



# The Intellectuals in Flannery O'Connor's Short Stories

**Nattayaporn Worasaktayanant**

**Master of Arts (English) Thesis**

**Prince of Songkla University**

T	2546
เลขหมู่	PS374. S5 N37 2003
Bib Key	299309
	25 S.A. 2546

<b>Thesis</b>	The Intellectuals in Flannery O'Connor's Short Stories
<b>Author</b>	Miss Nattayaporn Worasaktayanant
<b>Major Program</b>	English
<b>Academic Year</b>	2002

### **Abstract**

This research aims to study the intellectuals in the short fiction of Flannery O'Connor. The author's background and her literary techniques are also examined for the complete understanding of the literary presentation of this type of characters.

O'Connor's social background and religious belief are found to restrict her vision and crucially determine the harsh portrayals of her fictional intellectuals. Seven out of nine intellectuals in this study are protagonists, whereas the rest play marginal roles in the stories. These intellectuals have similar backgrounds: social status and family life which reflect their nonproductive life, abnormal psychology, and their incomplete existence. Depicted in a clearly negative light, the intellectual characters' most prominent traits are atheism, egoism, and dependence. Due to their own limited condition, all intellectuals live in the midst of conflicts and problems. Yet, with their excessive pride in their apparent power of intellect and reason, these intellectuals are blinded to their own weakness and inferiority. They stubbornly struggle against unpleasant situations and problems to overcome their vulnerability, and at the same time assert their presumed self-sufficiency. But, they eventually encounter defeats in forms of their alienation, suffering, and loss. O'Connor's fictitious intellectuals satirically mirror modern man who believes that he can outrun his own limitations. Through their negative pictures and repetitively crushing defeats, O'Connor reveals her distrust in and criticism on intellect, science, including modern social science regarded by the modern secular as a means to achieve the meaning of life. The author also points out that such destructive values as well as human flaws are significant factors leading to spiritual barrenness and misery as well as malice in contemporary society.

The nine stories examined in this study exhibit the shared themes of modern man's pride in his intellect, as well as the inability of reason or secular knowledge to fulfill his quest for significance and meaning of life. The author effectively utilizes twist plots which highlight the failures of the intellectuals, the omniscient/limited third-person point of view which emphasizes the characters' inadequacy and ignorance, settings and images with symbolic meanings, and exaggerated characterization. Artistically maneuvered, these literary techniques not only produce powerful emotional effects but also convey messages that invoke the readers to ponder over their essentially absurd condition.