

Chelsea Miles

Brother Bailey

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A Good Ol' Southern Showdown: Social Classes in Flannery O'Connor's "Revelation"

There is an intriguing pattern that occurs throughout history and it is because of human nature that this pattern appears. Social classes are prevalent in so many cultures—the Indian caste system, the British medieval feudal system and the French absolute monarchy are just a few familiar examples. These examples show a distinct feature of human nature. People are fundamentally judgmental, and because of this, they put each other into categories based on economical or racial status and even based on a person's general appearance. There is no better example of this than the Southern social class that Flannery O'Connor describes in her short stories.

All of Flannery O'Connor's short stories have many similar characteristics such as irony, religion and violence; a comparison of social classes is another very prevalent characteristic that crops up in her short stories. O'Connor creates this comparison with a pretentious, God-fearing middle class and an envious, and usually violent lower class. The middle class characters feel entitled to be in their social standing and they look down on those that sit lower than them on the social ladder. In her stories, these characters are either Black, or "white trash." The middle class characters try to hide their judgmental thoughts and sometimes it works. Sometimes, because of their ignorance, some of the lower class cannot see past the façade; however, she does create lower class characters that can see the truth. Since they are overlooked so often, these lower class characters get angry and act out violently against those middle class characters. O'Connor uses

this violent act to create a battle of sorts between the middle class and the lower class. In this battle, the lower class is victorious, while the middle class is left wondering how they could possibly have been bested by anyone lower than themselves, and the reader is left wondering what O'Connor is trying to accomplish by making the lower class characters victorious and the middle class characters defeated by the end of this battle.

### **O'Connor's Social System Background**

O'Connor's authority on Southern social classes can be set up by looking at her home, the Deep South. She was born in Georgia in 1925 to a prominent white, Catholic family (Hyman 5). At this time, the South was transitioning from the antebellum times of plantation divisions to the segregation of pre-Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement. It was during this time, when a new tier to the Southern social class was formed, the poor whites, or white-trash as O'Connor uses in her stories. These poor whites were once tenant farmers on the broken-up plantations following the Civil War. However, they failed at their attempts to grow anything on the land, and the landlords kicked them off of the land, leaving them nowhere else to go (Carr 36). Some Northern industrialists set up low-income housing and low paid jobs for the poor whites. Instead of helping them, this aid kept them at that lower status because they promised the industrialists that they would not have second jobs and they would not let their children work better jobs for better pay. This eventually led to the poor whites resenting those in the social classes above them. They "vented their frustration in hatred of the newly freed African-Americans" and by 1924, just one year before O'Connor was born, the South had their own "political and economic serfdom" (Carr 37). The Southern stage was set with a social class system for a new young writer to satirize.

Not only did O'Connor's Southern home give her a good setting for her short stories, but her schooling gave her background knowledge that would help her look into the minds of her characters and understand their true selves. She majored in psychology and sociology at Georgia State College for Women where she noticed a "pretentiousness" among the psychologists who had "an insistence upon doing [psychology] at the expense of others, while reversing for oneself a kind of haughty immunity" (Coles 158). By looking at her educational background, it becomes quite obvious where O'Connor got her inspiration for her condescending, middle class characters. Her characters, such as Ruby Turpin in "Revelation," have this same "pretentiousness" and feeling of "haughty immunity" that the psychology professors had. And it is this haughtiness that she attempts to bring to light, not to suggest a change, but to bring about a knowledge and realization of the judging and hatred that occurs between the social classes.

O'Connor's short stories were not first seen as satires on the social system in the South, but it soon became hard to ignore the fact that her stories deal with this issue. Stanley Edgar Hyman, a former teacher at Bennington College, suggests that the reason why her stories were not thought of as social commentary was because she herself was a white Southern lady. Hyman, however, says that this is an example of her use of irony, and that her stories do reflect upon the social and racial problems in the South, "and more powerfully and truly than that of anyone else" (41). It is ironic that a white Southern lady, who is usually the people that she satirizes, is able to write about an issue with honesty that brings readers to a realization about their own lives. Even though she chose to comment on the social system in the South, she did not do so to try and bring about equality for the classes. Instead, her belief in a Creator and His mercy to those who experience misery in life will "gain entrance into Paradise more readily than do their more prosperous neighbors" (Carr 111). Therefore, O'Connor is not arguing for a riddance of the

social class system, but rather is arguing for recognition that the lower classes experience great pains in life already without the judgment from the middle classes, and in the end, they will receive more for their strife.

### **Critical Survey**

Many critics have tried to make sense of O'Connor's ironic satirizing of the Southern social class. Others have analyzed her characters' traits and how those traits fit in with this theme of social classes, and also her most widely used theme of religion. By looking at these critics, it becomes easier to see O'Connor's subtle commentary on the Southern social class system, while still realizing that she was just as much a part of that social system as the characters she was writing about.

Although the situations and characters she creates are fictional, O'Connor makes her readers reach an uncomfortable realization that they are applying judgments to the middle class characters just as those characters would to the lower class characters. This is the main idea in Barbara Tedford's essay "Flannery O'Connor and the Social Classes." Tedford explains O'Connor's commentary becomes apparent as her characters believe they are above the lower classes, specifically poor whites and blacks. She tells how O'Connor's characters have prejudices, but they try to appear broad-minded. Unfortunately for those characters, their facades are broken by their actions and comments that they make (28). Tedford focuses on many of O'Connor's short stories, but she uses "Revelation" as her main source. She uses the character Ruby Turpin's social ranking system as the main argument for Ruby's behavior in the doctor's office, and also for Ruby's internal, not-so-humble, monologues with Jesus. Tedford explains that Ruby's ideas of the social system are questioned at the end of the story as she has her revelation in the pig barn (28). It is when she sees the crowds of lower classes walking ahead of

the upper classes that she comes to that realization that O'Connor herself had about the lower class, that they are not to be judged because they will receive more of God's mercy to finally make them equal with the middle class. Tedford also suggests that the characters are not rewarded for their superiority and prejudices of those in lower classes, and that because they feel superior, they are not able to relate to the lower classes, although they still seek their approval. She uses Ruby's interactions with her hired black farm hands as an example of this. Even though they do give her that recognition, Ruby is not satisfied because they overdo it and her prejudices come through again as she remarks that they aren't smart enough to understand her needs (32). Tedford says O'Connor's readers, are able to brush off Ruby's opinions and find humor in them, because at first they seem completely over-generalized and racist. But then, the readers have an awkward epiphany because they see themselves acting exactly as Ruby does, judging her and feeling superior to her as they would never make social judgments (31). This epiphany becomes ironic for readers, just as O'Connor's writing of these stories is ironic. While readers make judgment on characters that are judging others, in essence, the writer, O'Connor, is judging not only her characters, but her readers as well.

For O'Connor, these judging characters need to be humbled and shown that while there is no justice on earth for the lower class, it will come in heaven; the best way to bring about this humility is to have the lower class characters deliver it in full force. Duane Carr, a former professor at the University of Arkansas, presents this idea in a chapter on O'Connor's short fiction in his book *A Question of Class: The Redneck Stereotype in Southern Fiction*. Carr writes about many different examples of Southern social classes in other writers, such as William Faulkner, Eudora Welty and Cormac McCarthy, showing that it is a prevalent theme in Southern fiction. But he suggests that O'Connor who uses the Southern social classes in a way that is

unique to her stories, because she doesn't particularly care for either class. He does suggest that although she isn't equally fond of her characters, her middle class characters receive more of the punishment in her stories, and that it is usually the lower class characters giving out that punishment. He calls these characters "catalysts to knowledge and messengers of truth," or at least the truth that O'Connor herself sees (107). He outlines this idea throughout many of O'Connor's stories, not seeming to focus on any one in particular. This again shows the prevalence of the theme of social classes, especially within O'Connor's stories, as there are so many examples that can be used. He uses the story "The Life You Save May Be Your Own" to suggest that the boundary lines that the middle class characters draw between the classes are more blended than they would actually seem to those characters (108). This thought returns to his original idea, as this blended line makes it possible for the lower class characters to cross over and exact revenge against the middle class. He uses Ruby's revelation as another example for this blending, as her vision brings her the truth she needs to become humble and have that realization about God's mercy that O'Connor believed in (110). However, Carr forgets to mention that it is Mary Grace's actions in the doctor's office—throwing the book at Ruby's head—that lead Ruby into that pig barn to have that revelation and shows that social class blending.

The reason why these middle class characters need a big dose of humility is because of narcissism that feeds into their superiority beliefs. In an article "Narcissism and Spirituality in Flannery O'Connor's stories," psychologists Neil Scheurich and Vincent Mullen give many characteristics of narcissists, the three major being self-inflation, lack of empathy, and an intense need for admiration (538). They argue that most of O'Connor's characters are narcissistic as they have defined it, and they use her two short stories "The Enduring Chill" and "The Lame Shall

Enter First” to support their argument, but it could be used to characterize Ruby Tuprin as she has all the distinguishing characteristics of narcissism. She believes that she is correct in her beliefs on life, she has a lack of empathy, with regards to “white-trash,” and she has an intense need for admiration as she seeks out that admiration from her hired help. Scheurich and Mullen explain that although narcissists have these beliefs about themselves, they never intend to do evil, and they may not realize the evil in their hearts (546). They suggest that O’Connor uses narcissism as a type of blindness in her characters that hides them from truth (547). This truth is that while these middle-class characters may be superior in the eyes of man, in the eyes of God, everyone is equal.

These narcissistic characters create the social class hierarchy through their interactions with each other, while excluding the lower-class characters from those interactions. This is the main idea presented in the article “The Politics of the Cliché: Flannery O’Connor’s ‘Revelation’ and ‘The Displaced Person’” by Carole Harris, a professor at New York City College of Technology. The article focuses on how O’Connor uses diction in “Revelation” to show the differences between social classes. She explains that Ruby and Mary Grace’s mother form their own social circle based on their common social standing and they exclude those around them, including the white-trash woman, through their speech (114). They converse together and, as Harris explains, “battle it [racism] over semantics” as Ruby slips up and uses exactly the same racist and snobbish language that the white-trash woman uses, just not in the same way (114). It is because of this battle that Harris then argues that Mary Grace is also put in the same position as the white-trash woman, as her own mother begins to talk bad about Mary Grace in front of her. This leads to Mary Grace’s eventual attack on Ruby, and Mary Grace eventually turns Ruby’s own use of the word “trash” back onto her (116). Here there is another battle of

semantics that turns into a physical battle because Mary Grace feels that exclusion from the middle class and lashes out in the way that works best for the lower class: violence.

The best way that O'Connor has thought of to shock those middle class characters out of their narcissistic, superior selves into humble beings is through the use of violence. In this way, she doesn't just shock her characters, but her readers as well. They want that justice for the lower class characters, but they do not realize the cost until it is too late. O'Connor's use of violence is discussed in Marilyn Chandler McEntyre's article "Mercy that Burns: Violence and Revelation in Flannery O'Connor's Fiction." McEntyre, a former associate professor at Westmont College, suggests the same idea that Barbara Tedford suggested in her article, that readers don't realize that they themselves are judging characters like Ruby Turpin just like the characters are judging others (332). McEntyre then suggests that O'Connor uses violence to not only shock the characters, but the readers as well, and bring everyone to the same uncomfortable realization (333). O'Connor needs to use this shock because what has once seemed wrong to her characters, and readers, now seems right, and vice-versa (333). McEntyre uses Ruby's imaginary conversations with Jesus as an example of this. Ruby thinks that her conversations with Jesus are good. However, this is not right, because her conversations are full of racial and social prejudices. It then becomes necessary for Mary Grace to become violent and throw her book at Ruby to shock her into realizing that what is right is really wrong (335). McEntyre later expresses that through Ruby's revelation, readers are reminded that sin can sometimes be disguised as righteousness (337). It can then be seen that when superiority blinds the middle class, they think that their sins are actually not sins, and the only way to get rid of that blindness is from the shock value of violence.

### **The Social Showdown**



It is interesting and sometimes impossible to believe that an author's commentary on society years in the past can be relevant to readers today. While O'Connor's comparisons of social classes in her stories were written to satirize Southern society during her lifetime, it is possible for readers to gain insight from those comparisons and apply them to society today. In "Revelation," O'Connor creates a showdown of the Southern social classes by contrasting the middle class character and lower class characters with characterization and dialogue to show her readers that despite the separation of social standings, in life, everyone is ultimately the same at the end of the battle.

*The Middle-Class "Revealed."* The narrator in "Revelation" shows Ruby Turpin's true colors of superiority by laying out her private thoughts onto the pages of the story. The narrator in this story is third person limited omniscient which means that readers get a direct glance into Ruby's mind, even if the narrator attempts to help her hide her true self. The narrator describes her as someone who "without appearing to" (O'Connor 490) judge others, but readers can look past her façade of innocence and see her thoughts. It is this phrase that helps readers understand her true nature. She hides her superiority so that she may appear to be a caring person who does not judge those below her. Through the first few pages of the story, readers may be tricked by the narrator into thinking that Ruby is a sympathetic character, someone who guides her husband with a "firm hand" and gives him the only empty seat in the doctor's office (488). Readers may be tricked by this description because the narrator is describing what she is like on the outside, and in this way, readers are introduced to her just as other characters in the story are. It isn't too far into the story before readers catch a glimpse of who she really is. Just two pages after her initial introduction, Ruby gives her first mental judgment and readers start to truly see her. She notices a "stylish lady" with a daughter who is a "fat girl" who has acne and a scowl, and she

immediately begins making judgments about the young girl (490). Ruby compares herself to the daughter, saying that even though she herself is fat, she “had always had good skin” and had laugh lines around her eyes because of her happy disposition (490). Here, Ruby classifies this girl as being lower class not because of her social standing, but because of her general appearance, which shows that in Ruby’s mind, even a person’s physicality places them in a lower class than herself. It is in this short paragraph where Ruby’s middle-class superiority complex is first revealed, and it is from this point onward that the narrator is no longer able to trick her readers into believing that Ruby is that caring person from the first paragraph of the story.

Ruby’s mental judgments further show how she is actually quite shallow, but also how people in general can sometimes be just as shallow as she is. As she sits in the doctor’s office, she begins to do something that most people in a similar situation would do—she looks at their shoes. However, she doesn’t just look at their shoes. She starts to judge them by the shoes they are wearing. Ruby notices that the stylish lady from before has on “red and grey suede shoes,” that the lady’s daughter has on “Girl Scout shoes and heavy socks” (490), and she notices that a “white-trashy mother had on what appeared to be bedroom slippers” (491). Here, readers don’t get any sense that Ruby’s observations aren’t anything but ordinary, but she doesn’t stop with that one thought. The narrator adds-on to the simple observation about the white-trash mother’s slippers, telling how Ruby believes those slippers are “exactly what you would have expected her to have on” (491). With this sentence, readers once again see her actual feelings towards those who are lower than herself. She expects nothing more from the lower class, and one can almost imagine seeing her eyebrows raise and nose turn up as that sentence flows through her mind. This sentence doesn’t just reveal more of Ruby’s true character though. The narrator uses

her thoughts to directly address the audience as she thinks that those slippers are what you, the reader, would also expect from a lower-class, white-trash woman. From this direct exchange with the narrator, readers can begin to see how sometimes, like Ruby, they are quick to judge others based on something simple such as the shoes they are wearing. Readers can begin to notice that they, like Ruby, can be shallow and judgmental.

Ruby's obsession with social standing is further revealed through her creation of a mental social class system and this may show how she is slightly insecure with her middle class status. The narrator tells how she "occupied herself at night naming the classes of people" (491). Most people will not sit around and mentally place people in a social pyramid, but this unique action characterizes Ruby. She is so preoccupied with social status and standing that they take up her free time. This obsession deepens the reader's understanding of her character. In her mental standings, she believes that there are people who are wealthy but "were common and ought to be below she and Claud and some of the people who had good blood had lost their money and had to rent" (491). Here it is shown that Ruby may not be as secure about her middle-class standing as was once thought. In the least, it can be assumed that she may not mind being middle class as long as those who are "common" are placed down at the bottom of her list with "most colored people" and the "white-trash" (491). This insecurity connects back to Ruby's judgments and helps readers understand that she makes those judgments because at least those people are "common" and "white-trash" and are in their proper placement on the social pyramid.

Dialogue plays just as big a role in "Revelation" to show Ruby's middle-class superiority and her obsession with social status. While sitting in the doctor's office, she has internal conversations with Jesus. In these conversations, readers can further see how Ruby views the social pyramid. When given the choice of being either white-trash or black, she first pleads with

Jesus to make her neither, but when denied, and as a last resort, “she would have said ‘All right, make me a nigger then’ ...a neat clean respectable Negro-woman” (491). Her skittishness of being theoretically a white-trash woman can go back to the white-trash stereotype that appears in many Southern short stories. To Ruby, and other middle-class southerners, it is better to be a good, respectable black person than a white person who loafes off of the charity of others. This belief can relate to Ruby’s insecurities and obsession with social standing because when given the choice, she would still rather be black and middle-class, then white and lower-class.

The conversation between Ruby, the stylish lady and the white-trash woman begins to break down Ruby’s carefully crafted mask of compassion towards the lower class and show her true, middle-class, superior self. Throughout “Revelation,” the narrator gives the readers, piece by piece, a glimpse of how she is not what she seems to be. It isn’t until this conversation takes place that her true self is fully seen. Before, her thoughts towards the white-trash woman were thoughts about the lower-class in general. However, as she begins to chat with the stylish lady, the white-trash woman also enters into their conversation, and Ruby’s thoughts become more pointed. As the woman begins to talk about buying clocks and jewelry with green stamps (a type of trading currency that started in the 1930’s), the narrator shows readers that Ruby thinks, instead, the woman “Ought to have got you a wash rag and some soap” (492). Here, she is addressing the white-trash woman directly in her thoughts by using “you.” Before, the “you” referred to others like Ruby, who would understand her judgment of the woman. Now, the “you” is pointed directly towards the person she is judging, and the wall separating Ruby’s thoughts and actions becomes weaker.

This conversation continues to break down Ruby’s façade as more of her personal thoughts are revealed and the other characters begin to see Ruby’s true self. As the white-trash

woman continues to enter into the conversation, Ruby becomes more and more annoyed in each instance. First, she tries to ignore the woman's comments by switching topics. Next, she actually speaks her thoughts, if only quietly. While talking about pig farming with the stylish lady, Ruby is interrupted by the white-trash woman who exclaims that she would never want to "scoot down no hog with no hose" (493). Ruby says to herself "You wouldn't have no hog to scoot down" (494). She makes the comment based on a judgment she made in her mind, but now, it has finally slipped from her lips. It isn't too long before Ruby can no longer ignore the woman, and she begins to talk directly to her. She talks in a condescending way towards the woman as they discuss sending black people to Africa. Ruby says that "There's a heap of things worse than a nigger" (495). Just like her previous thoughts, this comment points directly to the woman as she is the very thing, to Ruby, that is worse than a nigger. When this comment is made, more and more of Ruby's once internal personal thoughts are no longer held by the confines of her mind. As Ruby continues in her conversation, readers soon are not the only ones who become privy to her thoughts. She begins to explain to the stylish lady about the conversations she has with Jesus. Although she tries to appear humble, by saying "I just feel like shouting, 'Thank you, Jesus, for making everything the way it is!' It could have been different!" (99). However, this comment does not show Ruby's humility. Instead, it shows her pride. While she may be trying to appear to be saying, "It could have been different. I could have been absolutely nothing like that poor white-trash woman," in actuality, she is really saying, "It could have been different. I could be just like that white-trash woman, wearing my bedroom slippers to the doctor's office." Ruby is once again making that judgment against the lower-class, but this time, it isn't just in her mind, and although the stylish lady may not notice, and the white-trash woman may be ignorant to

Ruby's intentions, there is another person in the room who does recognize Ruby's true identity as a judgmental middle-class woman.

Mary Grace, the "fat girl" that Ruby had once claimed social superiority over, becomes the lower-class character to middle-class Ruby in O'Connor's social showdown. Before, Ruby had brushed off Mary Grace as just another occupant in the doctor's office, but at the same time she had placed her in a lower class because of her appearance and disposition. However, Ruby is not the only one to place Mary Grace in a lower class, because even her mother places her in a lower class. Mary Grace sits and listens as the stylish lady tells Ruby about how the worst thing in the world is "an ungrateful person. To have everything and not appreciate it" (499). While trying to make the comment seem as if it could be about anyone, the stylish lady is obviously talking about Mary Grace. This comment mirrors Ruby's previous comment to the white-trash woman that there are "worse things" than a black person. This helps the lady, and Ruby in proximity, proclaim superiority over Mary Grace and group her together in the lower class with the white-trash woman. The narrator has finally finished creating the distinction between the social classes in this story, and the showdown can now begin.

The dissatisfaction of the lower classes in society can be seen from Mary Grace's reactions to Ruby's superiority. This is because Mary Grace is able to see that superiority, although Ruby tries to mask it. However, Mary Grace's objections to Ruby's judgments are hypocritical, because while Ruby is busy judging the white-trash woman for being lower class, Mary Grace is silently judging Ruby for her middle-class comments. Whenever Ruby makes some sort of judgmental comment, Mary Grace gives her "ugly looks" that seem "as if she had known and disliked [Ruby] all her life—all of Mrs. Turpin's life, it seem too" (493-95). This doesn't escape Ruby's notice, as she wonders, "Why girl, I don't even know you," (495). Because

the narrator lets readers look at Ruby's internal judgments on the occupants of the doctor's office, it can be concluded that Mary Grace herself is also making judgments because her judgments are not as well disguised as Ruby's had been, and it is easier to read her thoughts from her expressions. But where Ruby's judgments came from a higher social standing, looking down at those beneath her, Mary Grace's judgments are critical of those above her, and her actions lead her to correct that imbalance.

Mary Grace's violent actions towards Ruby create the social class showdown, and Mary Grace takes dominance over and shocks Ruby enough to begin the journey towards her humbling revelation. As Ruby makes her judgments against the lower class, Mary Grace's dissatisfaction builds and builds until finally, at the climactic point of the story, she throws her textbook right at Ruby's head. As most scholars know, textbooks are quite large and heavy, and none would relish in having one thrown in their direction because it would cause some serious damage to the victim. Mary Grace's violence does not stop by just throwing a large book at Ruby, but she also tackles Ruby, "crashing across the table toward her, howling" and wraps her hands "like clamps into the soft flesh of [Ruby's] neck" (99). Her anger at Ruby's superiority is so great, that she cannot contain it behind "ugly looks" anymore, and must take matters literally into her own hands. Just as Duane Carr related in his chapter on O'Connor, this violent act is a "catalyst" for bringing the middle-class characters to a "message of truth" (Carr 107). Before being taken away to an asylum, Mary Grace tells Ruby to "Go back to hell where you came from, you old warthog" (500). This statement, along with the violent act, causes Ruby to begin her journey to finding the truth of social standings.

The lower class violence makes middle-class Ruby come to the realization that, in the eyes of God, everyone is the same. Although she still tries to find comfort from her black

farmhands, her superiority still holds her back, as she proclaims “You could never say anything intelligent to a nigger” (103). Here, she is still seeking to have her superiority affirmed by the very people she feels superior over. But she is not able to see past her judgments, and must continue on her journey alone. It isn’t until she is alone hosing down the hogs that she realizes what Mary Grace meant by calling her a warthog. She first tries to rationalize the statement because pigs were “supposed to be smarter than dogs” (506). In this sense, it would not be terrible if she were like a hog, because they are smart and are superior to another species, just as she is superior to another class. But she also remembers that a pig had been sent into space and had a heart attack because he had been kept “sitting upright throughout his examination when naturally a hog should be on all fours” (506). The hog naturally needed to be in its proper place, on all fours, below those that are superior to it, and Ruby believes she cannot be like the hogs because she is superior to them, no matter what Mary Grace said. However, the comment stays with her and she cries out to God, “How am I saved and from hell too...How am I a hog...Exactly how am I like them?” (506-07). It is when she is questioning her social status that she has her “revelation”:

A visionary light settled in her eyes..There were whole companies of white-trash, clean for the first time in their lives, and bands of black niggers in white robes, and battalions of freaks and lunatics shouting and clapping and leaping like frogs. And bringing up the end of the procession was a tribe of people whom she recognized at once as those who, like herself and Claud, had always had a little of everything and the God-given wit to use it right...They were marching behind the others with great dignity, accountable as they had always been for good order and common sense and respectable behavior (508).



Ruby sees an interpretation of the scriptural phrase “The first shall be last, and the last shall be first,” and finally Mary Grace’s comment makes sense to her. Although she may be middle-class through man’s eyes, she will not be middle-class in God’s eyes because everyone is equal.

Without Mary Grace’s violent acts, Ruby may never have come to know this truth. The social class showdown is complete, and although Mary Grace sits in an asylum, she has been victorious in bringing Ruby to a realization, humbling her, and helping her see that her obsession, social classes, will not mean much when she dies

### **Conclusion.**

It can be easy for readers to sit back and read through “Revelation” and laugh at Ruby’s ridiculous thoughts and judgments; it can be easy for readers to judge Ruby just as she judges the other characters. If the readers, then, are like Ruby, passing judgments onto another person, than Ruby’s revelation can also become the readers’ revelation. They can see themselves walking behind Ruby in the vision just as she walks behind the white-trash and blacks she had previously judged. This is the genius of Flannery O’Connor. She knew that her readers would pass judgment just as easily as her character did. Although those judgments may make her characters feel better about being in a higher social standing in real life, she wanted her readers to understand that social standings do not continue in the next life, as she did believe that God’s mercy would make everyone equal in the end. While social class showdowns may be needed to bring humility to the middle-class and bring a needed boost of dominance to the lower-class, the showdown will not be necessary after death with God mediating the social class separation with His mercy.

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