



FACULTY OF ARTS
OF CHARLES UNIVERSITY
IN PRAGUE



Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

Supervisor's Review

Anna Hejzlárová, "The Conflict of Country and City in Flannery O'Connor's Short Stories" BA thesis

Choice of Topic:

The proposed topic of this BA thesis is certainly a pivotal one to understanding Flannery O'Connor's work. The thesis works through a set of issues in relation to this topic in an intellectually discerning and contextually sensitive manner, and with an acuity that marks this out as praiseworthy piece of work for a BA level student.

Thesis statement / aims and objectives:

The project is constructed around a clearly articulated set of objectives, at the core of which is the goal of analyzing the ways in which place and character serve to elucidate O'Connor's beliefs and attitudes. Ms Hejzlárová's analysis of the selected stories convincingly outlines how the tensions between rural and urban and the concomitant tension around intellectualism, point to O'Connor's critique of that the erosion of religious faith by spurious secular 'progress.'

Structure and development:

The first chapter offers a succinct introduction to O'Connor's situatedness in the South and the powerful role her religious faith played in her life and work. Following this the project's objectives and structural principles are clearly enumerated. Chapter two unfolds a necessary survey of the socio-historical context that informs O'Connor's work and its sense of place. This section presents a coherent, nuanced and quite well researched understanding of the concerns that filter through the stories. The chapter then turns to the status of conflict in O'Connor's writings: the conflict between Christianity and secularism, the conflict between O'Connor's Catholicism and the dominant Protestantism of the South, as well as the conflicts attendant upon being a self-proclaimed Christian writer. Ms Hejzlárová shows a critical awareness of how some commentators have attempted to go beyond this theological remit and read O'Connor otherwise, in particular in historical terms. In the end Ms Hejzlárová opts for a compromise here, holding both the theological and the historical as necessary tools in a critical appreciation of the writer's achievements. Chapters three, four and five elaborate on the motif of conflict in the stories "Good Country People", "The Artificial Nigger", "Judgment Day" and "A View of the Woods." One of the core merits of these chapters is the way that in each Ms Hejzlárová does not merely produce perceptive close readings of the stories, but provides critical framing of each of her nodes of enquiry (urban and rural places, intellectualism and progress) and strives to evaluate their validity or usefulness.

Research:

Research throughout is deployed with skill and judgement. Ms Hejzlárová's reading on the topic shows initiative and is both well chosen and imaginatively applied to the stories she discusses.

Use of sources:

There are no major formal or stylistic issues concerning the use of sources. Materials have been carefully cited throughout.

Stylistics and language:

Ms Hejzlárová's writing style is excellent—fluent, consistent and accomplished.



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Format:

A great deal of care has been taken with format of the project.

I recommend the thesis for defence and propose to grade the work “excellent” / 1 depending on the result of the defence.

22.1.2013

Clare Wallace, PhD