PATTERNS OF CHARACTERS IN NEW AMERICAN GOTHIC (WITH REFERENCE TO CARSON MCCULLERS AND FLANNERY O'CONNOR)

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Abstract*: In the New American Gothic prose, the character, protagonist or not, is closely patterned on the classical Gothic hero-villain paradigmatic opposition, with the necessary adaptation to the realities and the setting of the New World. The typical hero/heroine is a weakling equally plagued by the hope for love or by his defeat and the loss of love. In most cases, their love turns into narcissistic, even homosexual love—which intensifies their weakness. In what concerns the Gothic family, the hero/heroine, interacts with it and in most cases clashes with it. Moreover, quite often the parent himself turns into an 'evil parent,' into the villain in the story. The individual's narcissism interacting with the tension inside the family generates the protagonist's alienation and, in consequence, his seclusion in the 'private/inner' world. Once caught in the 'inner' world, the hero/heroine will not renounce his/her aspirations to love and be loved and eventually will try to make his/her escape.*
Keywords*: hero-villain opposition, 'evil parent', Doppelgänger*

A major ingredient, which the European Gothic romance brought along with the novelty of setting, when it was adopted by the New World and which, due to their interaction consequently triggered its overwhelming popularity, are the Gothic characters who, despite their many-sidedness, chiefly fall into two broad categories. On the one hand, we have heroes and heroines—the persecuted characters—placed in the most dreadful imaginable situations and, on the other hand, the hero-villain, the persecuting character, "wicked tyrants, malevolent witches, demonic powers of unspeakably hideous aspect."[1] Moreover, the creation of doubled characters and of self-other relationships is a crucial element in Gothic fiction. When talking about this kind of relationship, we must highlight its paradigmatic character; the hero never shares the stage with a heroine. Furthermore, whenever the text focuses on a heroine, the male becomes a split figure—a villain or a weakling—, or, we daresay, even a combination of the two, depending on the latter's relationship to the other characters.

As it had happened with the setting, the Americanization of the classical Gothic romance also had to deal with another major problem, i.e. the social status of the hero-villain. Traditionally, in Europe the hero-villains had been lustful aristocrats and monks, corrupt servants of the Inquisition, members of secret societies, etc. It was again Charles Brockden Brown who adapted the European hero-villain to the overseas conditions. For the corrupt Inquisitor or the lecherous nobleman, he substituted the Indian who thus became the projection of natural evil, a living extension of the wilderness. But, despite the red man's replacement in time, first by the Negro and then by white members of the community (the 'white trash'), the archetypal pattern of opposing the villain to the hero/heroine was preserved and even further expanded by the writers of the new American Gothic.

Irving Malin in his fundamental book *The New American Gothic* points out that the driving force and the main concern of all Gothic fiction, from the classical 18th century British Gothic to the American Gothic of the 1960s, is love and the pursuit of it. But,

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whether the usual Gothic character is a freakish, grotesque adult or an inexperienced/innocent youngster, the typical hero/heroine (i.e. the protagonist) is always a weakling, equally terrorized by the hope for love, or by its defeat and loss. The anxiety that constantly plagues the protagonists drives them to action, so that love for them becomes "an attempt to create order out of chaos, strength out of weakness; however it simply creates monsters."[2] In fact, their love turns frequently into narcissistic or homosexual love, which, consequently, increasingly highlights their weakness. Moreover, since the protagonists are mainly weaklings, intensely marked by their obsessions and preoccupations, they generally do not evolve, staying flat and stylized and grasping reality in a distorted way, as a "cracked mirror."

Very often then, the protagonists are members of one family, as parent or child, grandparent or grandchild. The atmosphere inside the family is definitely not one of love and understanding, as one might expect, but rather one of tension between its members, as in most cases, parents see themselves in their children and utterly disregard their children's personality, trying to mold them as their spitting image. Hence, the family relations are so stifling that they inhibit growth[3] and contribute to the protagonist's insecurity. Moreover, the individual's self-love interacting with the tension inside the family triggers the protagonist's alienation not only from the family, i.e. the close environment or the 'inner' setting, but also form the larger community. As a consequence, typical Gothic protagonists will isolate themselves from the social group into their private worlds—the "other rooms."

Like in the classical Gothic fiction, the hero/heroine is confronted with the villain, who assumes the form of the freakish, grotesque character—a physical or mental cripple—, or of the extremely violent one, or even a combination of the two. Paradigmatic in this sense are McCullers' *Ballad of the Sad Café* and *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, virtual textbooks of the New American Gothic in which almost all patterns of characters are dealt with.

The former illustrates indubitably the pattern of the heroine not sharing the stage with the hero and the male becoming a split figure. Miss Amelia Evans, the heroine, is herself a narcissist exerting power over others and a woman of a slightly unnatural figure, almost verging on the grotesque. She is "six feet inches tall which in itself is not natural for a woman,"[4] weighs 160 pounds, "with bones and muscles like a man . . . [and] not slightly cross-eyed."[5] But unlike the emblematic Gothic heroine, Miss Amelia is not in quest of feminine identity, as her strange seven-day marriage remains unconsummated by her own will. Amelia denies her husband access to her bedroom, abuses him, and finally orders him off her property. So, in this respect, she herself is a bit of a monstrous villain. Opposed to the heroine is the split-figure male character, the two-faceted villain, i.e. Cousin Laymon, the dwarfish hunchback (the physical freak) and Marvin Macy (the temperamental freak), the violent ex-husband who returns from prison to gain vengeance for the former rejection in marriage. Once the opposition stated, tension builds up gradually between the heroine and the villain until the great confrontation, when the joint forces of the two-faceted villain come out victorious.

The novelette *Reflections in a Golden Eye* focuses on the same hostile self-other relationship, by opposing the heroine to the hero-villain—Leonora and Captain Penderton—within a childless version of the Gothic family. Furthermore, this family is doubled by a second one—Alison and Major Langdon—, equally marked by a hostile and polarized

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relationship, but in which roles are somewhat reversed. Finally, McCullers introduces a third couple of characters, Private Williams and Anacleto (the Langdon's Filipino houseboy), so that we can assert that all types of Gothic characters are represented here: hero/heroine, hero-villain, weakling, and the freak.

Leonora Penderton and Major Morris Langdon, the heroine and the hero, are natural people who enjoy life and each other in a literal sense. Leonora Penderton, a totally sensual woman, loves to ride and spend much oh her time in the open, sleeps naked, drinks and enjoys her sexual life with vigorous delight and with whomever she wishes. At present, she is engaged in a sexual affair with Major Langdon, her husband's comrade and superior. Lacking imagination and sympathy, Morris Langdon is an unintellectual and uncomplicated man, committed only to the achievement of his own ambitions, which he Pharisaically voices only after his wife's death: "Only two things matter to me now—to be a good animal and to serve my country. A healthy body and patriotism."[6]

Another natural man of instincts is Private Elgee Williams, but only by his behavior, because, otherwise, he turns out to be a weakling bordering on imbecility and suffering from a repressed sexuality. Through his behavior, i.e. he succumbs to the charms of Leonora after catching a glimpse of her stark naked, Williams triggers his own destruction.

By reversal,[7] Alison appears to be a weakling—a sickly woman—, as she is mainly seen through the eyes of the other characters (Penderton hates her, her husband literally ignores her and Leonora treats her as if she were an innocent child) but, in fact, she is the most clear-sighted character, more sensitive and responsive than anyone else around her. However, being denied love and motherhood, she lacks the strength of will to alter her present way of life and to survive; therefore she is confined to a sanatorium where she dies shortly after.

Both physically (an ageless midget but childlike in his appearance) and from the point of view of the role played in the story (an observer), Anacleto prefigures Cousin Lymon of *The Ballad of the Sad Café*. Both become the heroine's companion and confidant, and both disappear when the two women meet their fate, except for the fact that the latter also contributes actively to Miss Amelia's defeat siding with her archenemy.

A counterpart to the natural people in the novelette, Captain Penderton is bisexual but a physically impotent kleptomaniac (at a dinner party he takes away a silver dessertspoon and is seen by Alison Langdon) who emerges as the hero-villain of the story. Suspended between love and hatred, the villain tortures everything that lives instinctively, from animals to humans: "Leonora maddened him to insanity, but even in the wildest fits of jealousy he could not hate her any more than he could hate a cat, or a horse, or a tiger cub."[8]

Despite the variations in what concerns its use, the unifying element in McCullers' remaining three novels, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, *The Member of the Wedding* and *Clock Without Hands*, is the child-character and his relation to his family. Unfortunately, within the Gothic family we rarely find "togetherness," as Irving Malin calls it,[9] since both parents and children are equally narcissistic. Each, in fact, wants the power for himself/herself—the parent to control the child, whereas the child to flee from this so confusing "real" family. In doing so, he seeks a substitute family and when this happens, the newly found parent, be he 'good' or 'evil,' emerges as a 'double' to the real parent. But unlike the classical Gothic novel, where the emergence of a 'double' parent is inextricably

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linked to narcissism, to reflections and mirrors, to shadows, guardian spirits and demonic shapes, with the manifest intention to create an effect of uncanniness, we believe that in Carson McCullers's fiction, it is triggered by the child's alienation within the real family. The child has its dreams, which he can voice only in the presence of the substitute parent.

Mick Kelly of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, the tomboy obsessed with the dream of becoming a musician (a faint reflection, perhaps, of Carson McCullers herself) and utterly neglected by her parents—whose appearance in the novel is only shadowy—turns desperately to the deaf-mute John Singer, the physical cripple, in search for a surrogate-parent. She lives in two different 'rooms': on the one hand, physically in the 'outside' room, along with her parents, her brothers, her sisters, the other boarders in the house, and the problems of the real world and, on the other hand, in the 'inside' room, where along with music, fantasies, and plans for the future, there is Mister Singer:

> Every afternoon as soon as she finished playing on the piano in the gym she walked down the main street past the store where he worked. From the front window she couldn't see Mister Singer. He worked in the back, behind a curtain. But she looked at the store where he stayed every day and saw the people he knew. Then every night she waited on the front porch for him to come. Sometimes she followed him upstairs. She sat on the bed and watched him put away his hat and undo the button on his collar and brush his hair. For some reason it was like they had a secret together. Or like they waited to tell each other things that had never been said before.
>
> He was the only person in the inside room. A long time ago there had been others...But with Mister Singer there was a difference . . . The other people had been ordinary, but Mister Singer was not.[10]

Unfortunately however, their relation is also distorted as, like the real parents, the surrogate-parent does not understand her: "And Mick—her face was urgent and she said a good deal that he did not understand in the least."[11]

Another broken parent-child relationship is the one that governs the family of Dr. Copeland. His intellectual commitment to socialism, to social justice for his own race and, last but not least, to rebellion through "strength . . . sacrifice . . . dignity of study and wisdom,"[12] separate him from his wife and his children. Moreover, he becomes the victim of his own rebellion, of his own frustration and failure, when his two children, Portia and Willie, ironically turn against him. At the end of the novel, both parent and child are physically and morally defeated—Willie is frightened and crippled by his prison experience while Dr. Copeland, half-dead with tuberculosis, is taken by a mule-drawn wagon to his father-in-law's farm. Portia, who throughout the novel shows genuine feeling for all the black and the white characters with whom she comes into contact, is left in the end to preserve, or rather, to re-establish the unity of the family.

Nevertheless, we believe that with *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, owing to its very structure, i.e. four spokes to a hub, it is very hard to classify the characters according to the established pattern of the Gothic novel, as they are not pure types to fit in some Procrustean bed. They are mixed types, weaklings in whom certain characteristics of both the hero and the villain blend, with one or the other feature trying hard to take the upper hand. Thus, for instance, with Dr Copeland and, above all, with Jake Blount, radicalism and obsession bring about their ambivalence and, moreover, with the latter trigger outburst of verbal and physical violence. In keeping with the famous adage—*the road to hell is paved with good intentions*—their 'humanitarianism' leads to their defeat. The former, forced to admit that

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his inflexibility has destroyed family ties, retires to his father-in-law's farm, whereas the latter, with hope in him, tries to catch a ride on the highway. But prospects for him are grim:

> Jake walked steadily. As soon as the town was behind a surge of energy came to him. But was this flight or was it onslaught? Anyway, he was going. All was to begin another time. The road ahead lay to the north and slightly to the west. But he would not go too far away. He would not leave the South. That was one clear thing. There was hope in him, and soon the outline of his journey would take form.[13]

The parent-child relationship in *The Member of the Wedding* is equally distorted. Frankie Adams, a successor of Mick Kelly, discovers that she cannot find any support in her widowed father, that the latter plays a minor role in her life, being too much preoccupied with his business (the store) to listen to what his daughter has to say or to suggest. This is the reason why Frankie wants desperately to be "joined" with others, to become '***We***,' and since she cannot become the '***We***' of her father, she tries elsewhere, she attaches herself to the wedding of her brother. She, too, like Mick, is searching for substitute parents, but then is utterly shocked when she finds herself rejected, because Jarvis and Janice, the "other parents," have their own lives to live and their own offspring to consider.

In McCullers' last novel, *Clock Without Hands*, family life does not differ much from the previous novels, except for the fact that the grandfather replaces the missing parent and the child is no longer a child in search for a surrogate parent or a surrogate family, but a young man. Moreover, the clash within the family evolves and becomes, in fact, one between two generations and two opposite mentalities, emblematic of the Old and of the New South. Consequently, the two opposing characters involved in the family conflict are backed up by doubles whose function is complementary. Thus, the octogenarian Judge Fox Clane, a caricature of a Southern racist and at the same time the voice of the Old South, is the villain who lives with nostalgia for his Congressional and judicial past, who hatches all kind of schemes for the recovery of Confederate money and reparation for the Civil War damages and, furthermore, incites to violence. His double, J. T. Malone, the 'physical cripple' in the novel (on the verge of dying of leukemia), stands for the conscience of the South that is gradually fading away, and in the end they both disappear along with the old system, the former in madness and the latter physically.

Though virtually opposing each other, we believe that the second pair of characters, Jester Clane and Sherman Pew—the former white, the latter black, but both nineteen—represents the two complementary sides of the Gothic hero. The former is indeed a liberally inclined young Southerner symbolizing the New South. But, at the same time, he is a weakling caught between the two worlds: that of his grandfather's—a world reluctant to changes and desperately clinging to the old values, and that of his own, a world that is now coming into being. Moreover, his weakness is further emphasized by the homosexual passion that he nurtures for Sherman, despite the various acts of humiliation and the verbal and physical violence that mark their friendship. The latter, too, has a double significance. Socially, he is truly the embodiment of the Negro's quest for freedom in the New South, but as a Gothic hero, he represents rather the force that drives and helps the hero on his flight out of the 'haunted castle.' But, in keeping with the established pattern, the flight is futile; a bomb, as a result of a racist plot blows him to bits. He, too, like the villain and the 'cripple,' is doomed to disappear along with the world in which he was born.

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Without the slightest intention of pigeonholing all of Flannery O'Connor's characters, mention must be made that with her, the classical pattern of Gothic characters—the hero/heroine vs. the villain—is in broad lines preserved but rendered less visibly, because what prevails, in fact, is caricature.[14] Both major types are engulfed by caricature. Recalling Hieronymus Bosch's *Millenium*, Sebastian Brandt's *Narrenschiff* or, perhaps, Goya's *Capricios*, Flannery O'Connor creates a hellish landscape populated with "American gargoyles,"[15] grotesque characters, physically or mentally disabled men and women "possessed by demons and devils who completely control their souls and who subject them to excruciating torment."[16] With almost no exception, they are guilt-ridden and preoccupied with problems of temptation, sin, guilt, and expiation; they are fated and dominated by obsessions and madness, and they assume, sometimes simultaneously, the posture of rebel, rogue, and victim. Moreover, they can also be pranksters, clowns, and morons and, then, the created effect is comical. However, be they comic figures or not, Flannery O'Connor is careful enough to place them in extreme, horrifying situations, but the treatment is, nevertheless, comic. This blending of horror and the ludicrous, of melodrama and caricature, generates the grotesque effect.

But, despite their 'flatness' and their automaton-like gestures, Flannery O'Connor's grotesques are not simple creations, because at times they can appear as very complicated characters. Hazel Motes of *Wise Blood*, for example, the epitome of the grotesque character, is many men simultaneously: a fanatic, a rogue, a clown, and a Christ figure. Displaced by the war, Hazel divorces from his fundamentalist background and becomes a rebel. But, similarly to Francis Marion Tarwater in the novella *The Violent Bear It Away*, he yields to a hereditary obsession and turns his grandfather's legacy into reality, i.e. he rebels against being drawn into a theological trap by Asa Hawks and his religious pamphlets. Then, like his grandfather, he becomes a Bible Belt prophet and decides to found a new sect—the secular Church Without Christ. He travels around in a car, again like his grandfather, and, in order to match her grotesque hero-villain, Flannery O'Connor confers the shabby Essex an equally grotesque yet symbolic value, the car functioning simultaneously as Hazel's house, his pulpit, the henchman's instrument, and his justification. Moreover, when wrecked by a patrolman's squad car, the shabby Essex becomes the protagonist's own coffin.

Hazel Motes, whose life is reduced to a *rite of passage* from fundamentalism to rebellion and then to reincorporation, turns out to be the true religious fanatic—the hero-villain in the book—undergoing a conversion from agnosticism to mysticism, whereas the other three prophets and the one disciple act as his psychological *Doppelgänger*. They are freaks and tricksters lacking morals yet operating within a moral context and their major role is "to alienate the protagonist from the world and from aspects of himself,"[17] i.e. to shed light on the more absurd and bizarre aspects of the protagonist's personality. Feigning blindness, Asa Hawks is an impostor preacher who sells religion in front of a department store where he takes advantage of the potato-peeler salesman's crowd. Hoover Shoats and Solace Layfield, both false and hypocrite preachers and prophets, are other psychological doubles. The former is the "artist-type" and tries to become Hazel's partner for financial gain, whereas the latter is hired only to compete with Hazel. Eventually, Motes kills the last of his avatars by running him over, but he is compelled to listen to Layfield's last words:

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"Jesus hep me."[18] These words move him so much that he begins to be Christ-like, first placing barbed wire round his wrist and then blinding himself with quicklime.

However, of these minor characters, Enoch Emry is by far the most important of Hazel's doubles. Much of the plot is actually organized on the polarity Hazel Motes and Enoch Emry, the latter assuming the role of a clown or a fool, a comic counterpart, i.e. a grotesque reflection of an equally grotesque preacher. He meets Hazel at the potato-peeler salesman's stand and, despite rejection at the beginning, he gradually turns into the former's disciple. His "wise blood" tells him to obey the teachings of his preacher and that he has a mission in life to fulfill: he steals the mummy from the museum to supply Hazel with a "new Jesus" for the Church Without Christ. And yet, he is unable to go beyond the physical nature (his job at the zoo, his wish to go to a whorehouse, his spying on women at the swimming-pool, and his putting on the gorilla suit). Unlike Hazel who struggles against confinement in the physical nature, Enoch succumbs to it and remains literally incarcerated in it.

Hazel Motes is the first in a long line of secular preachers and hero-villains. Similar to him in many respects is Francis Marion Tarwater of *The Violent Bear It Away*. He, too, becomes the object of a hereditary obsession—to become a prophet—and passes from denial to rebellion and, then, through ritualistic cleansing to the final acceptance of his mission. Moreover, the acceptance of his mission occurs only after a violent death; in Hazel's case, it is the killing of the hired prophet, whereas here, Bishop's drowning is the result of ritualistic cleansing, i.e. baptism. Like in the previous novel, the protagonist has a psychological double. Here it is George Rayber, Francis Tarwater's uncle, and a secular prophet "of a new objectivity."[19] He is an agnostic speaking for existentialist freedom separated from any concerns of the spirit. But while Francis Tarwater, by finally accepting divine Grace and despite his violent deeds, is accepted to support the Kingdom of Heaven, Rayber, a modern freak and a grotesque, meets his fate acknowledging that his ascetic denial of the spirit has deprived him of Grace.

In his turn, Rayber has counterparts in other stories by O'Connor, most notably in "The Lame Shall Enter First," where Sheppard, a welfare worker and an atheist (the hero-villain), decides to save Rufus, a devilish clubfooted character with a fundamentalist upbringing (the physical freak), who strongly believes that he is, indeed, evil and that he cannot be saved. Unfortunately, the latter proves right, because in the attempt to save him by his own goodness, Sheppard is so selfish that he neglects his emotionally crippled son (the weakling), whom the demonic character induces to hang himself in the attempt to join his deceased mother in Heaven. However, the most alienated of all remains Sheppard, because, by adopting the status of a hero in his scientific inquiry and in his attempt to save Rufus, he ends up a villain and selfishly sacrifices his son. So, Sheppard actually grows into a villain, while the story unfolds, whereas Rufus is from the very beginning a villain suspended between the traditional extremes of heaven and hell.

Other devilish characters, literal villains in disguise or wolves in a sheep's clothing, are the tricksters, the embodiment of evil, whose role is to deceive the weaklings by their humble or honorable appearance that is often doubled by predestined symbolic names. Moreover, besides being tricksters, these devils in disguise are also wanderers but, unlike

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the wanderers of the classical Gothic novel who are in perpetual self-exile, these wanderers perpetually search for new victims.

Manley Pointer, the Bible salesman of "Good Country People," with his bony face and the "little pointed nose in the middle of it,"[20] is a veritable gundog hunting for new "game," However, his red hands and the glittering "eyes like two steel spikes"[21] suggest rather a satanic figure. The Misfit in "A Good Man is Hard to Find" is an intruder in the family unit. Due to his violent nature and his outspoken agnosticism (like Hazel Motes, otherwise) he does not fit into any microcosm, let alone the world at large. The people in the microcosm mistake him for a savior (the family thinks that the Misfit will help them get back on the road) but the moment he reveals his true villainous nature he becomes the "dragon." Then, it is too late and they are all doomed to perish by the dragon.

With a name that suggests mobility despite his physical disability, Mr. Shiftlet of "The Life You Save May Be Your Own," the companion story to "A Good Man is Hard to Find," [22] is another intruder in the microcosm, a threat, although a toned down one, if compared to the Misfit. The one-handed tramp makes a good impression on Mrs. Carter who immediately sees him as a kind of savior, a potential husband for her retarded daughter and the man who will restore her farm to its earlier, productive state. But like the Misfit, he will also bring about the destruction of the family when, after taking Mrs. Crater's car and some of her money for a "honeymoon," he deserts his new bride in a roadside diner and drives off.

Equally alienated but disguised as the 'virtuous,' and, therefore, closely related to the villain, are the "cultural grotesques."[23] In fact, Mrs. Turpin in "Revelation," Mrs. May in "Greenleaf," and Mrs. McIntyre and Mrs. Shortley in "The Displaced Person" are a bunch of self-satisfied hypocrites, a group of characters who suffer from blindness (and blindness triggers failure) and ignore true Christian virtue, the spiritual foundations of their Southern culture. Except for Mrs. Shortley, a person of a humbler descent, all the others "home-and-landowners"[24] whose righteousness/blindness estranges them from their surroundings, renders them incapable of acting charitably, and, furthermore, makes them trigger destruction (like the villains), tacitly of others (of Guizac, the Polish refugee) or their own (Mrs. Shortley and Mrs. May physically, while Ruby Turpin painfully learns obedience).

Whether they truly match the pattern of Gothic characters or are mere extensions of that, as Gilbert H. Muller notes,

> all her characters are susceptible to defects in nature and spirit, and these deficiencies are what estrange them from the community and from God...Miss O'Connor ridicules pride and hypocrisy wherever she finds it. She unmasks her grotesques by exposing their perversity, affectation, and vanity, and she frequently reduces them to impotence through satire . . . All her grotesques eventually come to the realization of the fact that they are aspiring toward illusory points in a secular world. . . . The grotesques of Flannery O'Connor are individuals who cannot erase the horrors of their obsessions. Few images of peace and beauty populate their world, few are the interludes of order. Implicit in their behavior are all the conventions of the grotesque—the nightmare world, the perversion, the satanic humor.[25]

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In conclusion, as we have seen above, be he hero/heroine or be he hero-villain, the typical "New-American-Gothic" character is either an 'innocent' or a weakling, in the case of the former, but mostly a physical or mental freak, in the case of the latter. Nevertheless, both are undoubtedly distorted characters obsessed with themselves. Since the characters are so intensely marked by obsessions, by their own preoccupations (disorder in psyche), they grasp reality in a distorted way, as a "cracked, distorted mirror," as a reflection of the 'inner' room. Hence, the order often breaks down, chronology is confused, and identity is blurred, the total effect being that of a dream marked by disorder. So that, in the end, we reach the initial disorder, the circle is closed. [26]

Notes

[1] J.A. Cuddon, *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. (London: Penguin Books, Third Edition, 1991), 382.
[2] Irving Malin, *New American Gothic*. (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), 5.
[3] This explains perhaps why the typical Gothic character is not well-rounded, in terms of E. M. Forster's classification, but rather a flat, stylized, cardboard figure.
[4] Carson McCullers, *The Ballad of the Sad Café*. (London: Penguin Books, 1963), 20.
[5] Ibid., 8.
[6] Carson McCullers, *Reflections in a Golden Eye.* (New York: Bantam Books, 1967), 129.
[7] Objects appear in an inverted position when looked at by a lens.
[8] Carson McCullers, *Reflections…*, op cit., 54.
[9] Irving Malin, op.cit., 50.
[10] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*. (London: Penguin Books, 1961), 212-3.
[11] Ibid., 281.
[12] Ibid., 172.
[13] Ibid., 304-5.
[14] Unfortunately, not all critics agree with Flannery O'Connor's point of view that we are all grotesques in one aspect or another, although we might not realize it, that what most people consider to be normal is actually grotesque, whereas the grotesque itself, due to its omnipresence, is reality. Martha Stephens, for instance, one of O'Connor's sternest critics and representing a somewhat extremist position, denounces the prevalence of caricature in O'Connor's work: "A good indication of what must be called O'Connor's contempt for ordinary human life is the loathing with which she apparently contemplated the human body. She liked to describe faces—she hardly ever passed up an opportunity—and nearly all her faces are ugly . . . human faces remind her of rodents, cats, hogs, mandrills, and vegetables; they are frog-like, hawk-like, gap-toothed, mildewed, shale-textured, red-skinned, stupid, demented, and simply "evil.". . . One could continue the catalog—but the point, I think, is clear. Human beings are ugly in every way; the human form itself is distinctly unpleasant to behold; human life is a sordid, almost unrelievedly hideous affair." See Martha Stephens, *The Question of Flannery O'Connor* (Baton, Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 9-10.
[15] To paraphrase the title of Anthony Di Renzo's book *American Gargoyles: Flannery O'Connor and the Medieval Grotesque*. (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993).
[16] Gilbert H. Muller, *Nightmares and Visions: Flannery O'Connor and the Catholic Grotesque*. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1972), 3.
[17] Ibid., 29.
[18] Flannery O'Connor, *Collected Works*. (New York: The Library of America, Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., 1988), 114.

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[19] Gilbert H. Muller, *Nightmares*..., op.cit., 25.
[20] Flannery O'Connor, *Collected...*, 275
[21] Ibid., 282.
[22] At first glance, there is little resemblance between the two stories, but when looking closer at the two villains, we notice how much this story is a mirror story to *A Good Man Is Hard to Find*. In fact, the stories have the same dynamics but a reversed outcome. Both villains are intruders in the family unit, both have started as gospel singers and then worked in undertaking parlors (the Misfit as an undertaker and Mr. Shiftlet as an undertaker's assistant), and both philosophize on life. The Misfit tries to come up with a philosophical framework that will unit his fragmented sense of reality, whereas the latter is at best, as Suzanne Paulson says, "a mock-philosopher." [See Suzanne Morrow Paulson, *Flannery O'Connor, A Study of the Short Fiction*. (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988), 93.] Both are then connected with the image of the automobile and both embody the archetype of the man who comes from the outside—the intruder in the microcosm—and who is looked upon as a savior. However, what they bring forth is only destruction. In the former story, the encounter leaves a family killed, while in the latter, a retarded woman abandoned at a roadside restaurant.
[23] Gilbert H. Muller, *Nightmares*..., op.cit., 46.
[24] Flannery O'Connor *Collected...*, 636.
[25] Gilbert H. Muller, *Nightmares*..., op.cit., 49-50.
[26] See Irving Malin, op.cit., 5-9.

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