should* be role models for her, her mother and aunts, Connie's opinions about women's value is quite different. Instead of internalizing her mother's notions of womanhood, Connie relies on males' judgments in determining her value. We learn immediately that she is very concerned with her appearance and has "a quick, nervous giggling habit of craning her neck to glance into mirror or checking other people's faces to make sure her own was all right" (Oates 25). Oates absolutely clarifies Connie's beliefs about how she is valued, "she knew she was pretty and that was everything" (25). It appears that, judging by the responses

of the males in Connie's life, Connie is able to project herself as an attractive, and therefore, valuable woman. Readers must conclude that, single and living at home with her parents at age 24, June is unsuccessful in finding a mate, otherwise she would be married and living in her own home. June's reliability and plain looks do not appear to win her any attention from men. Connie, on the other hand, who "knows that she is pretty," seems to be the toast of the town. In one night out, she is singled out for attention by three suitors (27-8). Clearly, the men around her value her as an attractive mate; she has learned that her prettiness is "everything" specifically to men.

Looking to men for her value tends to make Connie ignore the principles esteemed by her female family members. She even plays different versions of herself, depending on where she happens to be:

Everything about her had two sides to it, one for home and one for anywhere that was not home: her walk, which could be childlike and bobbing, or languid enough to make anyone think she was hearing music in her head; her mouth, which was pale and smirking most of the time, but bright and pink on these evenings out; her laugh, which was cynical and drawling at home . . . but high-pitched and nervous anywhere else . . . . (Oates 27)

At home, where the only people paying attention and offering criticism are women, Connie is free to be a bratty, sarcastic child. Outside the home, however, where the opinions of men and boys are what matters, Connie tries out a new flirtatious and sexy persona, presumably in order to make herself more attractive to her admirers. Though

her family life is matriarchal (the only male family member mentioned is her father who “was away at work most of the time and . . . didn’t bother talking much to them”), and she has many female role models, Connie still plays at being a woman, instead of looking to the woman in her life for guidance (26). Her performance indicates that Connie has completely internalized patriarchal values, as is evidenced by her willingness to completely change her behavior and appearance in order to attract men and boys. She is willing to hide away her genuine self, the self she feels free to exhibit in the safety of a matriarchal home, in order to integrate herself into patriarchal culture. In fact, Connie appears to be the perfect girl to thrive in a patriarchal culture: she looks to men and boys for cues on how to look, act, and even think. She appears to be more than willing to mold herself into a second version of herself based on males’ feedback, indicating that, when that second version is no longer appealing, she would be willing to become a third version and so on. As with the fiancée in “The Daemon Lover,” Connie, understandably at age fifteen, does not have a core identity, which is why she looks to others to help her define herself.

In his article on “Where Are You Going” and the Cold War, James Cruise writes “Oates’s story is first and foremost a product of its age: a literary child of the 1960s” and goes on to talk about the story in terms of Cold War politics (95). Cruise argues that Oates intended “Where Are You Going” as a treatise against the containment ideology prevalent during the Cold War; according to Cruise, this ideology worked to create a feeling of paranoia, an urge to gather together in order to feel safe (95). Cruise sees a connection between Cold War parenting and Connie’s ignorance, which proves to be dangerous for her later. By containing their children in

an effort to protect them, Cruise argues parents of this era do their daughters a disservice, “No one, it seems, has taught [Connie] how to fend for herself, just as she has never learned how to live for herself. Womanhood for Connie is always a glass half-empty, not as a conscious determination but as an unformed notion to act upon” (104). That is, because her parents do not want her out in the adult world (she is still a teenager), they have not prepared her for the adult world. The result is Connie’s immature attitude toward sex and her complete lack of questioning the patriarchal system which tells her that her value is located solely in appearance. Whatever the reason for it, this naïveté leads her to mistakenly conflate value and power, as we will see.

It is unexpected that a girl so invested in patriarchal notions of women’s worth would need to be reprimanded by a patriarchal force. However, Connie’s remarkable ability to make herself attractive to suitors proves to be her hubris. The first night she encounters Arnold Friend, for example, Connie enjoys the excitement of being wanted and of being able to turn down those who want her. This night, Connie and her friend are barely out of the car “and right away someone leaned out a car window and invited them over, but it was just a boy from high school they didn’t like. *It made them feel good to be able to ignore him*” (Oates 27; emphasis added). These girls take pleasure in rejecting their admirers. While Connie looks to (male) others to define her value, she has, in turn, begun to tout her attractiveness, from which her value is derived, as a form of power. As a pretty girl, she is taking too much advantage of, and (even worse) pride in, the power that she has in attracting, then rejecting, suitors.

After Connie rejects the boy she knows from school, she goes on to slight Arnold a short while later. The encounter occurs in the parking lot of the popular drive-in restaurant, as Connie leaves with her chosen date for the night. In her 1975 article, ““Don’t You Know Who I Am?”” Joyce M. Wegs traces the parallels between popular culture and religion for Connie and other teens like her. As such, she sees the drive-in restaurant as “a grotesque parody of a church” (100). A female character seeking “haven and blessing” in a church is a familiar trope in Gothic literature; in 1960s United States, though, this trope is distorted when Connie conflates popular culture with the truly spiritual (Oates 27). In this reading, Arnold is especially frightening as he

stared at her and then his lips widened into a grin. Connie slit her eye at him and turned away, but she couldn’t help glancing back and there he was, still watching her. He wagged a finger and laughed and said, “Gonna get you, baby.” (Oates 28)

She clearly recognizes that he is attracted to her as he stares at her and smiles. Instead of simply smiling back or turning away, Connie makes a point of narrowing her eyes in disdain before turning away. When she looks back, it is as though she wants to see that she has caused him pain or, at least, embarrassment or, perhaps, this is simply her adolescent idea of flirtation. Arnold is well aware of her game, though, thus the wagging of his finger: Connie is a naughty little girl, overly confident and acting beyond her position and, instead of allowing her to feel empowered by her overt rejection, as she does when rejecting the previous boy, Arnold calls her on her

behavior and lets her know, in no uncertain terms, that she is just a baby and he is going to get her.

The power that comes from Connie's beauty is apparently being abused and this creates resentment. Marie Mitchell Olesen Urbanski also locates Connie's power in her beauty: "From the outset of the narrative, members of Connie's family recognize their powerlessness and thus their difference from her. Her mother and sister are not attractive, so they do not really count" (200). This feeling of powerlessness, of not really counting, explains why Connie's mother might feel resentment toward Connie and her confidence. This resentment manifests itself in verbal attacks on Connie, "Stop gawking at yourself. Who are you? You think you're so pretty?" (Oates 25). Her reminds her that she is no one when she asks Connie who she thinks she is. If an already relatively powerless woman feels resentment about Connie's minimal power, it is no surprise that the males who usually enjoy power over women would resent Connie's appropriation of power, as she rejects them. Connie, in her immaturity, mistakes her fleeting beauty as real power. It is no wonder Arnold wags his finger; he will have to instruct this girl, whom he can pinpoint as a "baby" from the first moment he sees her, in the ways of the world.

#### *Arnold Friend as Trickster Figure*

The question of who, or what, exactly Arnold Friend is has plagued critics since the first publication of "Where Are You Going." Using the metaphor of music as religion, Wegs is able to create a persuasive argument that Arnold Friend "is far more

than a grotesque portrait of a psychopathic killer masquerading as a teenager; he also has all the traditional sinister traits of that arch-deceiver and source of grotesque terror, the devil” (102). His deceptive nature, as noted by Wegs, leads me to believe that a reading of his character as a trickster trope could give readers some insight into the gender politics of the story.

One characteristic of the trickster trope is shape-shifting. While we never actually see him shift shapes, Arnold does seem to be a clumsy sort of disguiser of himself. Just as Manley Pointer’s power is rooted in the artifacts he steals, Arnold’s powers of disguise and persuasion are rooted in surrounding himself with the right accessories. He drives a “bright gold” convertible, perhaps a sort of teenybopper’s idea of a white steed (Oates 31). The appropriate, hip music is another accessory of his. When Connie first sees him at the drive-in, music pervades the scene (28). When he pulls up to her house, it as though he brings the drive-in with him: the cool car, combined with cool music certainly evokes the atmosphere of the drive-in restaurant. In fact, Arnold is even listening to “the same program that was playing inside the house” (32). Arnold is adept at creating an ambiance of hipness with which to surround himself. Unlike Jamie Harris, who operates on a psychological level, and Manley Pointer who operates on a more personal level, Arnold revels in the commercial and the material. He knows how to associate himself with the popular culture with which Connie so deeply identifies. In this way, he is able to make fifteen-year-old Connie think he is cool, someone with whom she would want to associate.

Arnold’s car and the music he listens to work in his favor in that both make him seem cool and desirable. However, despite his material resources, he is not an



ideal shape-shifter. His appearance seems almost clownish; one of the first things Connie notices about him is that “he had shaggy, shabby black hair that looked crazy as a wig” (Oates 32). This thought is reinforced when “He placed his sunglasses on top of his head, carefully, as if he were indeed wearing a wig” (39). In addition to the likelihood that he is wearing a wig, Arnold stumbles about absurdly, losing his balance and catching himself before he falls each time because, “Evidently his feet did not go all the way down; the boots must have been stuffed with something so that he would seem taller” Connie concludes (43). Arnold also appears to wear makeup; Connie notices evidence that he uses mascara “his eyes became slits and she saw how thick the lashes were, thick and black as if painted with a black tarlike material” (38). These accessories, helpful in first getting him Connie’s attention, are ultimately unconvincing.

As the story progresses and her fear of Arnold builds, Connie also notices that there is something unusual about his face:

he began to smile again. She watched this smile come, awkward as if he were smiling from inside a mask. His whole face was a mask, she thought wildly, tanned down to his throat but then running out as if he had plastered makeup on his face but had forgotten about his throat.

(41)

Arnold’s poorly constructed disguise falls apart rapidly, destabilizing Connie’s expectations of Arnold and his intentions. Despite the disguise’s eventual failure, it is effective in that it helps him to establish a preliminary rapport with Connie. She

initially responds quite positively to his carefully arranged appearance, “Connie liked the way he was dressed, which was the way all of them dressed . . . . And his face was a familiar face, somehow” (34). Though he has not actually shifted shapes, Arnold has altered his appearance dramatically and it seems to have worked quite well for him. It is a full five pages of dialogue between the two before Connie even begins to recognize that he is in disguise. While the disguise does fall apart, indicating that Arnold is not necessarily adept at trickery, success cannot be argued with; after all, he is able to coax Connie out of her parents’ home, even after she has seen through the disguise.

Friend possesses many more characteristics of the trickster trope in addition to this shabby, though effective, sort of shape-shifting. His origins are mysterious and his appearance evokes feelings of fear about the unknown. Specifically, Arnold appears to come from nowhere; Connie “had the idea that he had driven up the driveway all right but had come from nowhere before that and belonged nowhere and that everything about him and even about the music that was so familiar to her was only half real” (Oates 39). Where are you going and where have you been are questions that Connie should ask Arnold, who seems to come from nowhere and be headed anywhere and, most importantly, who wants to take her with him. The fact that he can just appear seemingly from thin air is frightening in that it indicates pervasiveness. Just as with the music which seems to accompany him, it almost feels as though he can appear anytime, anywhere from out of nowhere. This is an interesting metaphor for patriarchy, as well, since it is everywhere and always pervasive, though not always recognized.

In addition to his mysterious origins, Arnold also has knowledge which it seems he should not have. First, we learn he knows Connie's name, though she has not told him what it is. This does not seem so strange, he could have asked about her after their initial encounter at the drive-in. However, he quickly demonstrates exactly how much more he knows about her, which appears to be just about everything:

“I know your name and all about you, lots of things,” Arnold Friend said. . . . “I took a special interest in you, such a pretty girl, and found out all about you—like I know your parents and sister are gone somewheres and I know where and how long they're going to be gone, and I know who you were with last night.” (Oates 35)

Clearly, these are things that Arnold could not, or at least should not, know. Connie, ignorant of who Arnold is, not to mention what his intentions are, is at a clear disadvantage. Whereas in their previous interaction, in which she was able to reject him and she felt she had all the power, Arnold clearly indicates that he has the upper hand in this second exchange by demonstrating his extensive knowledge of her and her family.

The amount and depth of Arnold's knowledge are both fascinating and frightening. Walter Sullivan points out Arnold's “Youthful language and gestures . . . combine with his uncanny knowledge of Connie's circumstances, the names of her acquaintances, the habits of her family, to develop a sinister adumbration. He is not what he seems” (8). Arnold's ability to know becomes even more frightening when we

learn that he can “see” where Connie’s parents are and exactly what they are doing at that moment at a barbecue, miles away:

“they’re drinking. Sitting around,’ he said vaguely, squinting as if he were staring all the way to town and over to Aunt Tillie’s back yard.

Then the vision seemed to get clear and he nodded energetically. . . .

And your mother’s helping some fat woman with the corn.” (Oates 39-40)

When Connie asks who the fat woman is, Arnold does not have an answer, which does throw some doubt on any possibility of supernatural abilities. However, he does take her question as an opportunity to crack a joke and then compliment Connie on her figure. It is likely he does this to further establish a connection with her; perhaps, he is well aware of who the fat woman is, but intelligently chooses to joke with Connie instead of further frightening her with his creepily accurate knowledge.

There is also the possibility that Arnold is displaying, instead of supernatural abilities, the tendencies of a stalker. Perhaps he has asked around about Connie and learned the names of her family and friends. Perhaps he watched outside her home until Connie’s family left, followed them, and watched them to see what they were doing. After all, once they are at a barbecue, it is not difficult to guess what is happening: people sit around, drink, and talk at barbecues. No matter how he got his information, though, Arnold has succeeded in convincing Connie of the almost supernatural extent of his knowledge and, in so doing, has placed himself firmly in the

position of power. Connie, thrown off balance by the surprise of Arnold's knowledge, has lost her advantage.

Arnold's strongest trickster characteristic is his ability to convince. Speech is one way Arnold demonstrates that he is not who he pretends to be; he repeats a litany of phrases "as if he were running through all the expressions he'd learned but was no longer sure which of them was in style" in an effort to impress Connie (Oates 44). This speech just proves, though, that he is playing at being hip. Despite this incident of deception, Arnold is eerily honest about what he plans to do with Connie when she asks: "Just two things, or maybe three. But I promise it won't last long . . . I'll have my arms tight around you so you won't need to try to get away and I'll show you what love is like, what it does" (45-6). He even tells her, early in the encounter, that he will "come inside you where it's all secret and you'll give in to me" (40). It is clear that he plans to sexually assault her; the promise that "it won't last long" indicates that, whatever he does, it will not be pleasant for Connie, but at least it will end quickly. Then, the use of the word "love" combined with the promise that he will come inside her and the violent imagery of restraining her further indicates a plan for some sort of sexual violence. The revelation of his deception demonstrated in the speaking of the stylish phrases, combined with the honesty about his plans to rape her, should result in Connie *never* leaving the house with him. She even tells him, "People don't talk like that, you're crazy" (40). However, there is something beyond just his words about his speech which works in Arnold's favor and convinces Connie to join him.

Despite what he reveals in his speech, Arnold is able to use his words and, truly, *only* his words to convince Connie, despite her feelings of fear, to leave with

him. Arnold's speech is often identified as sounding like the voices heard on television or the radio and even sounds musical at times: "He spoke in a simple lilting voice, exactly as if he were reciting the words to a song" (Oates 35). "He had the voice of the man on the radio now" (38-9). "He sounded like a hero in a movie, declaring something important" (43). These are just a few examples of how he modulates his voice to become more persuasive to Connie, there are many more. It is as though, because he speaks with familiar voices, the voices she hears on the radio and in the movies, she is inclined to trust him.

Arnold alternately threatens, promises, and charms Connie. One promise he makes is to stay outside the house, as long as Connie does not call the police. Both he and Connie participate in this strange contract, a parallel to the unspoken contract between the sexes in a patriarchal system. Connie does, eventually, attempt to call for help but finds herself "so sick with fear that she could do nothing but listen to [the dial tone]" (Oates 45). Even when she chooses to save herself, her powers are limited, another instance of the interaction between Arnold and Connie as representative of larger cultural and political issues. Eventually his speech works to get her out of the safety of her house and within his reach.

What happens once Connie leaves her parents house and joins Arnold? We are not privy to that information; the story ends with Connie stepping down to Arnold, looking past him to "the vast reaches of the land behind him and on all sides of him—so much land that Connie had never seen before and did not recognize except to know that she was going to it" (Oates 48). Oates does not tell us what happens to Connie. However, as mentioned previously, Arnold is very overt about his intention to

sexually assault Connie. This might happen, it might not, we cannot know and this vague ending is one of the most haunting elements of the story.

### *Conclusions*

The questions Oates leaves her readers with are why questions: Why does Connie go with him? Why has Arnold chosen her? The reading that Arnold is a trickster who punishes Connie for stepping out of accepted gender roles helps us to answer these questions. Admittedly, Arnold does threaten to hurt her family when he tells Connie, “if you don’t come out we’re gonna wait till your people come home and then they’re all going to get it” (Oates 43-4). It is tempting to read Connie’s acquiescence as a heroic move, intended to save her family. However, by the time she has made the decision to leave the house, she is completely objectified. As Connie moves closer and closer to relinquishing herself to Arnold, we begin to see that she is detaches completely from her body: “She felt her pounding heart. Her hand seemed to enclose it. She thought for the first time in her life that it was nothing that was hers, that belonged to her, but just a pounding, living thing inside this body that wasn’t really hers either” (Oates 47). Furthermore, she does not walk outside to Arnold, rather, “She watched herself push the door slowly open as if she were back safe somewhere in the other doorway, watching this body and this head of long hair moving out into the sunlight where Arnold Friend waited” (47). By this point, Connie is no longer a subject, able to make decisions to save her family or herself. Oates uses a language of disconnection to explain Connie’s exit from the house, into Arnold’s world: “this body and this head” are, in fact, her body and head. Connie no longer feels in possession of herself, thanks to Arnold’s disruptive discourse.

Joan Easterly provides a compelling reading of Connie's submission to Arnold's wishes, "Connie helplessly allows Friend to direct her because she has no foundation upon which to base a resistance . . . . Because Connie has no clear concept of herself . . . she allows him to define her" (541). Indeed, Arnold is able to tap directly into Connie's notions about her value when he says, "be sweet like you can because what else is there for a girl like you but to be sweet and pretty and give in?" (Oates 46). In this way, Arnold indicates to Connie that being pretty is not everything, as she once thought; it is the *only* thing that defines her. In a material world, though, it is difficult for a girl like Connie, a teenybopper hanging out at the movies or the drive-in, to define herself in any terms but those outlined for her in popular culture.

Her lack of an inner core is so obvious to Arnold that he even knows that her heart is not her own, "put your hand on your heart, honey. Feel that? That feels solid too but we know better" (46). Connie is only valuable as a body and a pretty face and, because she and Arnold both know that her body is not even hers, she is simply a void where a person should be. Connie has completely accepted the patriarchal notion that she is only good as a beautiful face and body, as argued by Easterly. Her real downfall, though, is thinking that there was any real power located in that physicality. Arnold punishes Connie for stepping outside the bounds of acceptable female behavior; in Connie's case, the "crime" is the arrogance of thinking that she owns herself and that she can turn down any man.

While we cannot know what happens after the last lines of the story, Arnold's work as a reinforcer of patriarchy is completed within the story. By allowing her notions of her worth to translate to feelings of power, Connie assumes a level of



control which, as Arnold teaches her, is really not hers to assume. In demonstrating his uncanny knowledge, Arnold is able to subvert Connie's feelings of sureness. By convincing her to give herself up to what will almost certainly be a horrible fate, he demonstrates her lack of subjectivity when confronted with a man who knows the game she is playing. Whether he assaults her sexually or not, by usurping any power that she thought she had, by objectifying her so thoroughly, he assaults her socially and psychologically. In this way, Arnold has acted as a trickster figure, establishing for Connie the accepted gender roles in the adult world.

In "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" Oates draws attention, through one girl's story, to the damaging effects of patriarchal standards. This story is more directly politicized by Connie's participation in popular teenage rituals: she is not just one girl, she is representative of all girls who hang out at the movies, mall, or the local burger shop. Through the character of Connie, Oates demonstrates how patriarchal values are internalized by girls and how disempowering existing in this type of social structure is. Even girls like Connie, beautiful girls who think they have learned how to operate within the system, are ultimately vulnerable to the standards of patriarchy.

## Conclusions

Lewis Hyde writes, “The first deeds of most tricksters *do* undo hierarchy, overcome limits, assume control over the center, disorder the cosmos. . . . tricksters upset the old cosmos and create (or reveal) the lines of demarcation that shape the new one, this world” (260-1). The trickster figures of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century women’s literature, however, do not work in this way. Rather, in Shirley Jackson’s “The Daemon Lover,” Flannery O’Connor’s “Good Country People,” and Joyce Carol Oates’s “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” they operate to maintain patriarchal culture; they demarcate the existing structures.

In “The Daemon Lover,” Jamie Harris destroys the mind of the unnamed fiancée, whose only crime appears to be remaining unmarried, albeit involuntarily. In “Good Country People,” Hulga’s entire worldview and definition of self are destroyed by Manley Pointer. Her crimes against patriarchy are numerous: she is single at 32, she mocks standards of femininity and, perhaps worst of all, she believes she is at least as good as (probably better than) the only man she encounters in the story. Finally, in “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” Connie is punished by Arnold Friend for believing that her beauty gives her real power over men. In each of these stories, the male tricksters work as described by Franchot Ballinger who, as mentioned in the introduction, argues that tricksters work within the boundaries of the socially acceptable. In these short stories, the trickster characters pursue the socially acceptable goal of punishing outsider women.

By writing stories which represent the fragile position of women and girls the post-World War II United States, these authors draw our attention to the subordination of women in those years. “The Daemon Lover” and “Good Country People” demonstrate some reasons for the emergence of second wave feminism and “Where Are You Going” can be read as participating directly in the politics of its era. While these authors do not openly self-identify as feminist writers, in using trickster characters to reprimand the outsider women in these stories, each author investigates feminist concerns, such as the limitations on women’s lives and behaviors and the ways in which women are perceived to step out of bounds. These stories also demonstrate the extreme versions of how women are kept in line and the devastating effects of this type of behavioral policing and punishment.

As modern versions of Gothic tales, these pieces do not celebrate the traditional lady in distress and the hero who saves her, rather they comment on the society which puts their female characters in distress and point out that the “heroes” themselves can be the cause of female difficulties. Even within the short span of seventeen years in which these three stories were written, readers can see an increasingly insistent move to overtly political commentary. The trajectory of the stories from the focus on the deeply psychological in “The Daemon Lover,” to the crossroads between the personal and the political in “Good Country People,” to the highly commercial culture represented in “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” mirrors the movement of feminism into broader culture. As they move from the themes of the psychological to the highly public, these stories become increasingly political in their commentary. Despite the changes in focus across these pieces,

though, and the move to more overt political messages, trickster characters and patriarchal control remain constant across all three pieces.

While the trickster characters in these stories work to maintain the social hierarchy, maintenance of hierarchical structures is not always necessarily the role of a trickster. As Hyde points out, tricksters and trickster tales have historically been important in empowering certain oppressed populations. For example, he writes

African-American trickster stories, in one context, are about a particular oppressed people's refusal to be marginalized; in another context, they are about the freedom of the awakened human mind, a freedom those in power have not necessarily acquired. (278)

That is, for African-Americans, trickster tales have represented ways to challenge their oppression through mischief, in addition to providing an opportunity to consider their oppressors' failings. The stories studied in this work do not represent the kind of empowerment found in the African-American trickster story traditions but, perhaps, they are a step in that direction. The recognition of societal problems in these stories is important feminist work; recognition is the first step toward change

In her article, "Coyote Politics: Trickster Tales and Feminist Futures," Shane Phelan explores the ways in which women and other oppressed groups can adopt trickster characteristics in their thinking in order to make progress against oppression. Coyote, one of the better known trickster characters found in Native American mythology, plays a big role in this reframing. Phelan argues that "Coyote can refresh lesbian and feminist politics by offering us a less stable understanding of identity and

a looser and lighter, and therefore more empowering, interpretation of the political cosmos and human action” (132). Phelan finds tricksters’ capacities for play, mischief, and even shape-shifting to be possibly helpful in feminist politics in a culture which does not often find value in feminist ideology. As would trickster, Phelan suggests feminists “have to sneak up on our audiences” to make any real progress (143). Feminists have to “sneak up” on their audiences, of course, because American culture, as a whole, is still intolerant of the message that women deserve to be treated and thought of as equals to men. Perhaps, though, adopting a trickster philosophy can be a way to subvert the existing hierarchical systems. These stories represent the way in which authors can empower themselves by operating as tricksters themselves. Through the writing of these pieces, Jackson, O’Connor, and Oates “sneak up” on their readers and perform political work by challenging their readers’ notions of femininity, masculinity, belonging, control, and power.

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