REPRESENTATIONS OF WHITE SOUTHERN MASCULINITY IN FLANNERY O'CONNOR'S
EVERYTHING THAT RISES MUST CONVERGE

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Abstract. *The paper aims to examine representations of masculinity in the short stories that constitute Flannery O'Connor's short story cycle Everything That Rises Must Converge (1965). Specifically, the goal is to analyze how the texts in question represent different models of white southern masculinity and whether the models offered problematize the way Southern literature and culture has traditionally conceptualized the way white southern men should behave and think. The analyses are supported by theoretical considerations of masculinity in general, as well as several definitions of white southern masculinity and its representations in literature over time. Another aim is to see whether the texts dramatize the well-documented crisis of masculinity in the South in the twentieth century, and whether they expose its ideological underpinnings.*

Key words: *Southern literature, representation, masculinity, white southern masculinity, Flannery O'Connor*

1. INTRODUCTION

Flannery O'Connor's short story cycle *Everything that Rises Must Converge* (1965) consists of nine stories that portray small-town life in the American South. The stories deal with many contemporary issues such as domestic life, political and economic changes, the disappearance or decay of old southern families, racial strife, gender roles, and the role of religion in people's lives. In addition to these, the stories dramatize the crisis of masculinity that most of her male characters experience in the face of the numerous changes in the post-Civil War period.

As many other authors of the twentieth century, O'Connor also records the breakdown of the traditional southern masculinity defined in terms of paternalism, mastery, honor,

dignity, and chivalry. However, her texts also expose how that specific notion was always dependent on the existence of docile southern belles and submissive African Americans, arising from the economic, political and social conditions of the antebellum South. Thus, her male characters struggle to either preserve the old hegemonic model or to find a new form of masculinity. However, they often fail, as they are unable to negotiate between the loss of the old privileges and positions of power, and the perceived 'threat' of women and African Americans.

Therefore, O'Connor's treatment of white masculinity of the South can be seen as a part of a long development within literary history where gradual modifications, transformations and the disappearance of the resilient figure of the southern gentleman can be identified. Similar to her immediate literary antecedents, O'Connor also moves away from the hegemonic southern masculinity, and explores and, at the same time, problematizes the new emerging definitions and practices of manhood.

2. DEFINING MASCULINITY

Broadly speaking, masculinity is a relational category which denotes a set of characteristics, ideas and norms that define and guide the behavior and thoughts of men in a particular historical and cultural context. As John Beynon (2002, 1) explains, masculinity, as a product of culture, is composed of social codes of behavior which men learn to reproduce. Similarly, Todd Reeser (2010, 20) proposes the idea that masculinity can be considered as an ideology, or a series of beliefs that a group of people "buy into and that influences how they go about their lives," especially because it is a product of the interaction of various institutions, myths, images, practices and cultural representations, and it appears natural within a given context. Likewise, masculinity is connected with numerous other forms of identity (Reeser 2010, 11) as it is inseparable from class, subculture, age and ethnicity (Beynon 2002, 2). Moreover, the nature of masculinity is fundamentally relational, as it is always defined against or with something (Cooper 2022, 10). Traditionally, masculine traits are almost always posited in relation to their assumed opposites: women, gay men, and racialized others (Brittan 1989, 4).

Although there are many different ways of being a man in any given context, there is usually a single form of masculinity that is presented and imposed on men by society or ideology. Scholars define such a dominant model as hegemonic masculinity, which, according to Beynon (2002, 16), denotes successful ways of being a man in particular places at a specific time, rendering other masculine styles inadequate and inferior. Hegemonic masculinity is certainly normative in the sense that it embodies the currently-most-honored way of being a man and it requires all men to position themselves in relation to it (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 832). The most enduring form of white hegemonic masculinity is constructed in terms of aggressivity, assertiveness, independence, competitiveness and insensitivity, as well as domination over women and racialized others (Brittan 1989, 4). As shall be argued later, the South also had its own version of hegemonic masculinity that directly overlaps with this general definition. Finally, a split that might occur between men's subjective experience and larger ideologies can be articulated as a crisis of masculinity (Reeser 2010, 27). Thus, masculinity is in crisis when many men in a given context feel tension with larger ideologies that dominate that context (Reeser 2010, 27).

Inseparable from social and cultural contexts, masculinity is constructed through ideology, domination, practice and language (Reeser 2010, 51). Thus, the role of cultural representation is substantially significant for the process of construction and perpetuation of various forms of masculinity. Although the very concept of masculinity is essentially vague and easily influenced, literary and cultural representations help to solidify it both as an idea and as an identity (Cooper 2022, 10). Similarly, Resser (2010, 25) claims that representations of masculinity have a double nature because they both reveal a form of masculinity that already exists in culture and "construct (or help construct) the masculinity that they depict in culture".

2.1. White Southern Masculinity and Its Representations in Literature

Following the theoretical considerations of masculinity coupled with the studies of white southern masculinity and its literary representations, it could be said that the term denotes not a single definition or a set of ideas, but a series of models that have mostly overlapped over time. The term itself does not only encompass definitions of masculinity pertaining to white men in a specific region but it also includes a number of economic, social, political, racial and cultural factors that have influenced and shaped how white men in the South understood themselves, and against which norms they evaluated their performances.

Definitions of masculinity in the South have developed out of diverse relationships – "particularly those between white and black, free and slave, farmers and the land, and men and women" (Ownby 2003, 429). Thus, historical developments, particular changes in the economy, class structure and race relations have greatly contributed to the emergence of a distinct form of masculinity in the American South (Lussana and Plath 2009, 6). It is evident from these assumptions that white southern masculinity has always been constructed relationally against other identities, implying that the very existence of such masculinity depends on those other identities. Although definitions of white southern masculinity vary over time, several long-lasting traits can be identified that include mastery, independence, honor, normative heterosexuality, and its relational position against traditional femininity and blackness.

Ted Ownby (2003, 429) lists five ideals which grew out of the conditions and experiences of the early southern way of life that was the basis of white southern masculinity in the period before the Civil War. The first of these is the ideal of paternalism, i.e., the idea of benevolent men ruling as fathers over their extended families and the entire society. Next to this ideal is the notion of honor, which focused on the need to prove one's character and protect one's reputation among equals. These two ideals worked together to suggest that powerful men deserved their authority. The notion of independence suggested that white men should work for themselves. The fourth ideal suggested that white men should assert mastery over black men and claim sexual authority over black women. Closely connected to the notion of paternalism, slave-owners, as 'benevolent patriarchs,' treated their dependants kindly and received respect and affection in return. The final stereotype of masculinity differed from the previous interconnected ideals and portrayed men who drank, fought, and loved passionately, represented in southwestern fiction as rural white southerners and uncouth men who lived beyond the rules of polite society.

These stereotypes of white southern masculinity were established and represented by both southern and northern authors, including William Gilmore Simms, A. B. Longstreet

and Harriet Beecher Stowe. Southern writers in particular created "a magnificent fictional aristocracy" (Watson 2002, 132). Trent Watts (2008, 3-4) explains that the characters of the leisured and gracious southern gentlemen, benevolent patriarchs, hell-raising and authority-defying frontiersmen, and callous plantation masters modeled varieties of southern manhood. Tison Pugh (2013, 5) identifies the myth of chivalric masculinity as the force that dominated the antebellum southern society, culture and literature. Based primarily on the notion of honor, the stereotype of chivalric masculinity was relationally constructed against African American men, women, and homosexual men, reducing them to subjected and secondary status[1] (Pugh 2013, 5). Thus, literary representations of this period created a long-enduring myth of white southern masculinity embodied by the figures of benevolent planters and southern aristocrats.

The period immediately following the Civil War brought about a crisis of masculinity in the South, as men "had to find new ways to frame white manhood without the mastery that slavery had offered or the honor that victory would have provided" (Friend 2009, vii-viii). However, the ideal of chivalric aristocracy was retained and embodied in the figures of the Christian gentleman and the war veteran. Southern writers created military heroes resembling the revered general Robert E. Lee who stood for dignity and honor in popular imagination (Watson 2002, 132). Similarly, the Christian gentleman emerged as a redefined model of masculinity whose typical traits were honor, mastery of one's household, humility, self-restraint, and above all, piety and faith (Friend 2009, xi). Thus, southern writers such as Thomas Nelson Page and Thomas Dixon advanced "a model of white southern manhood and male authority" based on mastery, dignity, and admiration (Watts 2008, 4). It is evident that these new literary figures were modifications and adjustments of the old planter-aristocrat myth. Caroline Gebhard (1997, 133) identifies the figure of 'the Colonel' as "a literary postbellum reincarnation of the Cavalier or planter-aristocrat, the epitome of southern masculinity according to tradition". This stereotype is represented in literature as possessing almost absurd integrity, unfailing sense of dignity, and embodying white southern male honor and pride, still intact despite the transformations ensuing after the Civil War (Gebhard 1997, 133). The Civil War sought to renegotiate their generation's ideals of masculinity by repudiating slavery, but not white supremacy, by constructing narratives revolving around an aging white master who is still faithfully served by one devoted ex-slave (Gebhard 1997, 133). The figure of the old master and masculinity he epitomized are almost always coupled with a loyal African American servant. This prominent literary device is named "the faithful retainer" by Joseph M. Flora (2002, 244), who explains that this stereotypical representation presupposes a relationship between a white master and an African American who, while technically free, finds identity and fulfillment with the master who continues to provide security for the retainer. The retainer is celebrated for staying on to serve his master long after the war, supporting the texts' insistent claims that white, southern men are members of "an aristocratic, superior race" (Gebhard 1997, 139).

The twentieth century signaled a definite crisis of masculinity in the South as it became evident that the old and relatively stable white gentility and chivalric masculinity were no longer viable. Writers of this period disentangled themselves from the idealization and the ideology surrounding the cavalier figure and treated the character type with more

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[1] For example, William Gilmore Simms' male characters embody the qualities of manliness founded on property, patriarchy, and citizenship rooted in the ideology of a narrow elite, stressing their authority and ability (Gros 2010, 395).

irony and complexity (Watson 2002, 133). Gros (2010, 398) identified de-masculinization of southern male characters who turn to brooding and inaction in lieu of heroic or chivalric action[2]. The literature during the 1920s and 1930s portrayed southern masculinity as unanchored, signaling the inability of society to "locate a hegemonic masculinity among the challenges raised by femininity, race, class, and sexuality" (Friend 2009, xxiii). In addition to the erosion of the cavalier myth, two more stereotypes of white southern masculinities reemerged in the twentieth century. The ideal of self-made manhood emerged as the hegemonic form of masculinity in the South (Friend 2009, xv). This ideal was the consequence of the industrial growth and economic and cultural forces undercutting the independence of farmers and the paternalism of traditional elites (Ownby 2003, 431). Another stereotype of masculinity emerging in this period was the hell-raising young man who was the embodiment of independent performative white manhood and was often represented in the form of misbehaving boys, contemptuous of restraint or outside influence, tough, and aggressive (Watts 2008, 12).

Finally, the aftermath of the Second World War further deepened the crisis of masculinity. For example, Susan Donaldson (2008, 235) states that William Faulkner's fiction after the war "was concerned with the emergence of a new post-war masculinity that at once stressed conformity, domesticity, and consumerism and lamented older forms of entrepreneurial individualism." In the case of Tennessee Williams, the figure of the Southern gentleman is completely disappearing, and his male characters are often informed by an emerging feminist consciousness (Gros 2010, 425). Specifically in the 1940s, it is no longer the spectacle of gentility that is at stake, it is the very essence of manhood that is being threatened (Gros 2010, 431). As Watts (2008, 16) explains, post-war white men faced challenges to their authority from black southerners, white women, and other white men who, in the face of broader social changes, no longer felt constrained to accept culturally dominant definitions of masculinity. In her study of masculinity in Southern literature in the first half of the twentieth century, Emmeline Gros (2010, 400) states that the fiction of this period offers a transition from heroic masculinities embodied by soldiers and veterans, to the marginal characters which are pitted against each other in order to sometimes reinforce and sometimes disturb hegemonic masculinity. Another frequent component of these texts is the crisis of masculinity caused by often distant, absent or enigmatic parental figures which results in the male characters' permanent mourning for the lost father and the masculine ideal with which to identify (Gros 2010, 401).

3. Representations of White Southern Masculinity in Flannery O'Connor's *Everything That Rises Must Converge*

Flannery O'Connor's short story cycle consists of nine stories that deal with a number of themes such as the notion of Christian grace, family relationships, racial relations, and heritage of the South, among others. The cycle also problematizes the notion of gender

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[2] For example, William Faulkner depicted a form of masculinity as one of hesitation and often gendered confusion (Friend 2009, xvii). Another example is Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936) in which male characters are demanded to display typically-masculine qualities – control, mastery, honor and courage – but they actively challenge them, redefine them, and even abandon them altogether, trying to find new forms (Gros 2010, 65). The novel is a critique "of the masculinities that had dominated southern society since Reconstruction" (Friend 2009, xviii), and presents masculinity as fluid, diverse, always under debate and never fixed (Gros 2010, 423).

and gender relations, especially, as Richard Giannone (1995, 73-75) explains, the way O'Connor's characters often stand outside of acceptable definitions of men and women, and more often than not experience the reversal of gender roles. Pugh (2013, 53) claims that the representation of southern manhood in O'Connor's fiction exposes how masculinity is determined by ideology and forged through history. Similar to the southern authors preceding her, O'Connor also dramatizes the disappearance of older southern models of masculinity, along with their somewhat paradoxical haunting presence, while at the same time exploring how men react to the changing circumstances which force them to remodel their sense of manliness.

3.1. Absent Fathers, Looming Masculinities

The opening story, "Everything That Rises Must Converge," portrays a generational conflict between a progressive and liberal-minded Julian and his mother who is completely trapped in the past as she is utterly oblivious to the social, economic and political changes of the postbellum South. The conflict touches upon a number of issues, but it also directly influences Julian's own sense of masculinity. As his mother constantly insists upon observing and upholding the traditional values and rules of conduct of the Old South, Julian is also confronted with a long lineage of masculine figures who symbolically represent the ideal of white southern masculinity. As the mother reminds him, his great-grandfather was a planter, a slave-owner and a state governor and his grandfather a prosperous land-owner. It becomes clear from his mother's insistence on gentility, graciousness and class difference that the former family patriarchs represent the ideal of the Southern benevolent patriarch that Julian needs to accept and emulate. However, Julian's own political and ideological positions put him in direct opposition to the ideal, precisely because the model of masculinity offered by it directly depends on the specifically defined asymmetrical relations between the Southern gentlemen or patriarch, and women and black people. This results in Julian's need to break away from tradition and search for a different model of masculinity. The way Julian tries to resolve the issue is problematic because he is unable to construct and perform a sustainable and productive identity. From the beginning of the story, it is evident that he is burdened by his mother's controlling, domineering and overbearing presence, and his reaction to it is not the imposition of domination, as he clearly repudiates the old ideal, but an almost complete retreat to his inner world. As the narrator notes, Julian withdrew "into the inner compartment of his mind where he spent most of his time. This was a kind of mental bubble in which he established himself when he could not bear to be a part of what was going around him" (O'Connor 1983, 276). Thus, Julian retreats to a fantasy world where he dreams about teaching his mother a lesson, slapping her, and befriending African Americans out of spite. The result is a man who neither asserts mastery nor finds a less threatening way of dealing with his mother or the past, but a man who retreats to passivity and inaction.

Similarly, "The Comforts of Home" explores a crisis of masculinity resulting from an absent and yet haunting presence of the father figure heightened by the presence of a dominant mother and a form of threatening femininity. The male protagonist, Thomas, is frustrated because his mother brought home a promiscuous woman named Sarah as an act of charity. The same as Julian, Thomas often retreats to his inner world where he fantasizes about resisting his mother and asserting dominance due to his inability to act in reality. As Thomas becomes ever more frustrated and threatened by Sarah, the image and voice of his father reappear in his mind repeatedly urging him to "put his foot down"

(O'Connor 1983, 354) and send Sarah to the state penitentiary with the help of the local sheriff. Although Thomas was not able to put up with his immoral, ruthless, and violent father while he was alive, the anxiety and frustration with his own passivity lead him to mourn his father's death as he would have been the one to 'put Sarah in her place.' Thus, the image of his father represents an internalized model of masculinity based on aggression, power, and control which is threatened by the transgressive and unrestrained femininity represented by Sarah. As Pugh (2013, 65) claims, Thomas turns to his father's image of "southern masculinity for inspiration in handling the troubling vision of female sexuality he must confront in Sarah Ham." Moreover, when his father's voice tells him that he is not enough to be a man, it becomes evident that Thomas actually evaluates his performance of gender against the model inherited from his father and miserably fails to enact it. Just like Julian from the previous story, Thomas is unable to find any kind of model of masculinity that would do away with the misogynistic patriarchalism of his father and make an attempt at reconciliation with himself and the femininity he feels threatened by.

Another story that features an absent father is "Greenleaf," which dramatizes the dislocation of a model of white southern masculinity (traditionally reserved for a small number of southern men) in the face of social changes. The story follows the decline of the May family as a result of the death of the family patriarch Mr. May who was a wealthy independent businessman. The story juxtaposes Mrs. May, now a farm owner, and her sons with the Greenleafs who are tenants on Mrs. May's farm. Mrs. May's son Wesley is constantly sick and his brother Scofield is an unsuccessful insurance salesman, and both of them are incapable of and disinterested in managing the farm. On the other hand, Mr. Greenleaf's sons served in the Second World War, became sergeants, and are described as energetic and hard-working. When it comes to masculinity, the issue is class because the position of hegemonic southern masculinity is occupied by the Greenleafs. Their participation in the war and their military ranks point to honor extremely valued in the South ever since the Civil War, and their patriarchal family organization adheres to the desired form of masculinity. This usurpation of masculinity by the lower class is reflected in the story by the employment of Mr. Greenleaf's bull who repeatedly trespasses onto Mrs. May lawn, and who might be interpreted symbolically. At the beginning of the story the bull is described as a masculine lover and an "uncouth country suitor" (O'Connor 1983, 287), and in the end he impales Mrs. May on his horns. Thus, the bull, as a symbol of masculinity, strength and potency, might stand for lower-class men who in the absence of traditional patriarchs conquer the masculine space and signal the final breakdown of the old order.

3.2. Relational Masculinities and Gender Reversals

There are several stories in this cycle that feature an attempt at an interaction between a white male and a black male character. In addition to "Everything That Rises Must Converge," the stories that depict such interactions are "The Enduring Chill" and "Judgment Day." As Nicholas Crawford explains, O'Connor frequently employs a master motif of homecoming that is inextricably linked to a destabilizing encounter with African Americans. For Crawford (2003, 4), homecoming means both physical return to a past domicile and reckoning with heritage, or "a mature reassessment and recognition of a social and personal history" which never happens. It could be added that such interactions also underscore the inability of different models of white masculinity to relationally

define themselves against or *with* black masculinity they are confronted with. In "Everything That Rises Must Converge," the liberal-minded Julian fantasizes about interacting with other black men but he acknowledges that he had never been successful in making any black friends. Although Julian's liberal and progressive viewpoint signals a shift from his mother's racist and classist attitudes, "they both share this quasi-paternalistic attitude toward African Americans" (Crawford 2003, 14), remaining blind to the historical implications of shared heritage. Julian does repudiate the old models of southern masculinity defined against blackness, but his search for a different conception of himself based on sympathy and equality falls short since he is unable to go outside his own simplistic ideology and establish a meaningful exchange between himself and other black men.

Asbury, the male protagonist of "The Enduring Chill," experiences a similar impasse when he expresses a desire to achieve a meaningful interaction with the African American characters in the story. Asbury constructs a romanticized identity of a male writer dying of consumption who is on the brink of having a revelatory experience which he would turn into a splendid work of art. In his search of identity, Asbury leans on the well-established model of masculinity coming from the literary tradition that is actually far from reality. As the story reveals, he has never written or published anything; he is yet another male character who leads a life of inactivity and passivity, and it turns out that he simply suffers from a non-terminal fever. The failure of Asbury's self-fashioned artistic manhood is complete when he attempts to establish a sense of communion with two black workers on his mother's farm. What is evident in Asbury's inability to establish such an interaction is the discrepancy between his own conception of black men and the reality of racial relations burdened by the heritage of the Old South. Although he yearns for the dissolution of the barrier between black and white, Asbury views the two black workers as aesthetic objects from which he wants to extract some last significant culminating experience. When he wants to share a cigarette with them and drink milk from the same bottle, he is surprised by their refusal since they are very much aware of the covert relational dynamic of mastery and servitude that still exists between white people and African Americans. Thus, as Crawford (2003, 18) explains, black characters are embodiments of a sociohistorical reality that is psychologically unacceptable to white characters who dimly perceive the common humanity of African Americans but cannot accept it completely.

The story that most explicitly dramatizes the invalidity of the old relation between white mastery and black servitude is "Judgment Day," in which Tanner and Coleman are modifications of the previous literary representations of the old Colonel and his faithful black retainer. Tanner, now an old man living in his daughter's apartment in New York, yearns for a return to his home in Georgia and a reunion with his loyal follower Coleman. The relationship between the two of them and Tanner's old age resemble the stereotype of the old Colonel, but the elements of honor, dignity, independence and property ownership are visibly missing. As Tanner laments over his past glory and stable social order in the South, a series of flashbacks shows that he was far removed from the ideal image of chivalric masculinity and benevolent paternalism. He had owned a small piece of land in Georgia which he lost to Doctor Foley, a wealthy black landowner, and was finally evicted from it when he refused the doctor's offer to work for him on account of his racist prejudices. Thus, the South Tanner yearns for was already gone and his nostalgic recollections of simpler and better times are also an illusion. However, Coleman

was the only element that could help him sustain an incomplete but still powerful conception of masculinity based on mastery and white supremacy. It is no wonder that Tanner wants to reunite with Coleman as his identity is impossible to exist without and is completely dependent on his black protégé. In the present, he is completely emasculated by his daughter who constantly infantilizes him, and by his old age and disability. To recover his sense of manliness, Tanner attempts to replicate his relationship with Coleman with a black neighbor, who is in a relationship with a white woman, by calling him Preacher, telling him that he should go back to South Alabama where he could return to his rightful place within the old social order. The interaction results in an altercation which shocks Tanner and sets off what is probably a heart attack which could be symbolically read as a failure of the traditional white southern masculinity to adapt to all the political, social and cultural changes in America. As the figure of the dependent, servile, submissive black man disappears, the version of white hegemonic masculinity is no longer possible as it directly depends on such a relational definition against black manhood which is yet again imposed by the hegemonic model.

In addition to the stories that problematize the gap created between the old relations between white and black southern masculinities, "Revelation" and "Parker's Back" deal with white men who lose their traditional masculine roles in both public and domestic spaces. In "Revelation" which deals with Mrs. Turpin's revelation about her own moral depravity resulting from her racist beliefs, the character of her husband Claud occupies a miniscule share of the narrative space. Indicatively, the major conflict takes place in the doctor's office where the issues of racism, segregation and black emancipation are solely in the hands of women. The public sphere, represented by the doctor's office, is taken over by women who occupy the roles traditionally reserved for men, and the figure of Claud remains in the background and is described as being "in the corner on the floor, pale as paper, holding his leg" (O'Connor 1983, 416). All the interactions between Claud and his wife point to the inversion of traditional gender roles, where Mrs. Turpin is the one who enacts mastery and control. She takes Claud by the shoulder, tells him where to sit, gives him a push, and in those rare occasions where there is a dialogue between the two, she is the one who asks questions and gives commands and requests. Similar to "Judgment Day," this story also dramatizes how traditional masculinity loses its ground and its exclusive roles and privilege to women and black men who reduce these white male characters to passive and emasculated figures.

In the case of "Parker's Back," the story follows Parker who struggles to understand the loss of his former conception and performance of masculinity caused by his ambivalent attraction to his present wife who is a Christian fundamentalist. Parker's former performance of masculinity comes from the stereotypical representation of hell-raising boys or young men. The story gradually fleshes out his past behavior by mentioning that he often cursed, especially using religious words, was a heavy drinker, frequently got into fights and served in the navy. Likewise, the form of masculinity he espouses is also inscribed on his body through numerous tattoos. First, he got the tattoo of an eagle which represents the way the navy turned him into a hardened man, and then he moved on to various tattoos of anchors, rifles, tigers, panthers and hawks, all of them expressing the rough, tough, independent masculinity that Parker lives by and tries to uphold. The final tattoo of Christ signals not only his spiritual awakening and the full submission to his wife Sarah, but also the abandonment of his sense of manhood as it is directly opposed by Sarah and her religious convictions. Before returning home, Parker

goes to a bar, a place reserved for masculine interactions, where he is ridiculed by the men there. Although the act marks Parker's reluctance to abandon his masculinity, a fight ensues and the men kick Parker out of the bar, with the narrator commenting that it is "as if the long barn-like room were the ship which Jonah had been cast into the sea" (O'Connor 1983, 440). Apart from the obvious religious allusion pointing to Parker's spiritual awakening, the comparison also points to the secular expulsion of Parker from the realm of masculine men. The story's humorous ending where Sarah beats Parker for idolatry suggests that Parker will receive grace, but it is important to note that the road to salvation presupposes the abandonment of all secular identities, including masculinity.

3.3. Conflicting Masculinities

"A View of the Woods" explores how two models of masculinity, the old and the new, come in conflict and struggle for power. The story follows the relationship between Mary Fortune, her father Pitts, and her grandfather Mr. Fortune. The first half of the story seemingly puts Mr. Fortune in the position of progress, as he believes in industrialization, urbanization, education, and financial investments. On the other hand, Pitts, who is virtually Mr. Fortune's tenant as he owns no land, resembles a more traditional form of southern masculinity based on agrarianism, strict patriarchal family economy, and physical domination over women and children. Their struggle to gain control and influence over Mary might be seen as a dramatization of the conflict between these two models. When Mr. Fortune threatens to sell the piece of land that he allowed Pitts to farm, he practically uses his financial power and ownership rights to emasculate his son-in-law because his traditional position as the patriarch of the family is incomplete due to lack of property. In retaliation, Pitts resorts to the instrument of power he still possesses – abuse. He frequently goes with Mary to the woods and beats her in front of Fortune, and at one point says that "She's mine to whip and I'll whip her every day of the year if it suits me" (O'Connor 1983, 312). The turning point in the story that leads to its tragic ending is when Fortune realizes that Mary goes along with her father's beatings, negates that such thing ever happened, and even shows respect for his struggle to impose mastery over her. When she openly opposes Fortune's plan to sell the farm to a man who wants to turn it into a gas station, Mary symbolically sides with the values of the Old South. Mary's acts expose not the differences between Fortune and Pitts but the similarities in the way they exercise their masculinity. Upon feeling threatened by Mary's subversion of authority, fearlessness and sturdy-mindedness, Fortune decides to use physical violence to discipline her. At one point, Mary ferociously defends herself and calls Fortune the Whore of Babylon, to which he replies that "a whore is a woman!" (O'Connor 1983, 314), which only confirms that Fortune aligns himself with the masculine patriarchal tradition. He kills Mary with a rock and is seen dying from a heart attack, symbolically marking the devastating effects of his masculinity. In the end, none of the two models of masculinity prove to be a positive step forward since both of them are fundamentally structured around mastery, inequality, domination and violent oppression. It seems that the story raises the question whether new and seemingly progressive models of masculinity arising out of industrialization and urbanization are mere modifications of the old in the sense that they retain the old patriarchal patterns of control and violence resulting in the destruction of the feminine.

Finally, another story which deals with conflicting models is "The Lame Shall Enter First," which deals with masculinity and its interaction with the notions of fatherhood, boyhood and initiation into manhood. The story revolves around Sheppard who needs to take care of his son Norton after the death of his wife. The conflict arises when Sheppard brings home Rufus, a stereotypical hell-raising boy who has already committed various crimes in his adolescence. Sheppard is so adamant in his attempts to help Rufus overcome what he thinks is just a phase in his initiation into manhood that he is unable to realize that Rufus is indeed a depraved boy who does not hide a heart of gold beneath the rough façade. Sheppard is so obsessed with Rufus that he completely neglects his own son. Although the story does not offer any evidence for it, Sheppard is certain that his son is a selfish, compassionless, entitled boy without kindness and patience. In reality, it turns out that the boy is simply mourning his mother's death and becomes obsessed with going to Heaven to reunite with her. Upon discovering that Norton had committed suicide, Sheppard finally realizes that he failed as a father. As the narrator exclaims, "he had ignored his own child to feed his vision of himself" (O'Connor 1983, 403). The vision most explicitly refers to the notion of Christian charity that Sheppard follows, but the fact that he became so obsessed with helping Rufus might reveal something about ideology. As previously stated, Rufus is a stereotypical mischievous boy who steals, vandalizes, curses, drinks and manipulates other people. However, the problem is that Sheppard is certain that the boy can be helped because society weaves a narrative that condones such behavior and labels it as unharmful. Thus, Sheppard's tragic downfall is also of secular nature as he interprets his own child and Rufus through the lens of the dominant ideology which favors one model of boyhood or manhood over others.

4. Conclusion

The first thing that can be observed in O'Connor's short story cycle is that it does not offer any kind of stable hegemonic masculinity against which her male characters can evaluate themselves. Instead, the stories portray a whole range of masculinities and male performances that mark the shift from the once-stable white masculinity of the South. Even when older models of masculinity return to haunt the male protagonists, the stories decidedly show that such models are no longer possible due to the economic, political and cultural changes. However, this fragmentation and dislocation of masculine identity yet again express the crisis of masculinity already indicated in literature after the Civil War. Many male characters are unable to negotiate between the inherited myths of cavaliers, gentlemen and war heroes, and their urge to find a different self-definition of masculinity. The confusion often results in a behavior that revolves around passivity, frustration and inaction. In many of the stories, this kind of masculinity leads to tragic deaths of family members or the protagonists themselves. Although the general repudiation of the old ideals of masculinity that always include mastery and domination over women, children and raced others is sympathetic and progressive, the stories point to the inability of men to find any kind of sustainable or positive model of masculinity that would be based on equality, mutual respect, or at least some kind of dialogue.

The cycle also clearly shows that the ideal of white southern masculinity is directly dependent on specific conditions and institutions. The traditional hegemonic model is constantly endangered, since the old southern agrarian economy which supports a small

aristocratic elite, the institution of slavery which ensures mastery over black people, and the preservation of rigid gender roles are no longer possible. Dramatic changes pertaining to class relations and rapid industrial growth inevitably put pressure on the Southern gentleman and render him obsolete. It is no wonder that the figure of the Southern gentleman is completely absent in this cycle. Likewise, several stories show how the heritage of traditional masculinity still troubles the race relations in the South. Many white male characters try to communicate with black characters but often fail to reach any kind of understanding. Instead, they are confronted by an insurmountable barrier which points to the gap created by the disappearance of old and familiar master-servant dynamic. Perhaps the inability of O'Connor's white males to establish a sense of communion with other black men points to their own reluctance to deal with a painful past and form a new relation between white and black masculinities. Coupled with the issues of race, the stories also represent various reversals of gender roles where female characters exhibit behavior and occupy spaces traditionally reserved for men, resulting in the emasculation of men and their reduction to passive observers. Yet again, without stable relational positions, masculinity quickly crumbles because it simply cannot exist or function without its foundations.

To finally summarize, O'Connor's representations of white southern masculinity reveal its fluidity, instability and historicity in the sense that it always depends on a particular ideology, social order, institutions, political and cultural circumstances. It is clear that the old and enduring ideals of mastery, honor, dignity, independence and elitism are no longer viable and they take little to no narrative attention. On the other hand, the result of such a breakdown is not liberation or creation of a healthier, more egalitarian and less oppressive masculinity, but an utter retreat into the inner world where old male fantasies can be enacted. As stated previously, the stories are populated by inactive, retreated, emasculated men who are unable to find a new way of being men in a society in which both women and African Americans are no longer in positions of utter submission.

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PREDSTAVE BELAČKOG JUŽNJAČKOG MASKULINITETA U CIKLUSU KRATKIH PRIČA FLANERI O'KONOR „SVE ŠTO RASTE MORA SE SASTATI"

Rad se bavi načinima predstavljanja maskuliniteta u ciklusu kratkih priča Flaneri O'Konor „Sve što raste mora se sastati" (1965.). Konkretno, cilj rada je analiza predstava belačkog južnjačkog maskuliniteta u pomenutim kratkim pričama i utvrđivanje da li ponuđeni modeli predstavljanja problematizuju tradicionalne obrasce konceptualizacije pravila ponašanja i mišljenja belih (američkih) južnjaka u južnjačkoj kulturi i književnosti. Potporu za ovakvo čitanje nalazimo u teorijskim razmatranjima maskuliniteta, kao i definicijama belačkog južnjačkog maskuliniteta i njegovih prikaza u književnosti tokom različitih perioda. Drugi cilj je da se utvrdi da li u navedenim tekstovima ima naznaka dobro poznate krize maskuliniteta na američkom Jugu u 20. veku, kao i da li ove kratke priče otkrivaju ideološku pozadinu te krize.

Ključne reči: *Južnjačka književnost, predstavljanje, maskulinitet, belački južnjački maskulinitet, Flaneri O'Konor*