



Awakening the Moral Imagination through Fairy Tales and Stories with Dr. Vigen Guroian

Seminar 5 with Becky
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Outline:

Revelation

- In several of her earlier stories there are mature female characters like Ruby in this story, who are the principle protagonists.
- This is one of O'Connor's funniest stories. Ruby has a fine sense of humor. This manifests itself even in a self-deprecating way.
- The dark side of Ruby is exposed most powerfully by the scene in her mind. There is something about her that is an incipient nihilist or at least an incipient fascist.
- Ruby classifies people by race and social economic class.
- Ruby likes Mary Grace. Mary Grace is a young college student who has problems. Mary Grace is reading a book on human development.
- Flannery O'Connor had been up north and was not impressed by the secularism in university and college settings, and the reductionist understanding of human nature.
- God was acting through Mary Grace with respect to a middle age woman who is redeemable.
- We learn who she is and where she is from through conversations and her inner thoughts as they are recorded by the narrator. The people become types, not individuals.
- Ruby's point of view is the chief way that we learn about the others in the waiting room.
- Mary Grace is a prophet in some way, raging against the idols of the racist south. In some ways she sacrifices herself in the process. She is probably psychologically unstable. She is intoxicated with liberal secular ideologies. She stills sees through the unpleasant truth about Ruby. She is not a perfect prophet by O'Connor's standards.
- It is not only Ruby's racism and class prejudice, but more important, Ruby's self-centeredness and inflated estimate of her goodness, which is a false pride.
- The story is in two parts:
 - The extended scene in the doctor's office.
 - A short ride back to her home with her husband.



- There is something good about these people. It is not all black and white. They are not pure evil.
- Mary Grace is infuriated and throws her book at Ruby. Ruby becomes, for a moment, passive. There is an internalization of this that quiets her.
- Ruby's religion is deeper than that of the Grandmother's religion. Ruby is open to grace. She begins to question herself. She is open to God's judgement.
- Ruby is very fixed on southern manners and appearances. O'Connor conveys the cultural milieu quite well.
- We all fall into the habit of judging based on appearance. Ruby even looks at people's shoes.
- There's mystery, things happen in this world that we can't escape from. The greatest truth about her was spoken by a crazed young woman, who calls her a wart hog and tells her to go back to hell. This reaches her.
- Mary Grace doesn't fit into Ruby's mapping.
- Ruby is reflecting certain views of the time (hierarchy of the society).
- Flannery O'Connor has a need to speak to the culture.