

Post your excellent paragraphs of insight, essential information, articles, websites, and such here on the subject of **Characters, Characterization, Character Development (and more)** in Joseph O'Connor's novel.

Wiki Master Document Update: We're going to be creating two separate documents (UNL will create theirs and CC will create theirs--2 pages, single-spaced) and we will be posting the finished products by Saturday, 21 April 2012 by 6:00 pm.

Michael Hansen, UNL:

I've found myself enjoying getting to know the characters more and more as I read. What I really like, is the method used for characterization. Sometimes a description of an important character is given through someone else's account, so the reader gets to know the characters in a sort of round-about manner. The image the reader conjures of the characters changes dramatically as they work through the story. At first the reader is shown one aspect of the character then, later on in the story, we are given a very different look at the same character. We can see this sort of character shift through the different sides we see of "the ghost" and also with David Merridith. The result of all this chaos in characterization is a strangely satisfying confusion while one reads.

Brandon Stewart, UNL:

Each chapter tells the story in a different way, through the use of the perspective and voice. The Lockwood's point of view tends to summarize some of what is happening on the ship. Chapter four describes Pius Mulvey why he was on the ship, how he thinks, but also details of the other characters. I found chapter six to be built in an interesting way. It was primarily used to show just how badly the famine affected the Irish. This was shown in a form of a letter to Mary, revealing some of what has happened to her. I like this because the famine could have been described from almost any of the characters, but instead it is shown by someone who has truly suffered because of the famine. This makes the whole process of describing the famine much more effective.

Bailey Corcoran, UNL:

At first I didn't really care for the switches into the Captain's narratives. This way of thinking was the first time I read through it. After rereading the chapters my thoughts on it changed completely. I find him so subtly comical, yet frighteningly realistic, that it really turns everything upside down and puts us as readers truly into perspective. One thing I found very prevalent was the constant blatant contradictions, irony, and contrasts that he would make throughout his narrative. As readers we can tell how emotionally distraught he is about the on-board deaths, but as he records them they are so matter-of-factly written that they seem emotionally distant at times. Of course this is simply a matter of logging as a captain, however he does switch back and forth from objective and subjective thoughts and phrases that it changes the ball field for the captain. He takes into account the huge contrast between first class and steerage passengers, which in turn exploits the severity of his observation on-board. For example, when referring to the "first-class-problems" he comments on things matter-of-factly. It's just the harsh reality of the ship. I've gathered that when referring to the harsh realities, he uses matter of fact language, unless he is in the moment, and emotionally attached. "Some of the first class passengers were complaining about the disturbance...concerned that her children might be distressed by the queer proceedings" (when discussing the burial and grievance of the deaths of fellow steerages). This statement has so much power to it. Completely characterizes Lady Kingscourt as a person, and generalizes the first-class. Characterizes Captain, through his blatant language. Even throughout his sentence structure, it's direct. Just how things are. As a reader you can tell which passengers that the captain truly favors.

Jenny Morrow, CC:

Lord Kingscourt was another character who fascinated me in the first ten chapters. Unlike Dixon, I get a bad vibe from Kingscourt. I don't really know why I get this vibe from him, but it's just a gut feeling that I have. I also feel like he's hiding something. Much of the first ten chapters focus on Kingscourt's childhood and life before he met his wife. As I was reading these parts, some post colonial values came to mind. The first point of intersection in post colonialism is ontological. Questions of identity are raised here, such as "who am I?", "how did I come to be who I am?", and "to whom am I connected?". It seems that

Kingscourt ponders these questions in the first ten chapters. He looks at all these questions from issue with his father's grave. The most important question is to whom he is connected. He is connected to his father, who was despised for evicting people from their land. Because of this connection to his father, does it mean that Kingscourt will have the same wrath put upon him? I need to find out more about Kingscourt in order to knowledgably answer this question.

Rebecca Easler, Concordia.

The way in which O'Connor sets up the characters is very different from normal character developments. With a linear development, and especially in a mystery novel, we are surprised by future events in the novel based on what we have learned about a character's past. O'Connor, however, flips characterization completely around. We begin to understand the characters through the present events of the novel – the main storyline. Thus, when we read the flashbacks, we are no longer surprised by future events because of the past; rather, we are surprised by past events because of the present. Based on the present relationship between Mary and Lord Kingscourt, we do not expect the extent of their past relationship as shown by the flashbacks. Therefore, how we perceive the characters changes rather than progresses. We do not see their growth as much as we see their experience. And I think this kind of characterization only adds to the nature of O'Connor's mystery novel.

Tom Knowlton, Concordia.

The most impressive characterization thus far occurred in the preface with the introduction of the Ghost. The way that O'Connor created this mystique to the character was a work of art. The vivid description of the character himself as well as the way that the atmosphere of the ship was described added to the character's development in the short preface. The simplicity of the passages works very well in creating the character and was a breathe of fresh air. The end of the preface where we learn that the Ghost is indeed "meaning to do murder" was a very interesting strategy used by O'Connor. This same strategy (as others have observed) is used throughout the novel. It is a style that I have always appreciated for a couple of reasons. The first is that if an author has the confidence to basically give away portions of a character, or a plot line, they must have confidence in their work to still keep readers reading. The other reason is that it is a nice change of pace from linear novels that do not reveal anything until the end. O'Connor thus far has done a good job of keeping me interested in his work. Getting new interesting snippets throughout the reading is something that I have really enjoyed.

Liz Rahn, Concordia.

Looking at the first ten chapters from a character perspective, I see a lot of potential for development in the characters that have been introduced. Because of the unique narrative style, switching between present time on the ship and the histories of the passengers, the reader is exposed to multiple facets of development for each character. In a traditional narrative that follows a linear pattern, one would only see the development of a character within the timeframe of the novel. Through the historical bits he includes, O'Connor allows the reader to experience the development of each character and what happened in their past in order for them to be who they are now. Looking into the pasts of the characters gives insight into their motivations and perceptions of other characters. In this section, we got a particularly personal look into the life of Mary Duane. Her present time character on the ship is somewhat mysterious, introverted, and arguably a bit bitter. A look into her past illuminated her fluctuating relationship with David Merridith which would justify her current feelings of resentment towards him. Also, the reader is given a letter, presumably a suicide note, from her late husband. One can infer that Mary's husband killed their baby girl when he took his own life. This bit of insight serves as foundation for Mary's current character encountered on the *Star of the Sea*.

Ella Worth, UNL:

The *Star of the Sea* is a story about survival. Evil and destruction lurk at every turn in this novel, but through it all, Joseph O'Connor raises the silent question: Can you really blame them? Are there certain circumstances in life that justify theft, abandonment, and even murder? The concept of morality is something we struggle to assign to any of these characters. O'Connor introduces them as adults that portray questionable traits, but as we get to know more about their absent parents and derelict childhoods, many of these traits seem justified. In doing so, not only does he have the chance to toy with our feelings, but we as the readers find it harder to judge the characters. Without a set idea of "good" and

“bad” characters, we don’t know who to root for. Does Merridith deserve to be killed? Is Pius Mulvey nothing more than a ruthless killer? With O’Connor influencing our sympathies, it’s difficult to trace the cause of the conflict in this piece. Are the actions of the characters to blame, or is the overwhelming influence of the famine controlling their entire worlds?

Michael Hansen, UNL:

I'd like to sort of summarize how I think the character, "The Ghost" has changed quite a bit as we've gotten to know him and how he has gotten to the point where we can believe he is the killer. We are first introduced to Mulvey as "The Ghost" who haunts the ship with his nocturnal activity and self-enforced solitude. He seemed, at the time, more of a characterization of the ship than a major character with his strange appearance and habits, especially not being affected by the desperation of the people nearby. Then O'Connor shows us that "The Ghost" has a name, is surprisingly literate, and a man of faith. It seemed, at this point, that Mulvey was there to further illustrate that nothing on this ship is as it seems; "the Ghost" is a real, and very much alive, person. Then we are transported back in time, to Mulvey's horrible past where he is connected to Mary and he is forced to kill their child. Further back in the timeline, "The Ghost" is further humanized by the reader being revealed to his past, before he met Mary. Here we see the unbelievable poverty that he had to put up with, and how his family was slowly driven from him. Another interesting character development is the way Mulvey learned how to escape his own little Hell for a few hours a day; he learned how to write songs. We are shown that the character is fairly clever and is slowly being drawn into life away from his home by better fortunes, so it's not going too far to see him on his way to merry old England. This is where Mulvey's character does a complete 180, he is now a street vagabond surviving everyday on his wits and preying on hapless victims, and enjoying himself quite a bit. But, his antics get him thrown into prison. Here's the character development we needed to see when we found out he was the murderer. He survives in prison by his wits again, fooling the attendants into thinking their backward system actually worked and he was being reformed. In his plan to escape, he ends up killing a guard that has both raped and flogged him. He finally reaches the point where he can be a cold killer to meet his own ends.

Bob Borvan, UNL:

I have been kind of studying, as I read the book, how he creates different voices for each character. I know that voice is something I need help with and why not take a couple of pointers from a man that can write voices like it's his job (pun intended). The thing that I noticed the most was the difference of adjectives between the characters. Whenever we get to a scene with Pius Mulvey the adjectives change to really dark and heavy adjectives and words. This would make sense since Pius is the most troubled man on the boat. The dialogue also reflects different characters different ways. Again this is supposed to happen but I noticed that the words are different. Dialogue is a little bit harder than setting up a scene with a particular character and to do that I think that you have to personify the character. If they are drunk, you have to think like you are drunk, if they are frightened for their lives, you better be too. The only experience that we can draw from is our own. We can take a situation that none of us has been in and give it a human emotion. The hard part about this is having more than one character within the scene. How does one convey different emotions for one scene, or make it the same emotion but a different perspective. It is hard to do.

Luke McLaughlin, UNL

I think that it is cool how O'Connor sets up his character, Mulvey in chapter 21. First we get this glimpse of him as the outcast of society, a wanted man making ends meet somehow on the outskirts of England. We find out that he is known as the monster of newgate and that everybody is always on the lookout for him for his horrible reputation. Then O'Connor shows us how even though Mulvey may be presented as this monster he really isn't. There is still good in him. Little things throughout the chapter let us know this too. For instance, he said he let Swales when the singing competitions everytime because he felt like he had never won anything else. I think this just shows us how human Mulvey really is and everytime I realize this it seems Mulvey has to endure another hardship. He foot gets bitten off and he can't work laborous jobs anymore. He has to sneak through the freezing cold woods and burn belongings just to survive. There are so many bad things that happen to this character and yet when he gets this teaching job he seems to be human as can be with monster like qualities and past experiences that would haunt anyone.

Brandon Stewart, UNL:

I am greatly enjoying the many different aspects of the story. It is just put together so well. I especially like looking at the story and trying to guess at what is going to show up later. I have done this a number of times already, and for the most part I have been wrong. I think the most interesting aspect of this story is how each chapter ends with a hook that makes the reader want to keep going. O'Connor sets the story up in a way that provides a key fact of the story at the end of each chapter. This makes the reader want to continue on; reading a good amount of chapters to have their. The story is set in an interesting order. He adds about three chapters that focus on a character, and then adds another set of chapters, which focus on a different aspect of the story. This keeps the story fresh and interesting, especially after adding that last paragraph which makes the reader want continue on. I also feel that that last couple chapters have revealed a lot about the characters. Many of the chapters deal with memories that have forced the character to overcome some trials. Mulvey has become a very cunning and intelligent man who does whatever he has to get ahead. The chapters have explained why he is fond of children. We find that Merridith is a very conflicted man; he grows tired of his family and becomes a drug addict. But eventually finds a way to deal with his problems, only to return to his older habits. These moments have really shown how they changed and what brought about their change. Probably one of the more important information given is the situation the people of Ireland are in. They are furious and a lot of that anger is being directed towards Merridith. He feels that they should be help, or at least receive a little compensation for their loss. But because of the situation he is in he can't really do too much. This also gives the reader an idea of why Mulvey was sent to kill Merridith.

Bridget Vacha, UNL:

Many people have found that they like Mulvey as a character. Personally, after reading the Triptych, I found Mary Duane to be a rather interesting character. Three chapters (7-9) were dedicated to how she and David Merridith know each other and their history. Although we like Mulvey who is to kill Merridith, and don't necessarily care for Merridith's character, I found myself rooting for their relationship, even though I know how it ends, with them being apart. Chapter 7 is presently on the ship and how their relationship works in the novel's present. Chapters 8 and 9 go back in time though, to tell us why their relationship in 7 is the way it is. The order of this relationship, not being in chronological order, gives their relationship an interesting look to it.

Lindsey Hofer UNL:

We've been given subtle clues since the beginning of the book that Dixon is really telling the story rather than O'Connor and as the book continues that is becoming more and more prevalent. The way we perceive the characters relates to how Dixon as seen them. Specifically, in Chapter 28 when Dixon tells us the story of Merridith's early adult years and spells out the relationships between him and his wife and father more clearly. Though, this book has been written after Merridith has already died so these encounters we read about could be embellished as Dixon sees fit, considering we are already aware that he is a desperate writer. In this book it seems you can't trust anything for there is another twist waiting around the corner, but the fact that you can no longer trust even the person telling the story is frustrating as a reader, in a good way.

Jenny Morrow, CC:

Throughout chapters eleven and twelve, there are numerous instances where Pius has personal identity issues. I think one of the most important of these is at the beginning of chapter eleven when O'Connor is discussing how Pius' mother is teaching Pius and his brother to read. His parents disagree on the value of being able to read, so Pius is getting mixed messages. His mother believes that reading is "an indication of decency" (O'Connor 85), while his father believes it is a waste of time. Pius obviously follows his mother's logic, as he is soon a very good reader. Because Pius is so invested in learning to read, he becomes attached to his mother, and when she dies, it appears that he has a personal identity crisis. After his mother dies, he and his brother take to sleeping in their parents' bed. I see this as a way for them to stay connected to their parents, especially their mother. Pius also wonders how he is going to function in the world now that his mother is gone. He doesn't want to become an orphan, nor does he want to become like the men in his village who "reeked of their isolation, of stale piss and lost chances" (87). Much of Pius' identity is tied to his mother. He thinks about her often and her absence is painful for

him. Pius' brother's identity, on the other hand, is tied to the land they live on. This may have to do with the fact that Nicholas wasn't quite the reader Pius was, so he therefore feels more connected to his father and the land.

Rebecca Easler, CC:

I really enjoy how O'Connor stays away from the traditional murder-mystery plot set-up. Normally, everything about the criminal is learned after the crime has been committed and the murderer found. We would know nothing about why this person committed the crime nor anything about his or her earlier life before the crime. In the *Star of the Sea*, however, we are getting to know everything about the supposed murderer - Pius Mulvey - and the supposed victim - David Kingscourt - before any hint of anything actually happens. O'Connor is setting up our expectations through his characterization, and I can only think of how wrong I might be as I continue reading. But I also really like how we not only get to know the characters individually, but we see their relationships with others or the formation of relationships, so not only do we know their mind and thought processes, but we now get to see their reactions and feelings, making them more human and real to us as readers.

Liz Rahn, CC:

One passage that really stuck out to me in this section was in chapter seventeen when David Merridith is confronting his father about his feelings for Laura Markham. David's father gives his son a definition of love that I feel shapes David's perceptions and reactions for the remainder of his life. He says that love is "Resolve to keep one's word, David. Nothing more, nothing less. To do one's duty, always; whether one feels like it or not" (166). Obviously David's father is trying to convey to David that duty is more important than fleeting feelings, but at this point, David does not seem to get the message. Later in life though, as we see David on the ship, he seems to be stunted in his feelings of love. His affection for Laura has faded, but he still feels the need to put on the airs of a happy marriage. When Laura confronts him about divorce, he felt the need to fight for the marriage. When she asks him if there is someone else who may hold his affection, he dodges the question. David is well aware of Laura's affair with Dixon, so a confession from David himself may actually put Laura at ease. But in order to maintain placid indifference, to "do one's duty" and stay committed to Laura, he cannot be honest with her. What he feels for Laura is no longer love; he is bound to her by duty, nothing more, nothing less.

How does this definition of love, the idea of duty, show up in any other characters?

Tom Knowlton, CC:

Something that I have been thinking about through the first two readings that we have done is the idea of the ship as a character. I think that it is something that is worth taking a look at. Throughout both sections the plot is obviously driven by the interactions on the ship. Some of these interactions have occurred because of the state of the ship. The odor is something that really made me ponder this thought in the first place. From there I realized that the ship has been dynamic this whole time people are shifting around, the locations that people congregate are changing at times. I have not fully developed this notion but I think that there are a few key factors. The first would be that in general the Captain is the only one who goes into great detail of the ship. I attributed this to the fact that he is the "brain" of the ship and is conscious of its condition. The ship also carries on the narrative in the fact that it sails closer and closer to its destination which means that we are getting to the end of the novel and hopefully to the revelation about the murder and other facts. This theory was a bit far fetched, but I thought that it was worth jotting down my ideas and seeing if the theory is supported as we move into the final sections of the novel.

Anybody else want to jump in with ideas of how the ship is as much a character as any of the humans?

Ellen Mueller, CC:

We have not seen much about the author Grantley Dixon by the end of the second section of the novel. What is known about Dixon, however, seems to fit very well with his name. Grantley is an Irish name and Dixon is an English name. This resonates well with Dixon trying to share both perspectives of the famine in his writings. Dixon is also very similar to "Dixie," and by section two of the novel, we know that even though Dixon works for the *New York Times*, he is originally from the South. Dixie is a common nickname for the Southern states, and it more closely ties Dixon and his family to slavery. Dixon mentions that his

grandfather was an abolitionist (133), but the author's ties to the South are unquestionable. Dixon is incredibly close to "Dickens," who has appeared several times in the novel. Dixon does not seem to like Charles Dickens, but it is clear that he has read the great author's works. There are several nods to *Oliver Twist* in the novel (Fagan the Jew, p. 187; "Please, sir. We want some more," p. 121), and even more negative portrayals of the author through many meetings with the central characters.

The role of naming in this novel--especially as it relates to identity--is really strong, and as you identify, how the naming is linked with place is also a strong thread. Where else does anybody see this happening? Kingscourt is an obvious example.

Bailey Corcoran, UNL:

In chapter thirty-two, Merridith's interactions with the doctor are quite out of character, at least the character we have come to know him as. Like in chapter thirty-one, we see that Merridith is a fake. He puts on a face for almost each and every other person in this novel. It would be safe to assume that the multiple faces he chooses to use correlate to the extreme identity struggle that we have seen on the page. The interaction with the doctor is so formal, innocent and gentle, that at times I thought I was reading from some other character's perspective entirely; especially after reading about the birthday celebration. I find that the particular placement of the birthday scene and the follow-up initial doctor-patient scene create a unique sense of movement in Merridith's character development. Chapter thirty-one viciously displays Merridith's "father inherited" very verbally and visually dissatisfied with his family which in turn exploits a deep internal struggle within himself. Nevertheless, his attitude in higher standard facilities, such as in the doctor's office, he maintains an entirely different persona.

Ella Worth, UNL:

As the book comes to a close, I am struck by the simple beauty of our trio of main characters. David Merridith, Grantley Dixon, and Pius Mulvey. The artist, the writer, and the musician. The Joseph O'Connor you clever, clever genius. How did it take me so long to realize that Dixon is the perfect narrator? Of course he had to be one who survived the story- he's the the writer! Merridith couldn't have told this story on a canvas, and music tends to be a bit limited in what can be expressed. How would Mulvey even go about writing enough songs to tell the whole story? "The horror among horrors. A musical." (O'Connor 379). At the start of the novel, there was some debate as to whether or not Dixon was a reliable narrator, but he affirms several times that he is a failure as a fiction writer who only managed to publish fiction work by piggybacking it onto the nonfiction pinnacle of his career. Better yet, Dixon is revealed at the end to be recounting this story at the end of his life. It is widely accepted fact in the literary world that narrators who acknowledge to the readers that they are at the ends of their lives have no reason to lie and will therefore tell an accurate history of past events with perfect unbiased clarity that is completely unaffected by any potential mental feebleness or senility.

Brandon Stewart, UNL:

At first I was almost disappointed in the way that the "Star of the Sea" ended. I wanted the story to continue on, past chapter 39. But when I look back at it I realize that it makes great sense that it ended where it did. The story is really about what happened in the ship; it wouldn't make too much sense to have the story continue after everyone has left the ship. So to avoid the problem of leaving the reader with the many questions he/she may have, Dixon has added the epilogue. I also felt that the epilogue did a lot to show how Dixon has changed by the end. I felt that throughout the story, the scenes that were from his perspective sometimes carried a narcissistic tone to it; especially on page 289, where he describing Mulvey. Also we knew Dixon was a very observant person. But chapter 33 really shows just how observant and clever he really is. He obviously makes many notes of the happenings that he observes. Being a journalist this suites his character quiet well. During the Epilogue, Dixon is essentially looking back at all the important aspects of the story that he did not share, as well as his reasoning for writing the book. Dixon admits that at the time he was looking for admiration, which may explains why he may have carried this egotistical mindset. It can also be show through the story in the moments where he focuses on his own writings, specifically the short stories. While many others thought his stories needed work, Dixon felt that he deserved more credit for his work. He admits that even the short stories added to his novel were not exactly favored. In fact in the latter copies the stories were omitted; despite knowing this Dixon didn't seem to express any hard feeling over the matter. Probably the most important and

notable change in Dixon is his respect for Merridith. In the beginning Dixon and Merridith often fought back and forth a number of times. It is interesting to see how at the end he doesn't really resent him, in fact after realizing all the good he has actually tried to do and getting to know what life was like for him, Dixon builds up a great amount of respect for him.

Bridget Vacha, UNL:

(For knowledge, I'm going back to Chapters XI and XII). These two chapters are where we get a deeper look into Pius Mulvey's character. We learn that Mulvey has excellent memory, he is more passive than active (ie: "[...] Pius Mulvey had never made anything happen. Knowing what to write about was the hardest thing about writing." (O'Connor 97), and he has a way with words. Coming from these chapters, that's when we sympathize with Pius, even though we know he is going to be the killer of Merridith. On page 105, we have a connection of our predator and the prey. Mary Duane (for some reason, I was disappointed when I read their connection. I always seem to find myself liking the whore characters now, don't I?). Their connection then calls into question when do these two relationships take place on the timeline of this massive story with flashbacks. Who first had her? At least, those were the thoughts I had when first reading it. We know about future events, and we can't help wondering if Mulvey kills Merridith because of something to do with Mary (well, of course we aren't for certain until later). It's a motive, if Mulvey even needs one. He's a smart fellow, and hey, he's hell of a musical talent, too. I hate that I'm sympathizing for him. He's not the average murderer though, no matter how premeditated it is.

Bob Borvan, UNL:

The ending of the book is fantastic but, everybody knows this. I have so much respect for Mary Duane. She is an absolutely wonderful character. I almost hate O'Conner for what he does to that poor woman, and no matter what he does to her she keeps going. She doesn't stop, she is very strong and is a good woman. The scene where she is repeating her child's name over and over again in front of a kneeling Mulvey is the most powerful scene I have ever read in my entire life. I can honestly say that. She is about to let the person that she despises more than anything onto this life boat with her to freedom. At first she says no, which we would all say if someone did to us what he did to her. But then she lets him on. I did not want her to let him on, I really didn't. I wanted him to stay on that boat. I did not feel bad for Mulvey at all. He is a character that is like a dog that you see in Westerns. The mangy dog that nobody likes and kicks all the time because he is just a pest and the only reason he is still around is because people still feed him because they feel bad for him. I like Mary, and I have to stand by what Dixon said about Mary and Mulvey, that Mary could preserve through the hardships of being an immigrant in New York and Mulvey couldn't.

Lauren Morgan, UNL:

The construction of Mary Duane is brilliantly done. Throughout the novel she acts as a second reporter, giving us facts about the past and using as much informative language as can be managed while still building her as the average Irish woman. Her history and character tell she is not average, possessing great survival strength. It is even more brilliant that she is not a voice in the epilogue. The idea that she cannot go back and revise her history means we as reader have to take everything she said as true (because of her character, it probably is, she is given no reason or motive to ever lie to us). She is, for the purposes of this novel, the purest history. This is important because most of the rest of the novel is colored by Dixon and his own biased reporting.

Jenny Morrow, CC:

On the subject of the ontological point of intersection of postcolonial theory, much of the questions about identity are answered in the epilogue, especially in the case of Laura Merridith and Grantley Dixon. These two characters become more human in the epilogue and not as stiff as I perceived them to be earlier in the novel. Laura and Dixon finally get the chance to be together, without the threat of interference of Lord Kingscourt. I know I shouldn't champion adultery, but from the first time I saw Laura and Dixon in an intimate situation, I hoped they would get the chance to be together. In looking at the one of the identity questions, Laura is no longer connected to Lord Kingscourt. She has discovered who she is and also how she has come to be who she is. I believe she discovers this by being with Dixon and also through her work with the causes she was involved with.

Luke Mclaughlin, UNL

After reading this book I have really realized how fiction writing can become more than meets the eye. I have written in my notes that I thought of the ship as a character in this story as well as some of the other settings too. The farm had a personality too, but I believe the ship was just another one of the main characters in the story along for the ride. It becomes torn apart more and more as the crew does. I was relieved to hear that other people had actually thought the same about this in class and that I wasn't the only crazy one (or others were just as crazy as me). When I first read the ship's name I thought of it to be grand and if it were to be a human it would be a lot like Lord Kingscourt. Then you get further into the story and find out more and more how this ship has seen better days just like Lord Kingscourt. In chapter 35 I believe, the ship is referred to as "our old intrepid lady". Then you find out how her health is getting worse along with everybody else's. The creaking noises made from the ship are described as human screams and sympathy is felt for the "magnificent beast" with descriptions of the sea weed that covered it and you understand it is on its last limb just like everybody else.

Brandon Stewart, UNL:

O'Connor's story has showed me many very interesting ways to write a story. Of everything he had done in his book I admired the change in point of view the most. I loved how he changed from character to character as well as used different forms of showing their perspective. By this I mean how he set in in first for one character. I also admired how unique each of the characters were, and how they developed throughout the novel. The readers the interpretation of a character changes throughout the story. Some characters you may trust or find somewhat open or simple, then you realize that they are not to be given as much trust as they should. As the story progresses you find that they are so much more complicated than they were at the beginning of the story.

Michael Hansen, UNL:

As I write about this book and I read through it, the thing that stands out most to me is the characters and how they develop. What I've learned from reading this book is just how much you can manipulate a reader's feelings about a character. Every chapter changes my feelings about the character and I almost like guessing how I'm going to feel about whoever the chapter is about before the end of it. Another thing that stands out to me that I have learned is, how much you can change a character's identity in a believable way, my example is Mulvey. Mulvey has changed considerably through the chronological story line and how he's been presented.

Rebecca Easler, CC:

In class discussion, we often talk about how trustworthy or sympathetic certain characters are and what stays consistent even though O'Connor might try to manipulate our opinions with the different viewpoints. David Merridith seems to be one of the characters whose approval ratings undulate the most because of the multiple perspectives, although we finally get a definite characterization towards the end of the novel. Verity Merridith, David's mother, stays consistent in everyone's viewpoint, and towards the end of the novel, we see David express some of Verity's traits in terms of caring for the less fortunate, so our view of him changes for the better. Even though he has moments that lessen our opinion of him, I think O'Connor ultimately wants us to feel sorry for David because of his past and the consequences of his actions.

Tom Knowlton, CC:

In my opinion Dixon has shaped the entire novel in order to justify his actions. It just does not make sense to me that he would be able to get into so much detail without making some of the stories up. It bothers me that we cannot have the true characterization of all of the people in the novel because there is a constant thought in the back of our heads that Dixon (or in some cases O'Connor) is misleading us. Reliability aside, the other important aspect that dictates the way that people think of the characters is the idea of morality. Throughout the novel there are many moments when we are challenged to decide if something is done morally or immorally. The mercy killing(s) in the book all call us to decide what is acceptable and vice versa in times of great turmoil. This leads into the idea of stealing food for one's family or doing anything that is a desperate attempt to survive. For me it is hard to imagine the hardships that the people of Ireland are going through during the famine. I think that when we are considering which characters are likable or not it is necessary to take into account the desperation involved with the situation.

in the novel.

Ellen Mueller, CC:

While in the first 99 editions of his novel, Grantley Dixon sets up Pius Mulvey to be the villain of the novel, the hundredth edition removes much of the blame. It is impossible to know what things have been changed or added, but with Dixon's admission of guilt in the epilogue, it becomes difficult to call Pius Mulvey a villain at all. Many things in the last twenty chapters of the novel point to Pius Mulvey's innocence. Mulvey is blackmailed into attempting to murder David Merridith. By sneaking into Merridith's cabin, Mulvey is only saving himself, because Seamus Meadows and the Hibernians have promised "And that treacher Merridith ever laves this ship, there's five hundred in New York who'll line up to stick you" (282). Since Mulvey has placed himself outside of the Ireland tenant/landowner controversy, he has no malicious motivation to kill Merridith. As Mulvey and Merridith grow closer, literally, Mulvey continues to look for an escape from the blackmail. Through Dixon, we find out that Mulvey "had an intriguing conversation [the morning of the murder], where he wondered if it would be possible to sign as a hand on the ship and return to Liverpool" (356). Mulvey has clearly decided to not murder Merridith, and his desperate escape on the lifeboats shows that he is not the terrible villain we think he is. While Mulvey's motivations absolutely do not excuse the fact that he killed, they definitely remove him from a list of infamous literary villains who kill with no mercy.