Gullibility Hypocrisy Essay, Research Paper

In Flannery O?Connors?s ?The Life You Save May Be Your Own,? ?Good

Country People,? and ?A Good Man Is Hard To Find,? she explores the

consequences of the combination of hypocrisy, gullibility in social contacts,

and the role of being raised at mother?s knee. Reared a strict Roman Catholic

and writing in the Bible Belt South O?Connor encountered those character flaws

first hand. The repetitive hypocrisy displayed in these three short stories is

portrayed by only the men suggesting that O?Connor has certain issues with

men. Tom Shiftlet in ?The Life You Save May be Your Own,? wearing his black

town suit and brown hat met these two women, Lucynell Crater Sr. and her

daughter Lucynell Jr. O?Connor depicted him as ?a tramp and no one to be

afraid of,? but in reality he is a man who makes and breaks his claims and it

the process blemishing his company?s spirit. When he claims, ?I can?t get

married right now,? and later the trio goes into town to marry Mr. Shiflet and

Lucynell Jr. is exactly the aim O?Connor wants to get across, hypocritical

men. One may accidentally utter one statement and then act on the contrary, but

in this short story Mr. Shiflet makes many remarks on his beliefs and almost

opposing every one. One may inherit the impression that he is quite foolish by

all of his self-righteous talk when he says people lie too much and later

telling the youth she was a hitchhiker. On his way to Tuscaloosa he picks up a

boy who only spoke telling him, ?You go to the devil!? Both the boy and

Lucynell Jr. represent innocence in this story and that opens Mr. Shiflet?s

numb mind forcing him to change his perspective. Similar to Mr. Shiflet, yet not

as repetitive as his hypocritical ways, the Bible salesman in ?Good Country

People,? says ?I may sell bibles but I know which end is up.? This young

man?s purpose in the beginning of the story is to sell a bible to a woman who

refuses to buy one and later to the daughter. A blatant example of his inherit

hypocrisy is also seen by Hulga when she says: ?You?re just like them all

? say one thing and do another. You?re a perfect Christian, you?re…?

O?Connor outright expresses what she feels in all three of these short stories

in that brief comment. With men being hypocrites and women being gullible,

O?Connor shows how well the two mix with each other. When Mr. Shiflet and

Lucynell Sr. first meet he comments: ?How you know I ain?t Aaron Sparks,

lady, and I come from Singleberry, Georgia, or how you know it?s not George

speeds and I come from Lucy, Alabama, or how you know I ain?t Thompson Bright

from Toolafalls, Mississippi.? This is suggesting to the reader he actually

could say any of them or any other far-fetched information and the Lucynell Sr.

would most likely believe it. O?Connor is portraying how the women of the

South do not have a mind of their own, but a universal southern mind in which

does not protest or contradict anyone, but rather being close minded to the

reality of the world that people lie. Just after meeting with the visitor

Lucynell Sr. allows Mr. Shiflet to sleep in a car and fix miscellaneous items in

exchange for meals. This is a very assertive action she takes, but since she

believes him to be a harmless man she would never expect the proceeding events.

Paralleling with ?Good Country People,? O?Connor portrays the Freeman?s

in the same situation as the Carters. Mrs. Freeman being approached by a

persistent bible salesman is forced to make a decision and when he says ?I?m

just a country boy,? she immediately turns into a helpless pawn under his

control. After he interjects that comment she now trusts him and this is when

O?Connor represents the times women are most vulnerable to gullibility. A

short while after Hulga has got to know the bible salesman she realizes that all

of these die-hard ?Chrustians? are all hypocrites and is the only one

throughout the three stories who has this insight. Another common thread between

the these short stories by O?Connor is they all depict the man in the story as

being ?raised at mother?s knee.? Meaning that they sat on their mother?s

knee while she read them the bible and greatly pampered them. Mr. Shiftlet?s

opinion on his mother is: ?She taught him his first prayers at her knee, she

give him love when no other would, she told him what was right and what

wasn?t, and she seen that he done the right thing.? O?Connor stresses the

tidbit of information on the background of these men whom were raised at their

mother?s knee in all three stories, suggesting a stereotype of this type of

man. Through O?Connor?s writings it is very apparent that she has issues

with the men in her life and in turn affects general men that were raised at

their mother?s knee being read the bible as hypocrites and the women who

encounter these men as gullible. She shows how this combination of hypocrisy and

gullibility can affect the most average of southern families.