Insisting on Patriarchal Rights in a Matriarchal World: Immature Sons in Flannery O'Connor's Short Stories

Yukaru AMESHIMA

In Flannery O'Connor's mother-daughter stories, rebellious daughters and optimistic mothers, who apparently have confrontational relationships, unconsciously hold the same moral identity, especially in their incompetence in the outside world. Through the stories, we realize that in front of outside evil male characters, both mothers and daughters are helpless and harshly oppressed by cruel fates. The experiences of facing the evil characters teach the daughters that they are exactly the same as their mothers who they dislike. Therefore, O'Connor's mother-daughter stories are about mother-daughter identification. However, unlike the relationships of the mothers and their daughters, in the mother-son stories, although they are immature and still have a strong attachment to their mothers, the sons are anxious to extricate themselves from their mothers. The issue of the sons' independence from their mothers' affection provokes other problems, such as the power dynamics in the home and the sons' longing for father figures. And these problems occur because the parents and children belong to different sexes.

In the mother-daughter stories, homes are shelters which are constructed and maintained by domestically dominant mothers. The daughters have been unconsciously protected and cultivated inside the shelters until they encounter outside evil. Unlike O'Connor's sons, the daughters do not realize they have been dominated by their mothers and far from that (except Lucynell), the daughters believe they are independent and take the initiative compared to their mothers.

In the mother-son stories, homes serve two different twisted functions: just as they do in the mother-daughter stories, they are the comfortable shelters from the outside world provided by the mothers who generously show their love to their sons, though they are also symbols of enlarged matriarchal power which reflects the sons' emasculation at the same time. This means the sons are faced with a threat to their

masculinity: divested male authority under the pressure of their dominant mothers who administer their homes instead of their sons. Therefore though they are in different circumstances, the sons long to be independent from their mothers and want to show off their patriarchal rights.

The sons cherish the delusions of patriarchy which are strongly connected to their image of father figures and through those delusions they exercise authority over a home or family in order to fill the gap between the ideal man and their powerless selves. Therefore from this point, the homes, the imaginary homes to which the sons might have succeeded with their imaginary patriarchal rights, symbolize their desire for masculine authority.

In this chapter, I analyze O'Connor's "Everything That Rises Must Converge," "The Comforts of Home," and "The Enduring Chill," three different mother-son short stories. In all three stories, the families are fatherless and the mothers take over the reins of their homes. Mary L. Morton terms O'Connor's mother characters as "managerial types" (58) who may have "consciously adopted a masculine ethic"(58). Suzanne Morrow Paulson refers to them as "assertive widow[s]" (39). In the mother-daughter stories, as Morton and Paulson argue, the mothers' masculine aggressive behavior is remarkable especially when they must control lower-class workers or face outside evils. But also they are dominant against their daughters because they want their daughters to live their lives as they hope. The mothers do not show their strong affection to their daughters and just feel pity for them. However in the mother-son stories, although the mothers take the initiative inside the house, putting their sons aside, they clearly show their affection to their sons and sacrifice themselves for them.

The sons are described as asexual characters who neither have authority inside their families nor the outside of it. In "Everything That Rises Must Converge" and "The Comforts of Home," although one is driven by necessity to fight against the outside menace and the other is not, Julian and Thomas both admire masculinity and adhere to their images of the dead father figure or the great-grandfather figure, missing what they think patriarchy owes them. Here, we can see one mother-son confrontation structure : the stories end with the sons extricating themselves from their mothers' protection by assailing their mothers physically or mentally. However what is ironical here is that

Julian and Thomas overwhelm their mothers, but at the same time they lose their only connection to their comfortable homes which their mothers offer to their sons with selfless love. Therefore, the stories emphasize the mothers' affection more than the symbolic male authority which the sons may get through their mothers' deaths. The two sons are thrown to the outside harsh world from their mothers' protection and have to live solitary lives.

Unlike the other two sons, Asbury, the protagonist of "The Enduring Chill" does not clearly long for his patriarchal rights as Julian and Thomas does. He is not given to delusional thinking about his dead father or great-grandfather. However, like the two sons, Asbury repeatedly schemes to embarrass his dominant mother, Mrs. Fox, and tries to be independent by escaping himself from her attachment. Unable to see how much she cares for him, Asbury torments her, by searching for somewhere he can feel he belongs to, outside of his mother's home. Moreover as Doreen Fowler suggests, there are symbolic father figures in the story: Dr. Block, the local doctor and Father Finn, the priest of Purgatory who are "prophet figures and the agents of grace" (90). In the process of trying to gain independence from Mrs. Fox, Asbury connects with the symbolic father figures. Here, we see the another mother-son story structure in which a son seeks father figures, while feuding with his mother.

In "Everything That Rises Must Converge," the story develops centering on a fatherless family: Julian, a young man in his twenties who just finished college is working as a typewriter salesman, and his mother, over fifty and fat with gray hair and blue innocent eyes just like a ten-year-old girl. Julian's mother is a complicated character because her class identification is different from her reality. Being proud of her privileged upbringing, she has conservative ideas for the social class system and takes condescending attitudes towards others. Julian's mother says to her son, "With the world is in the mess it's in, . . . I tell you, the bottom rail is on the top. . . . Most of them in it are not our kind of people, . . . but I can be gracious to anybody. I know who I am" (487). She starts to talk about how noble their origin is, indulging in her childhood reminiscences such as her grandfather's plantation and mansion, or the slaves that he had. From here we realize that she is still basking in her family's past glory and it is the source of her condescension to the others. Although she is now in the same social class

as the people who she looks down upon, because all of her identity depends on her past, she believes she is different. And her emotional stability makes it possible for her to accept the circumstances and unstintingly undergo hardships to bring up her only child.

Because of her optimism and perseverance, Julian's mother has accepted her present conditions and she has made the greatest efforts to bring up Julian properly even though they have been in financial difficulties. O'Connor writes, "[Julian's mother] was a widow who had struggled fiercely to feed and clothe and put [Julian] through school and who was supporting him still, 'until he got on his feet'" (485). From Julian's mother's attitude, worrying about her seven and half dollar hat, we realize how much she sacrifices herself and saves money for her son. She says "I can pay the gas bill with that seven-fifty" (487). Also to straighten her son's teeth, Julian's mother lets her teeth go unfilled.

Moreover, Julian's mother is proud of her son because she "had brought [Julian] up successfully and sent him to college and he had turned out so well" (491). Considering Julian's character objectively, he is not as socially successful as his mother thinks. Blinded by her affection for her child, Julian's mother believes someday Julian will fulfill his potential and at that time he will stand on his own. Therefore till then she sacrifices herself and keeps caring for Julian. Here we sees the strong affection between the mother and her son.

Julian rebels against his mother by purposely doing or saying what she dislikes, especially by inveighing her class distinctions. He continuously announces to her that the world has changed and pretends that he is tired of her talking about the past. O'Connor writes, "There was in him an evil urge to break her spirit. [Julian] suddenly unloosened his tie and pulled it off and put it in his pocket." He says to his mother, "If you never learn who you are, . . . you can at least learn where I am" (489). However, the truth is that Julian is the one who cannot be satisfied with his circumstances. For Julian, the neighborhoods in which he has lived with his mother have been a torment to him because he is forced to realize that he belongs to the side of have-nots compared to his mother and for him, the situation is unconvincing.

Julian is unsuccessful in reality. He graduated from college the previous year, but he is still cared by his mother since he lives with her. Also he dreams of becoming a

writer someday, though from his mother's explanations, it seems that he does not even try and now he is a typewriter salesman. Julian gloomily says to his mother, "Some day I'll start making money" (486) but at the same time he knows "he never would" (486). Julian thinks that "he could have stood his lot better if [his mother] had been selfish, if she had been an old hag who drunk and screamed at him"(486). This is a shift in responsibility; however, from Julian's point of view, he thinks that his mother's excessive affection and care has spoiled him and now prevents him from becoming independent. All of Julian's resistance to his mother comes from his dilemma that although he wants to be independent and stand by himself, he cannot extricate himself from his mother's protection.

Therefore Julian is always immersed in his imagination where his mother can not intervene; especially, he clings to the fantasy of his great-grandfather's old mansion. For fatherless Julian, his great-grandfather is his father figure and he is the model of masculinity. Despite his superficial sarcastic remarks to his mother, Julian places more importance on his great-grandfather's legacy than his nonchalant mother does. O'Connor describes Julian's attachment to his great-grandfather's old mansion.

> [Julian] had seen it once when he was a child before it had been sold. The double stairways had rotted and been torn down. Negroes were living in it. But it remained in his mind as his mother had known it. It appeared in his dreams regularly. . . . It occurred to him that it was he, not she, who could have appreciated it. He preferred its threadbare elegance to anything he could name and it was because of it that all the neighborhoods they had lived in had been a torment to him[.] (488)

Julian pictures the world of his great-grandfather, and imagines himself as part of it. Many times he visualizes owning that old mansion. For Julian, his great-grandfather's mansion is a symbol of the authority which he longs for, but can never have. Julian himself only imagines, and can never live in that world. However, this world is not completely unrelated to Julian, because he imagines that if his mother had not forfeited their property and if the mansion had not been sold, Julian might have wielded his

authority in the house as the patriarch. Julian is absorbed in the imaginary world of the old mansion where he can have false authority, and this escapism is the sole consolation for his emasculated life.

The story ends with the sudden death of Julian's mother. The direct reason of her death is because she is beaten by a black woman. Not paying attention to Julian's words, because of her condescending way of thinking, Julian's mother tries to give a penny to a black boy, and this action incurs the boy's mother's wrath. In the moment of her death, Julian's mother completely loses her mind. Because her mind regresses to her past when she was a child living in her grandfather's mansion, Julian's mother does not recognize her son anymore.

O'Connor writes, "[Julian's mother] seem[s] trying to determine [Julian's] identity. [But it was] as if she found nothing familiar about him"(499). This scene represents Julian's independence from his mother. Violently unrecognized by his mother, Julian is forced apart from her. When he notices that his mother is losing her mind and now is dying, Julian helplessly cries, " Mother! . . . Darling sweetheart wait! . . . Mamma! Mamma!" (500). However, Julian's mother does not hear her son's cries and we know that Julian has to live his solitary life.

Simultaneously, because of his mother's death, Julian loses his access to the world which he longs for, the world of his mother's memory, his great-grandfather's mansion. Bryan N. Wyatt argues that "the house was Julian's link to his mother's world and world view" (69). Julian's patriarchal imagination is derived from his mother's world view. When Julian's mother is hit by the black woman, Julian says to his mother, "the old world is gone" (499), however at the same time he "[thinks] bitterly of the house that had been lost for him" (499). Julian's words exactly apply to himself. The old world of his imagination which confines him is now gone with his mother's death, and the new world begins.

"The Comforts of Home" more intelligibly represents an emasculated son's relationship with his mother and the contrast between men and women. Thomas's mother bears a remarkable resemblance to Julian's mother. She is probably from a respectable family and even after her husband dies, she lives well with her only son. She has condescending ideas about others who are in lower classes and feels pity for them,

saying "[w]e don't know how the other half lives" (576). Also like Julian's mother, Thomas's mother has excessive affection for her son. She takes too much care of her middle-aged son and repeatedly tells him she is proud of him, believing unlike, his oppressive dead father that Thomas is a gentle man.

However against his mother, Thomas insists on his rights as a patriarch as the story progresses, gradually haunted by his dead father's figure. Like Julian, middle-aged son Thomas is not successful in real life either. He is not a sociable man and most of the time he sticks to his home because he "writes history"(579). However unlike Julian, he does not have a strong dissatisfaction toward his calm, boring life until his mother brings trouble into their lives.

Before the delinquent nymphomaniac girl, Sarah Ham, who calls herself Star Drake, enters his life, though sometimes he gave his mother cold looks, Thomas enjoyed a calm and settled life which is brought by his mother's care for him. O'Connor writes, "[Thomas's] own life was made bearable by the fruits of his mother's saner virtues—by the well-regulated house she kept and the excellent meals she served" (576). Thomas is old enough to establish himself as independent. But he depends on his mother to maintain his life. Unlike Julian who strongly rebels against his mother by taking an unpleasant attitude because of his dissatisfaction for his present situation, Thomas has a strong attachment to the home in which he now lives with his mother. O'Connor explains, "[Thomas's] home was to him home, workshop, church, as personal as the shell of a turtle and as necessary. He could not believe that it could be violated in this way" (585). After his mother invites the problem girl into their home, Thomas expresses his strong desire to have power as a patriarch to protect his home from being devastated by Sarah.

To recover his ideal comfortable "home," Thomas presses his mother to make her choice: him or the girl. Thomas says, " If you bring that girl back into this house, I leave. You can choose her or me" (573). Justifying herself by believing she is now doing a virtuous deed, Thomas's mother pay no attention to her son's complaint. Thomas's mother says, "I keep thinking it might be you, . . . If it were you, how do you think I'd feel if no-body took you in? What if you were a nimpermaniac and not a brilliant smart person and you did what you couldn't help and . . ." (575). And she continues, "[Star]

doesn't need a jail or a hotel or a hospital, . . . she needs a home" (584). Thomas's mother does not notice how strong her son forms an attachment to his "home." Therefore she treats her son's contrary argument lightly and "counting on his attachment to his electric blanket," she chooses Star. For Thomas it is a first time that he "felt a sudden burning moisture behind his eyes" (573).

Wyatt argues that this scene shows the mother's rejection of her son. He says "[Thomas] gives his mother an ultimatum—she must choose between him and Sarah, and she obviously chooses 'the little slut'" (79) and thus her "credibility as a character is further reduced vis-à-vis [Thomas]" (79). As Wyatt suggests, his mother's rejection causes considerable damage to Thomas. And taking this opportunity, Thomas starts to strongly resist his mother, extricating him from his mother's affection and seeking his dead father's figure who he has disliked until the problem happens.

According to O'Connor, Thomas and his dead father seem to have directly opposite characteristics. She says, "Thomas had inherited his father's reason without his ruthlessness and his mother's love of good without her tendency to pursue it. . . . [Thomas's father] had always been engaged action" but "Thomas's plan for all practical action was to wait and see what developed" (577). From these differences, O'Connor presumes that "If then and there [Thomas] had put his foot down, nothing else would happened" after Thomas's mother goes to see the girl taking the box of candy. And she writes, "[Thomas's] father, had he been living, would have put his foot down at that point"(576). Consequently, to protect his "comforts of home," Thomas begins to rely on his dead father's image. For Thomas, his dead father is the symbol of male authority that can control women, especially his wife, to protect their home. Thomas starts to have a strong hallucinatory relationship with his dead father to eject Sarah from his home.

The most remarkable thing here is that Thomas's target of his fury and attack is not Sarah but his mother throughout the story and it becomes distinct as the story progresses.When his mother brings Sarah to their home "with her daredevil charity"(573), Thomas thinks his mother is "about to wreck the peace of the house" (573). Also when his mother chides him for his attitude of not welcoming Sarah, Thomas replies, "I am not set against [Sarah], . . . I am set against your making a fool of

yourself " (583). Moreover when he realizes his mother never listens to him, Thomas's "fury [is] directed not at the little slut but at his mother" (587). This strong fury and resistance against his mother indicates both Thomas's confrontational feeling to his mother concerning home dominance and his adherence to his father figure, the symbol of male authority.

Possessed by his father's ghost, Thomas is repeatedly berated by his father for being powerless. His father forces him to be stronger to fight the women: of course the annoying girl Sarah but especially Thomas's mother who is the main culprit of this disturbance. For instance, after the first meeting with Sarah, Thomas drives her to her home and comes back to his own house, and then "the voice of his father rasped in his head." "Numbskull, . . . put your foot down now. Show [your mother] who's boss before she shows you" (582). Also when Thomas leaves the table because of Sarah and has to finish his supper in the den, "the old man was intensely present to [Thomas]" and says "[Thomas's mother] never ran me away from my own table" (586). Moreover Thomas's father's voice always rebukes Thomas because he does not deal with the problem constructively. The voice says, "Let her run over you, . . . you ain't like me. Not enough to be a man" (583).

Thomas's father's ghost awakens Thomas's desire for authoritative masculinity which is fundamental for patriarchy. For Thomas, it is hard to face up to Star and his mother with his own power because in real life, Thomas is a powerless man who does not hold any authority in his home as his father might have in the past. Therefore, Thomas unconsciously evokes his father in his mind and obeys the imaginary voice to protect his precious home. As if indicating Thomas's obsessional idea, as the story progresses, his dead father's voice becomes louder and harsher. At the end of the story, when Thomas tries to put the gun, the symbol of the masculinity, into Star's bag, constantly Thomas hears his father's voice and the voice violently abuses Thomas, using the words, "Idiot!" "Moron!" "Imbecile!"(592). From O'Connor's description, the gun is "an inheritance from the old man, whose opinion it had been that every house should contain a loaded gun" (587). The gun symbolize phallus, the symbol of male authority. And Thomas's father's idea shows that he is a male chauvinist who thinks the home is maintained by male dominance.

The story ends with Thomas shooting his mother with his father's gun in response to the imaginary voice of his father: "Fire!" (593). Considering that the gun which Thomas uses to kill his mother belongs to his dead father, this ending represents Thomas's awakening to male authority and his escape from the matriarchal world. However, like Julian, Thomas seems not strong enough to live in the harsh world without his mother's protection because the masculinity which he acquires is just an imitation of his dead father's. Therefore, after the story, what is waiting for Thomas is his guilt and deep sorrow.

"The Enduring Chill" also comprises the problem of home, by searching for home in metaphoric terms. Here, metaphorically home indicates the world to which people feel they belong. In the story, Asbury Porter Fox, is searching for his metaphorical home and tries to construct some connection with others, especially with symbolic father figures instead of with his mother. A child's independence is complete after discovering his/her belonging to somewhere away from his/her parent's home. From this, we realize Asbury's urge to be independent by detaching himself from his strong relationship with his mother. Contrary to her son, Mrs. Fox indicates that she is the home where Asbury belongs and where Asbury is protected by her strong affection. Therefore Asbury strongly rebels against his mother by saying or doing what gives Mrs. Fox pain. However, the more he opposes his mother and tries to get away from his mother's domination, the more he recognizes his mother's deep love and strong attachment to him.

Like the other two sons, Julian and Thomas, although he has a lot of pride, Asbury is also an emasculated son who does not have male authority over his woman-centered family. Also he is not a sensible type of character who is socially successful. Asbury is a twenty-five year old man who dreams of becoming an artist. He goes to New York but his dreams never come true. Gradually when he is alone in his freezing flat in New York, Asbury starts to be obsessed by the idea that he suffering from a serious illness and is going to die. So after making an unsuccessful effort to become an artist in New York, Asbury decides to go back to his hometown, Timberboro. Objectively, because he does not have any artistic talent, Asbury fails to succeed as an artist. When he comes back to his hometown, his sister Mary George make a mockery of him saying "Well

well, we have the artist with us again. How utterly utterly" (552). Also she says, "[I]f Asbury had had any talent, he would by now have published something" (553). However, because of his strong vanity and immature stubbornness, although Asbury admits that he has no talent, he imputes his failure to his mother, the only person who cares about him.

Asbury clearly has the same characteristics as Julian and Thomas. However what I want to note here is that unlike the other two sons, Asbury already tried to extricate himself from his mother's domination. Physically he leaves his mother's home and goes to New York where he strongly realizes his mother's psychological domination upon him. While Asbury is in New York he writes a letter to his mother to disparage her.

> I came here to escape the slave's atmosphere of home, . . . to find freedom, to liberate my imagination, to take it like a hawk from its cage and set it 'whirling off into the widening gyre' (Yeats) and what did I find? It was incapable of flight. It was some bird you had domesticated, sitting huffy in its pen, refusing to come out. (554)

Asbury completely imputes his failure onto his mother. However, simultaneously it implies Asbury and his mother's strong psychological connection. Even though physically he leaves home to enter a new world where his mother can not influence him, he lives in mother's dominant world. O'Connor writes, "[Mrs. Fox's] way had simply been the air he breathed and when at last he had found other air, he couldn't survive in it" (555).

Obsessed by the idea of dying, Asbury decides to leave NewYork and goes back to his mother's home. He understands his limitations and his failure of extricating himself from his mother's domination. When Asbury gets off the train from New York and sees it disappearing, he thinks "his last connection with a larger world [is] vanishing forever" (548). It is not an uncommon thing for a young man whose dream is shattered to return to his hometown to make a new start. However Asbury's homecoming is not to heal his illness or start his new life: he goes back to his provincial home to die. Asbury believes his dying is his revenge on his mother. Death is the only way to be liberated from

maternal domination. When Asbury notices Mrs. Fox is shocked by his pathological look, he "was pleased that she should see death in his face at once" and "[his] mother, at age of sixty, was going to be introduced to reality and he supposed that if the experience didn't kill her, it would assist her in the process of growing up" (547). Asbury completely refuses to accept his strong connection to his mother, the only person who takes seriously Asbury's delusional thoughts and tries to rescue him. Instead of opening his mind to Mrs. Fox, Asbury seeks to find another home where his mother can not intervene.

Once Asbury's targets were two black employees, Morgan and Randall, who work for Mrs. Fox. As Nicholas Crawford says, "Asbury feels a need for some special communion with the African American characters" (13). For Asbury, the important thing is to discover his place, the metaphorical home in the world which is outside of his mother's world, the place where his mother's influence does not interfere. Therefore he chooses to have a connection with the blacks whom his mother despises. However, Asbury realizes he cannot "[establish] rapport" (558) with them by talking, because they "lost their initiatives" during the time they had been working for Mrs. Fox and they talk to Asbury as if they were talking to an invisible person. Therefore Asbury "decided to try something bolder than talk" (558), doing something that was disturbing for his mother together with two blacks.

The first thing Asbury did was to smoke the cigarettes with Morgan and Randall near the milking machines. Firstly they refuse to smoke saying "[Mrs. Fox] don't low no smoking in here"(558) but as Asbury holds the cigarettes out in front of them, they take them and starts to smoke. This time, Asbury felt the satisfaction and enjoyed the "moments of communion when the difference between black and white is absorbed into nothing" (558). Next Asbury forces Morgan and Randall to drink a warm glass of milk. They resisted by repeatedly saying "[Mrs.Fox] don't 'low it" (559) and then Asbury loses his temper and said, "My God! . . . she she she!" (560) Ironically, the more he tries to extricate himself from his mother's domination by connecting with others, Asbury realizes his strong attachment to his mother.

Asbury thinks because he and the two African American workers share wrongdoings which embarrass his mother, he establishes a secret connection with them where his mother can not intervene. However, before his death, Asbury realizes that

this is a self-complacent delusion and he did not construct any special connection with Morgan and Randall. When Asbury is weakened and lying in the bed before his death, he remembers the "experience of communion that he had had in the dairy with the Negros when they had smoked together, and at once he began to tremble with excitement" (568). So he requests Mrs. Fox to bring Morgan and Randall to say good-bye. Asbury repeatedly explains that he is dying and expects some consolation from the two blacks. However, Morgan and Randall just say "you looks fine" (569) or "you sho do look well" (570). Even though Asbury holds a package of cigarettes, the symbol of his connection with the blacks, out to Randall to smoke together again, Randall misunderstands it and takes the whole package.

Wyatt suggests that Asbury's spiritual deficiencies are undergirded by his realization of his domestic failures. He writes, "Essentially it is Asbury's assumed realization that his woes have, in the main, resulted not from his mother's values, the values of home, but from his rejection of them that signals the final peeling away of his illusion" (77). Asbury is agonizing over his solitude that he is not understood or sympathized by the others. He does not take his mother's love for him into consideration and tries to seek his place outside of his mother's world. Asbury's suffering originates in his cross-grained feeling for his mother. Mrs. Fox is the one who gives unconditional love for her son. She is the only person who takes him seriously and feels anxiety for Asbury's delusions of his death. However Asbury does not realize it and rather, he tries to sever his connection with his mother.

In the story as Fowler suggests, there are two characters who represent the father figures: Dr.Block and Father Finn who "liberate[s] [Asbury]from a threatening tie to his mother" (89). She explains that "The Enduring Chill" is a story which parodies the "paradigm of male identity formation" (89). Based on Freud and Lacan, Fowler explains, "[T]he father initiates an autonomous male identity by an act of exclusion. . . . The mother is the first to be excluded and her alienation distinguishes male difference and superiority in a male-female binary opposition" (89).

Although Asbury thinks they are idiots, Dr. Block and Father Finn rescue him physically and mentally and open the entrance to the new world. Dr. Block finds out that the cause of Asbury's illness is the unpasteurized milk he drank. He saves Asbury

from dying. The illness he suffers, because of the milk from his mother's cow, symbolizes his maternally attached life till now. Symbolically as a father figure, Dr. Block helps Asbury out of his mother's domination and encourage his independence. On the other hand, Father Finn mentally saves Asbury by teaching him religious thought which violently shocks him. Father Finn says to him, " 'The Holy Ghost will not come until you see yourself as you are—a lazy ignorant conceited youth!'" (567). His words disclose the truth from which Asbury averts his eyes. Imputing all of his dissatisfaction of his life to his mother, Asbury does not look at himself, the immature son who clings to his mother. Awakened by Father Finn's words, Asbury starts his own independent life.

Unlike the mother-daughter stories, the mother-son stories comprise the problem of sons' extrication from the strong attachment to their mothers. The sons who I introduce in this chapter—Julian, Thomas, and Asbury—are all immature as men and adults protected by unconditional love from their mothers. Like the mother-daughter stories, mothers' homes are shelters from the outside world; however, simultaneously in mother-son stories, they also symbolize the sons' emasculation. In the stories, each son shows his longing for his male authority through different ways: being absorbed in the delusional thinking of patriarchal rights, haunted by the authoritative father's ghost, and searching for his own place of belonging away from his mother's home. These sons' actions come from their dilemma: they are caught between their real life and ideal life as men because they want to be authoritative men, but the present situation is that inside their home, they are dominated by their mothers, the women.

The sons actions also imply how strongly they desire of their independences from the psychological perspective. As Fowler does, James M. Mellard also analyzes the O'Connor's characters using Lacan's concept, the concept of other/Other. Mellard explains:

> One form of the other is the figure of the double or antagonist in whom we projects our best and worst selves. The origin of this other is the mother, who is the first figure in whom the subject identifies itself, as well as the first from whom it splits off an off an antagonistic opposite. The second form is the other of the unconscious, . . . in order to suggest its authoritative place in

> determining psychic meaning. In Lacan, this Other/*Autre* resides in the place of father, . . . This Other, consequently, may be of either gender, though obviously in a patriarchal culture it more frequently male." (627)

From here we learn the Lacan's idea of psychological steps that a child, especially a male child takes: the intimate relation with his mother, is followed by the acknowledgment of the existence of father. Lacan explains that father figures symbolically has the function as social imperative law. In front of the father figure, a male child accepts their incompetence and he starts to establish his own identity in society. Therefore through the father, the child starts to participate in the outside world.

In O'Connor's mother-son stories, because the fathers are missing, the sons have not followed the certain steps of independence and they have stayed strongly attachhed to their mothers. However simultaneously we understand the sons' urge to be independent. All three sons seek the father figure such as dead great-grandfather, the dead father, the local doctor, and the priest to compensate for their missing fathers. In Julian and Thomas's cases, the father figures are imperfect because eventually they are Julian and Thomas's delusional thoughts. Therefore the two sons are compulsorily and negatively independent by their mothers' deaths. Julian and Thomas are violently separated from their mothers and mothers' world and made to face the new world.

On the contrary, without the mother's death, Asbury more positively accelerates his independence. Though they are not Asbury's real fathers, Dr. Block and Father Finn accomplish their roles as the father figures. From Lacan's formulation, the father's functions are to give their children connection with the society outside of the mother's world, and show their son's incompetence. Dr.Block and Father Finn physically and mentally help Asbury and awaken him for his own immaturity.

The relationship between mothers and their sons in O'Connor's stories are more complicated compared to the relationship of mothers and their daughters. In the stories, O'Connor describes the sons' mixed and twisted feelings for their mothers which comes from the dilemma that forces them to face the reality of their immaturity and what the society requires for men. Also O'Connor uses symbolic characters and their actions to represents the theme of child's independence from the mother.

Works Cited

Crawford, Nicholas. "An Africanist Impasse: Race, Return, and Revelation in the Short Fiction of Flannery O'Connor" *South Atlantic Review* 68.2 (2003): 1-25. Print.

Fowler, Doreen. *Drawing the line: The father reimagined in Faulkner, Wright, O'Connor, and Morrison*. Charlottesville: Virginia UP, 2013. Print.

Mellard, James M. "Flannery O'Connor's Others: Freud, Lacan and the Unconscious" *American Literature* 61.4 (1989): 625-643. *JSTOR*. Web. 11 November.2015.

Morton, Mary L. "Doubling in Flannery O'Connor's Female Characters: Animus and Anima" *The Southern Quarterly* 23.4 (1985): 57-63. Print.

O'Connor, Flannery. Collected Works. Ed. Sally Fitzgerald. New York: Library of America, 1998. Print.

---. "Everything That Rises Must Converge" *Collected Works* 485-500. Print.

---. "The Comforts of Home" *Collected Works* 573-594. Print.

---. "The Enduring Chill" *Collected Works* 547-572. Print.

Paulson, Suzanne Morrow. *Flannery O'Connor: A Study of the Short Fiction*. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1988. Print.

Wyatt, Bryan N. "The Domestic Dynamics of Flannery O'Connor: Everything That Rises Must Converge" *Twentieth Century Literature* 38.1 (1992): 66-88. *JSTOR*. Web. 9 December. 2014.