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"Uprooted:" Anton Chekhov's Influence on Frank O'Connor

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Abstract. Thus far perhaps the most acclaimed Irish practitioner of the short story, Frank O'Connor, attributes a lasting influence to Russian author Anton Chekhov when he considers the direction that the modern Irish short story was to take in the twentieth century. In *The Lonely Voice: A Study of the Short Story* (1963), O'Connor emphasized two particular themes in Chekhov's short fiction that influenced his own stories: on the one hand, a preoccupation with loneliness; on the other, a belief that venial sin, or the adoption of a false personality, was "far more destructive" than mortal sin itself. In other writings, he expressed an interest in narrative technique and structure as he found them in Chekhov's stories. The article explores O'Connor's "Uprooted" from his collection *Crab Apple Jelly* (1944), a story about displaced intellectuals. My reading illustrates how the Irish writer was not only adopting Chekhov's themes but was also experimenting with Chekhov's character types and narrative techniques, particularly as found in the Russian author's story "The Lady with the Dog." At the same time, O'Connor developed a distinctly individual technique of his own within the Irish realist/naturalist short story tradition, making a lasting impact on the art of the modern Irish short story. Unlike his displaced Irish characters in "Uprooted," he prefers to remain faithful to this tradition.

Keywords: O'Connor, Chekhov, modernism, realism, naturalism, Irish short story

O'Connor and Chekhov

Frank O'Connor's literary output is diverse and prolific, embracing several genres, but his major accomplishment lies in perfecting the art of the short story. Like the Irish modernist writers of his generation, O'Connor was greatly influenced by the Irish Revival, and, similar to George Moore, open to the French and Russian literary influences that had come into Ireland from abroad at the beginning of the twentieth century (Lennon 2011). Ever since W. B. Yeats's praise for "O'Connor

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[who] is doing for Ireland what Chekhov did for Russia" (qtd. in Barnes 2005, ix), it has become a commonplace to describe O'Connor as the Irish Chekhov. It is still worth revisiting the subject as the few critical writings on O'Connor that have been published since the author's death do not analyse Chekhov's influence in detail beyond a few scattered references. Recent critical voices have also begun to cast doubt on the significance of Chekhov for O'Connor. Although Heather Ingman, for instance, sees some similarities between the Russian and Irish authors in their focus on "dull provincial life," in her eyes, O'Connor "neglect[s] Chekhov's emphasis on mood and feeling, his impressionistic characterizations, his lyricism and openendedness" (Ingman 2009, 131). O'Connor himself gave good grounds for Ingman's view when he protested against comparison with Chekhov in an interview for *The Paris Review*. The Russian writer was "inimitable, a person to read and admire and worship. But never, never, never to imitate" (Whittier 1958, 166). Even a writer as adept as Julian Barnes takes these words for granted, without paying due attention to the rest of the paragraph in which O'Connor praised Chekhov for his "extraordinary technical devices," warning writers against following Katherine Mansfield's example, who, "without those technical devices […] f[e]ll into a sort of rambling narrative" (Whittier 1958, 166). O'Connor's short stories are anything but "rambling." In the same *Paris Review* interview, O'Connor emphasized how Chekhov "had learned the art very, very early of maintaining interest, of creating a bony structure," but that it was only in the later phase of his literary career that he put this technique into practice (Whittier 1958, 166). By concealing "the bony structure" of his stories in a similar way to Chekhov, O'Connor's realist/naturalist stories display an affinity for early modernist techniques, rather than "a resistance to artistic experiment," as Heather Ingman claims (2009, 131).

In the following, I examine some of the typical Chekhovian techniques in O'Connor's "Uprooted," one of the best stories from the short story collection *Crab Apple Jelly* (1944). I do so in order to demonstrate how the Irish author masterfully employs the technical devices he has borrowed from Chekhov, creating a "bony structure" of his own for the story in order to examine the Chekhovian "theme of the false personality" (O'Connor 1963, 88). It is important to note, however, that although O'Connor's stories incorporate Russian literary influences from Chekhov and become examples of aesthetically patterned, well-crafted modern short stories, they still remain settled within the tradition of Irish realism. Indeed, Joe Cleary sees O'Connor and his contemporaries, Sean O' Faolain and Liam O'Flaherty, not simply as practitioners of realism but as developers of a distinctly Irish mode of naturalism that attempts to reflect the contemporary disillusionment with post-revolutionary Ireland from the 1920s (2007, 141). O'Connor's "Uprooted" is indeed a complex story that meets the high demands of modernist aesthetics and subtly hints at O'Connor's dissatisfaction with the Irish reality of De Valera's Ireland through its disenchanted characters. Instead of employing naturalism as a form of social critique, however,

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O'Connor adheres to Chekhov's "faith in life," in the magic of human existence and in the importance of individual responsibility and free will (O'Connor 1963, 98).

O'Connor first became acquainted with Turgenev's and Chekhov's works through Michael Corkery, another writer from Cork (Sherry 1990, 282). Published between 1916 and 1922, Constance Garnett's translations also contributed to the popularity of Chekhov among modernist writers, with "the particular qualities of her renderings" helping to preserve the characteristic features of Chekhov's style and "shap[ing] the development of the short story in English" (Hunter 2009, 38). O'Connor often returned to his volumes of Chekhov, as William Maxwell observes, the books being "[s]o lived with – turned down corner, turned down sides of the page, coffee stains, whiskey stains, and perhaps tears" (qtd. in Steinman 1996, 252).

Nevertheless, in his essays on Chekhov in *The Lonely Voice* and in *The Mirror in the Roadway*, O'Connor seems to be more interested in the Russian author's ideas than his technique. In the chapter on Chekhov, "The Slave's Son," from *The Lonely Voice*, O'Connor observes a dual "obsession" in Chekhov's stories with "human loneliness" and the "theme of false personality" or "venial sin as opposed to the mortal one" (1963, 85). Commenting on the "The Letter," "The Duel," and "The Bishop," stories that explore the theme of the false personality, he offers the following account of Chekhov's idea:

> We are not damned for our mortal sins, which so often require courage and dignity, but by our venial sins, which we can more easily conceal from ourselves and commit a hundred times a day till we become as enslaved to them as we could be to alcohol and drugs. Because of them and our facile toleration of them we create a false personality for ourselves – a personality predicated on mortal sins we have refrained from committing, ignoring altogether our real personality which is created about the small, unrecognized sins of selfishness, bad temper, untruthfulness and disloyalty. (O'Connor, 1963, 87–88)

Interestingly, O'Connor does not mention, in this context, one of Chekhov's early stories: "Uprooted." This story was written in 1887 and translated by Garnett in *The Bishop and Other Stories* in 1919. The central character is a young Jew, a dreamer, who leaves his impoverished parents in hope of an education and wanders from one place to the next, even converting to the Greek Orthodox religion. Aleksandr Ivanitch assumes a false personality, which results in a divided conscience that prevents him from admitting to himself that he had been wrong in denying his roots. At times, he suffers from denying his Jewish faith and his background, but he always manages to reassure himself that he had made the right decision. It becomes clear from the story that he will always remain displaced, or "uprooted," and will never settle down to finally reach his goal of becoming a village teacher. It is not only Chekhov's title that

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O'Connor borrows for his own story but also the character type of the young intellectual with a false personality. Yet instead of employing the subjective first-person narrative technique that Chekhov employs in "Uprooted" and that O'Connor preferred for his earlier stories, he studies the literary techniques and the "bony structure" of Chekhov's stories that were written later in life and upon which the Russian author's reputation as short story writer rests. Written in 1889, just a few years before the author's death, Chekhov's "The Lady with the Dog" serves as a perfect example.

"The Lady with the Dog"

"The Lady with the Dog" is a story which, according to O'Connor, "may well be the most beautiful short story in the world" (O'Connor 1963, 96–97). The structural and narrative techniques employed by Chekhov in the story were considered to be completely new when the story was written. Chekhov continues to explore the theme of a false personality in the story, but he goes beyond the description of venial sin as if "he were putting in a good word for the mortal sin, the sin that requires character and steadfastness of purpose" (O'Connor 1963, 95).

Gurov and his mistress, the lady with the dog, adulterers though they may be, cannot resolve the duality in their lives. According to O'Connor, "[s]he and her lover, […] seem to lack the capacity for committing the one mortal sin that would justify them in the eyes of God," which would be to come out in the open with their secret affair and suffer "the consequences" (O'Connor 1963, 97). The third-person narrator probes the deeper layers of consciousness of his characters. He has an insight into Gurov's thoughts, which reveal that the latter finds the duality of his life intolerable: "everything that made the kernel of his life, was hidden from other people" (Chekhov 1917, 25). The adulterous lady Anna Sergeyevna travels to Moscow occasionally, and the lovers meet in secret, but their problem remains unresolved, and the story also remains inconclusive. "How could they be free from this intolerable bondage? 'How? How?' he asked, clutching his head. 'How?'" (Chekhov 1917, 28).

In the essay "The Russian Point of View," Virginia Woolf expresses her perplexity concerning this particular story: "What is the point of it, and why does he [Chekhov] make a story out of this?" She comes to the conclusion that Chekhov's stories are predominantly about the "soul" (Woolf 1948, 225). Woolf also draws attention to some of the technical features of Chekhov's texts. These include the same lack of "episodic interest" that O'Connor discovered and marvelled at in Turgenev's stories (O'Connor 1963, 48); the preoccupation with irrelevant details and their selection and arrangement; the inconclusiveness of the story. Woolf regards these features as the keys to the artistic effect that "The Lady with the Dog" and Chekhov's other stories achieve:

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> Nothing is solved, we feel; nothing is rightly held together. On the other hand, the method which at first seemed so casual, inconclusive, and occupied with trifles, now appears the result of an exquisitely original and fastidious taste, choosing boldly, arranging infallibly, and controlled by an honesty for which we can find no match save among the Russians themselves. (Woolf 1948, 225)

When O'Connor was lecturing at Harvard University and Northwestern University in America during the 1950s, Vladimir Nabokov was also instructing students on European and Russian Literature at Cornell University in upstate New York. In his published lecture on Chekhov and "The Lady with the Dog," Nabokov highlights similar technical features characteristic of Chekhov's stories to those identified by Woolf. Besides the "careful selection and careful distribution of minute but striking features," he also mentions the inconclusiveness of the story and the constant references to irrelevant "trifles," which "are all-important in giving the real atmosphere." Furthermore, he emphasizes how the structure of "The Lady with the Dog" is based "on a system of waves, on the shades of this or that mood;" "the contrast of poetry and prose," and the "natural" and "slightly subdued voice" of the narrator (Nabokov 2002, 262–263). This type of narrative technique produces what Adrian Hunter terms "interiority," achieved by "the occlusion of an 'objective' third-person point of view, and the persistent infiltration of character interiority into the narrational discourse" (2009, 46).

The four main movements, or waves, of Chekhov's story are determined by Gurov's shifting mood and the atmosphere of the setting which alternates between the poetic and the prosaic. After they spend the night together in Anna Sergeyevna's room, the detached narrator is careful to mention that the slightly bored Gurov cuts himself a slice of watermelon. This prosaic and trifle detail is contrasted with a poetic description of the beauty of the sea at dawn when together they sit on a bench in Yalta and gaze at the sea and listen to the sound of the waves:

> The leaves did not stir on the trees, grasshoppers chirruped, and the monotonous hollow sound of the sea rising up from below, spoke of peace, of the eternal sleep awaiting us. Sitting beside a young woman who in the dawn seemed so lovely, soothed and spellbound in these magical surroundings – the sea, mountains, clouds, the open sky – Gurov thought how in reality everything is beautiful in this world when one reflects: everything except what we think or do ourselves when we forget our human dignity and the higher aims of our existence. (Chekhov 1917, 12)

Nabokov emphasizes that Chekhov makes no distinction between the prosaic "slice of watermelon" and the poetic "violet sea;" nor does he differentiate between

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"the lofty and the base," which are in harmonious balance (2002, 262). O'Connor employs similar techniques in the stories modelled upon Chekhovian themes.

"Uprooted"

Like Chekhov, O'Connor is also interested in the souls of his characters. The temptation of endowing his Irish characters with a "false personality" and experimenting with the Russian author's techniques in his own short stories was one that O'Connor could not resist. *Crab Apple Jelly* (1944) is especially important in this context; it also marks a turning point in O'Connor's career when the loneliness of his characters becomes a prominent theme (Peterson 1982, 64). This holds true for the stories in *The Common Chord* (1947), the Larry Delaney stories, and the tales of childhood written in the fifties, in which he also explores the themes of venial sin and false personality. "Uprooted," from *Crab-Apple Jelly*, is of particular interest from this point of view. The theme of homecoming, the emotions described in the story, the narrative technique and structure not only evoke Chekhov but also Moore, particularly "Home Sickness" from Moore's *The Untilled Field*. Thus, O'Connor manages to pay tribute in a single story to both Moore, who adapted techniques from Turgenev, and to Chekhov, reaffirming the existence of a distinct modern Irish short story tradition launched by Moore, the development of which was influenced by the works of Turgenev and Chekhov. O'Connor is thus claiming a place for his own stories within the modern Irish literary tradition and confirming the view that Russian literary influence was important in revitalizing the Irish tradition.

To describe the all-embracing theme of loneliness in his short stories, and the secondary theme of "false personality," O'Connor had to express the soul of his Irish characters. The question was how to achieve this goal. For O'Connor, it seems, it was first important to find the raw material of the "theme" or the incident before turning it into a short story (Steinman 1992, 242). He jotted down ideas for his stories in his small notebook, or "theme-book." They were brief, written in journalistic fashion. The maximum four sentences describing the theme focused on "what the story was – not what it was 'about'" (Steinman 1992, 242). These brief "themes" served as the pillars in the "bony structure" of his stories. Although no brief description of the theme of "Uprooted" exists in the note-book, it can be summed up in a few words: the homecoming and displacement of two brothers who are "hunted down" by their own "false" natures. Ned Keating, a young teacher, feels displaced in the city; his brother Tom is a priest, unsuited by nature and temperament for the profession. In "Uprooted," O'Connor's theme of displacement is closely linked to the Chekhovian theme of venial sin which both brothers commit day by day through living lives that are alien to their temperaments and personalities. Ned Keating, for instance, is "exhausted" by teaching and "no longer knew why he had

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come to the city" (O'Connor 2009, 274). All he knows is that the city and his dreams "had failed him" (O'Connor 2009, 273). He does not enjoy the humdrum routine or the bleakness of city life, and "his eyes were already beginning to lose their eagerness" (O'Connor 2009, 273). In an unobtrusive and casual manner, producing the effect of "interiority," the narrator reveals that Ned's ideals and dreams about his comfortable and contented life in the city are in conflict with his own nature:

> He would continue to be submissive and draw his salary and wonder how much he could save and when he would be able to buy a little house to bring his girl into; a nice thing to think of on a spring morning: a house of his own and a wife in bed beside him. And his nature would continue to contract about him, every ideal, every generous impulse another mesh to draw his head down tighter to his knees till in ten years' time it would tie him hand and foot. (O'Connor 2009, 274)

The opportunity for Ned to break away from the constraints that he has inflicted upon himself is offered at Easter, when his brother Tom proposes that they should go home to visit their parents during the "long weekend" (O'Connor 2009, 275). Tom's booming voice, and "boisterous," "irascible," "humorous," and friendly manner (O'Connor 2009, 275) are similar to their father's and are contrasted to Ned's stammering and shyness. But whereas Ned's stubborn clinging to his former ideals results in "nervousness" (O'Connor 2009, 273), Tom's sociability and open nature are in direct opposition with the self-control and submission demanded by the religious profession. The loneliness he has to endure leads to despair, which can only be relieved temporarily by alcohol: "They stopped at several pubs on the way and Tom ordered whiskeys" (O'Connor 2009, 275).

Just as in Chekhov's stories, there is also little episodic interest in O'Connor's "Uprooted" (O'Connor 1963, 48). The four different moods in the story (as in Chekhov's "The Lady with the Dog") correspond to the movements that sweep Ned from the city back to his native village; then to the village of Carriganassa across the bay and finally back to Dublin. Ned's melancholy eventually gives way to expectation as he joins his brother on the car trip to the country. He begins to feel "expansive" and liberated rather than constrained and "hunted down" (O'Connor 2009, 290). But this feeling is disrupted by a disappointed feeling of estrangement caused by the familiarity of the unchanged surroundings in his parents' house and the distanced view of his parents: "Nothing was changed in the tall, bare, whitewashed kitchen. The harness hung in the same place on the wall, the rosary on the same nail in the fireplace, by the stool where their mother usually sat; […] all seemed as unchanging as the sea outside" (O'Connor 2009, 275).

However, on Easter Monday, their father, Tomas – a man vividly characterized through his coloured and vernacular speech – is intent upon taking them for a visit

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to their uncle and cousins living across the bay in Carriganassa. As with Yalta for Gurov and his mistress in "The Lady with the Dog," so the village holds the promise of fulfilment in O'Connor's "Uprooted." During the boat ride, once again there is the feeling of expectation and happiness: "Ned leaned back on his elbows against the side, rejoicing in it all" (O'Connor 2009, 279). There is a subtle historical reference to English-Irish conflicts of the past in the name of O'Connor's village, evoking the disastrous Flight of the Earls in the early seventeenth century, following defeat at the Battle of Kinsale in 1601, and subsequent plantations of English and Scottish settlers loyal to the Protestant English monarch. The self-exile of the Gaelic lords paved the way for a comprehensive English conquest of Ireland and changed the course of Irish history (McCarthy 2006, 29–30). Ned's choice in the story is also self-enforced, affecting the rest of his life. Time seems to stand still in Carriganassa: there is an unchanging quality in the environment and its people, but, instead of seeing it as disheartening, it is uplifting for Ned. He makes a visit to his cousins and sees the rural surroundings in a new light: "Something timeless, patriarchal, and restful about it made Ned notice everything. It was as though he had never seen his mother's house before" (O'Connor 2009, 283). When Tom suggests that his brother needs a wife to keep him away from the temptations of the city, Cait Deignan is mentioned as the right person. Tom's manners and his words to Cait suggest that there was something between them in the past, a year before, when Tom was staying for a week at Carriganassa: "'[h]ave you nothing to say to me Cait?' he boomed, and Ned thought his voice was soft and clouded" (O'Connor 2009, 285).

When Ned first sees Cait, he is reminded of lines from Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound" to indicate the promise of love she inspires in him and the liberation from his chains: "'Child of Light, thy limbs are burning through the veil which seems to hide them,' Ned found himself murmuring" (O'Connor 2009, 285). On their way back to the pub, Cait shares her shawl with Ned as they run down the hill in the rain and the wind: "Ned felt as if he had dropped out of Time's pocket" (O'Connor 2009, 286). Like Chekhov, O'Connor alternates the descriptive poetic passages with the prosaic, but, instead of "suggest[ing] atmosphere by the most concise details of nature" as Chekhov does, nature is usually mirrored through the characters' features and movements (Nabokov 2002, 257): "While he gazed at her face with the animal instinctiveness of its over-delicate features it seemed like a mirror in which he saw again the falling rain, the rocks and hills and angry sea" (O'Connor 2009, 287); or "Tomas burst in unexpected on them like a sea wind that scattered them before him" (O'Connor 2009, 288). This type of descriptive method illustrates that Cait and old Tomas are at one with their environment.

Looking back at Cait from the boat as they are leaving at dusk, Ned is overwhelmed by contradictory feelings: "[F]or a long time Ned continued to wave back to the black shawl that was lifted to him. An extraordinary feeling of exultation and loss enveloped him" (O'Connor 2009, 288). The next morning, when the brothers have

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to leave, there is a conversation between them, which reveals that despite the joyous experience and the liberated feeling, despite exultation and the promise of love, Ned is not going to return to Carriganassa for Cait. Instead of choosing the redeeming alternative, he will accept the loss and return to the city and the dreams that have failed him.

In "Uprooted," O'Connor is struggling with a dilemma concerning narrative technique in the story. The theme of loneliness, the choice of characters, the lack of episodic interest, the narrative interplay between "interiority" and "objectivity," the alternating poetic and prosaic descriptions, and the inconclusiveness of the endings – which other modernists like Joyce, Woolf, Mansfield, and Bowen had employed in their own short stories – do not allow elements of traditional Irish story-telling to emerge. By employing Chekhov's techniques, O'Connor is moving away from the subjective *seanchai*-type of Irish oral story-telling tradition which he had tried to preserve in earlier stories (Peterson 1982, 67). For O'Connor, to hear "the tone of a man speaking" (O'Connor 1963, 29) was always more important than the "slightly subdued" and detached voice of the narrator. In "Uprooted," O'Connor's dilemma is how to include and preserve the Anglo-Irish and Irish voices of provincial Western Ireland, which he had successfully rendered in his early story collections, *Guests of the Nation* (1931) or *Bones of Contention* (1936) (Dabrigeon-Garcier 2006). His solution is to sprinkle the Chekhovian text with the colourful vernacular speech of the boisterous Tomas, the father of the Keating brothers. Tomas is full of life and activity, in harmony with himself and his rural surroundings. He admits to his son that the whole idea of the trip to Carriganassa was for the purpose of drink and company: "You were right last night, Tom, my boy. My treasure, my son, you were right. 'Twas for the drink I came" (O'Connor 2009, 280). By nightfall, when it is time to take the boat back to the mainland, Tomas is completely drunk, but happy: '"Twas the best day I ever had' he said. 'I got porter and I got whiskey and I got poteen. I did so, Tom, my calf. Ned, my brightness, I went to seven houses and in every house I got seven drinks and with every drink I got seven welcomes'" (O'Connor 2009, 288). Unlike Tomas, whose contentment stems from his rootedness in the provincial surroundings and his stable identity, his son Tom is miserable in his vocation as a priest. At dawn, when the two young men get ready to leave and take up the humdrum existence of their lives back in the city, Tom confesses his misery to Ned, admitting that "the trouble is in [him]self" (O'Connor 2009, 290). It is at this point that Ned realizes the similarity between himself and his brother:

> It's the loneliness of my job that kills you. Even to talk about it would be relief but there's no one you can talk to. People come to you with their troubles but there's no one you can go to with your own […] Ned realized with infinite compassion that for years Tom had been living in the same state of suspicion and fear, a man being hunted down by his own nature; and that for years to

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> come he would continue to live in this way, and perhaps never be caught again as he was now. (O'Connor 2009, 290)

For Tom, who resembles old Tomas in temperament, the burden of a false personality is even heavier to bear than for Ned. But Ned's response closes all doors to any possible change: "We made our choice a long time ago. We can't go back on it now" (O'Connor 2009, 290). Thus, the dilemma of the brothers remains unresolved mainly because of their own ineffectual approach to their situation, and they will continue to escape from themselves, unable to reach their ideals. In this sense, O'Connor's Ned and Tom in "Uprooted" resemble the idealists and dreamers in Chekhov's prose; there is an element of Aleksandr Ivanitch from Chekhov's "Uprooted" in both brothers from O'Connor's story of the same title. As Nabokov pointed out, Chekhov's intellectuals live "in a haze of Utopian dreams; […] sinking lower and lower in the mud of humdrum existence, […] hopelessly inefficient in everything" (2002, 158). In the characters of Ned and Tom Keating, O'Connor manages to capture the same ineffectual types of intellectuals. By closing themselves off from the past, there is nothing for them to hope for in the future. Ned and Tom's predicament reflect the limited possibilities that young intellectuals in the Ireland of the 1940s had in their choice of careers and also the social expectations that drove them towards committing the venial sin of choosing life paths that result in adopting a false personality. But rather than holding post-revolutionary Irish society entirely responsible for the Keating brothers' plight, O'Connor's naturalist short stories also address the issue of individual responsibility. Ultimately, it is torpidity, pride, and the lack of faith in the possibility of change that prevent the characters from returning to their roots and finding their true selves. The romanticism of Carriganassa and Cait thus remain unreachable for Ned, like streaks of the rising sun on the sky compared to a children's book from the past:

> A boy on a horse rose suddenly against the sky, a startling picture. Through the apple-green light over Carriganassa ran long streaks of crimson, so still they might have been enamelled. Magic, magic, magic! he saw it as in a picture-book with all its colours intolerably bright; something he had outgrown and could never return to, while the world he aspired to was as remote and intangible as it had seemed even in the despair of youth. (O'Connor 2009, 291)

Although there is revelation for Ned, there is no resurrection; he cannot capture the romance and magic that Carriganassa has offered to him and simply allows it to slip away. Nothing but memory will remain, a bitter reminder in the future of what might have been his.

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Conclusion

Unlike Ned, who rejects romanticism and resigns himself to bleak reality, O'Connor does not completely surrender the magic of his artistic powers to a mere social critique of his times. Instead, "Uprooted" demonstrates that the realist/naturalist mode of the Irish short story is open to the literary experimentalism of Modernism, rather than severed from it. By embracing themes that had been important to Chekhov, O'Connor provides undercurrents to his story which place it not only within an Irish literary tradition of realist/naturalist mode of writing and Irish history but within a broader context of European literary Modernism. Much as O'Connor admires Chekhov's themes and techniques, it is also clear that he does not wish to follow Ned Keating's example in uprooting himself from an Irish tradition of storytelling and assuming a false personality for himself as a Modernist writer. Instead of leaving Carriganassa and joining the mainstream of Irish Modernist writers in their flight from Irish realism, O'Connor prefers to see himself as remaining faithful to an Irish literary tradition that is linked to an awareness of national identity and a distinctive Irish cultural and literary heritage but that is open to the literary experimentalism of the major aesthetic movements of his time.

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