

# LITERATURE

## EXTERNAL MEDIATION IN FLANNERY O'CONNOR'S *WISE BLOOD*

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The fiction of Flannery O'Connor is focused on her orthodox understanding of the Catholic dogma. Already her first novel *Wise blood* published in 1952 defines the lines of her subsequent religious concern. Herself a Catholic of strong conviction, Miss O'Connor believes that the solution to man's plight can only be given in soteriological terms. In this, she stands unique among other modern American writers whose positions are either humanist or existentialist. She views modern man through his relation to the questions of sin, grace and salvation as they are illuminated by the mystery of redemption. In order that a proper relation to these questions be established man's life should take the form of Christian quest: the quest for God terminating in salvation. Her fiction is peopled with Southern backwoods preachers and prophets, protestant fanatics who strive to find God yet are unable to due either to personal weakness or to an obscure and biased understanding of faith. The latter often comes as a result of excessive individualism that has cut modern man off from his essential spiritual bond with God. Miss O'Connor holds existentialist philosophy responsible for inflicting modern man with a fatal distrust of the existence of transcendent Christian reality to which she sees human life bound and which a true believer cannot question. Her vision renders modern world to be Eliade's desecralized cosmos in which man no longer gives expression to the desire for the numinous which she regards as central to human nature. She seems to deplore the fact that this desire has been only too successfully replaced by the trust modern man puts in his self-sufficiency and unlimited individual freedom. Therefore, Miss O'Connor's Christians are torn between their innermost deep faith in God and their inability to obey Him. For them, obedience has become synonymous with enslavement and humiliation which defy modern man's sense of autonomy and pride. Such is also Hazel Motes the protagonist of *Wise blood* who, at one point in the

novel, is compared to Jonah. However, Jonah never doubted the wrathful reality of God he fled from whereas Miss O'Connor's believers deny God but always seek Him. Split and anguished, they try to confirm His reality through denial and disobedience.

Miss O'Connor calls *Wise blood* a comic novel because Hazel Motes's quest for God eventually brings him to find and accept salvation. Thus, the novel generally follows the pattern of the Christian myth of which Northrop Frye writes:

The framework of the Christian myth is the comic framework of the Bible, where man loses a peacable kingdom, staggers through the long nightmare of tyranny and injustice which is human history, and eventually regains his original vision. Within this myth is the corresponding comedy of the Christian life.

(Frye 1965:133)

The Christian life is virtually the imitation of the life of Christ as presented in the gospels. It seems proper, therefore, to adopt Rene Girard's concept of external mediation for the present analysis of *Wise blood*.

In his work *Deceit, desire and the novel: self and other in literary structure* Rene Girard (1969) develops a concept of triangular desire as a structural model for formal interpretation of fiction. He assumes that human desires are not spontaneous but dictated by the Other, a presence which acts as the third element between man (the desiring subject) and the goal he wishes to reach (the object of desire). Since this third element shows the object of desire to the desiring subject, thus arousing his interest, Girard speaks of this function as mediation. The third element is then referred to as the mediator of desire. The spatial metaphor for such pursuit of desire (desire according to another) takes the form of a triangle. It consists of a straight line joining the desiring subject and the object of desire, and two converging lines above it pointing to the presence of the mediator. Such triangular arrangement in a work of fiction can have different points of reference. The mediator may operate outside the plot or can be embodied in one of the characters. Between the character who is the desiring subject and the mediator of his desire various relations are possible. The mediator's presence is either welcome or objectionable but it is always sought as indispensable for the desire to develop. Whenever the mediator is one of the characters Girard speaks of internal mediation. If he operates from the outside the mediation is external.

As Girard himself concedes, for a Christian the imitation of Christ is Christian existence. Thus, Christ becomes a model of all Christianity in its desire to be redeemed and acts as the mediator of this desire. We may conclude that in all fiction concerned with the Christian myth external mediation operates as the structural principle. In Miss O'Connor's work specifically, the plot usually develops along such lines that the protagonist has either mistaken

the nature of his Christian desire or has mistaken other characters for mediators of his desire and must be, therefore, brought to the point where the recognition of redemption as his real desire and Christ as his only true mediator is inevitable. This usually occurs as an action of grace whereupon the protagonist freely obeys both his Christian desire and its mediator. The characters that the protagonist encounters in the course of his Christian quest fall into two groups. If their mediation brings him closer to God they operate on the side of external mediation and thus form a group of positive mediators. The other group are false mediators who act as obstacles in his quest and push him away from God. Very often, however, they illuminate for the reader the nature of the protagonist's misconception of his desire. Nevertheless, their mediation aims to make the protagonist recognize the world at the cost of Christian mystery and may thus be called properly internal. Naturally, Christ who always remains the only external mediator cannot appear as a character. Thus, Girard's strict definition of characters as internal and outside forces as external mediators cannot be maintained if a just assessment of all characters in Miss O'Connor's novel is to be reached. In the present work, the characters whose mediation partakes of the external power will be called positive mediators whereas the name of negative mediators will be given to those characters who mediate for the world and against the divine.

*Wise blood* begins with a train journey of Hazel Motes, a Southern boy in his early twenties who returns from the army to Eastrod, a small place in Tennessee where he spent the first eighteen years of his life. He was raised in a preacher family to become a typical backwoods boy of little formal education and deep concern with religion. When a child, he was pronounced redeemed by his grandfather "a circuit preacher, a waspish old man who had ridden over three counties with Jesus hidden in his head like a stinger" (O'Connor 1973: 20).<sup>1</sup> In his preaching, the old man used to show Hazel as an example of an ignorant and unrepentant sinner for whom yet Jesus "would die ten million deaths before He would let him lose his soul" (WB:22). Ever since his childhood Hazel has felt his life bound to Jesus. He has been constantly aware that Jesus craves his soul and in this way his life is doomed:

There was already in him a deep black wordless conviction that the way to avoid Jesus was to avoid sin... he saw Jesus move from tree to tree in the back of his mind, a wild ragged figure motioning him to turn around and come off into the dark where he was not sure of his footing, where he might be walking on the water and not know it and then suddenly know it and drown (WB:22).

<sup>1</sup> The following abbreviations of Flannery O'Connor's works will be used in the present work:

*Wise blood* — WB

*Mystery and manners* — MM

Hazel's avoidance of sin is quite clearly motivated by his fear of death. His grandfather's brand of backwoods religion is marked by a strong Manichean tendency to regard physical reality and earthly life as evil and unworthy of concern. Such conclusion is strengthened by the nature of Eastrod events which he recalls on the train: they all point to death. Lying on a train berth reminds him of being placed in a coffin the lid of which is slowly closing down. He remembers the funerals of the members of his family against the context of his own fear at those times that the lid could close down on him as it did on others. It is through this fear that Hazel comes to identify Jesus not only with death but with sin as well. The paradox of such identification stems from his one-sided concept of sin. In another context, Catherine Feeley (1972) in her penetrating study of Miss O'Connor's fiction draws attention to the fact that "the religious notions of the child Hazel were based on the relationship between personal sin and salvation — that is, that one's personal sin (rather than the sinful condition of mankind) draws down the power of the Redeemer" (Feeley 1972:197). Consequently, Hazel envisions the world outside Eastrod so full of sinful acts that his leaving the place would make him fall a prey to soul-hungry Jesus. In his grandfather's sermons, Jesus chases sinners "over the waters of sin". If Hazel submitted to temptation, if he walked on these waters Jesus would make him know his sin by running to his rescue and he would drown. Were he to welcome Jesus in that role he would inevitably have to die since Jesus would want him to escape further corruption. The words of his grandfather planted themselves deep in his religious reasoning: "Jesus would never let him forget he was redeemed. What did a sinner think there was to be gained? Jesus would have him in the end!" (WB:22). In Hazel's boyhood mind, sin and Jesus thus become inseparable as death force whereas the urge to avoid sin and Jesus operates as life force.

Consequently, Eastrod, where he has so successfully avoided sin and managed to stay alive for eighteen years assumes for him all the significance of the mythical country of innocence which sin does not enter. He will stay there as Adam before the Fall and will not need redemption. He is a false prophet of Eastrod innocence in the world over which Jesus always hungrily watches for a sinner to slip. Eastrod becomes a hiding place where man may feel free of Him. Since his vision of salvation excludes inner depravity Hazel places great confidence in his own ability to resist sin. When, at eighteen, he is drafted he imagines the army to be a trap Jesus sets for him to lure him into sin. He is most proud of his power to have fought temptations of soldier life. His purpose in staying sinless is Eastrod since he cannot return there if corrupted.

Yet, the army experience modifies his religious notions. When other soldiers invite to take him to a brothel he refuses to go stating that he must protect his soul. He is then told that he does not have any soul. Hazel sees in

this statement a possibility of another way to escape Jesus. "He took a long time to believe them because he wanted to believe them... he saw the opportunity here to get rid of it without corruption, to be converted to nothing instead of to evil" (WB:24). At this point, the opportunity for him lies quite simply in atheism the symbol of which is the shrapnel wound. He has been operated on but he always feels the shrapnel inside "rusted, and poisoning him" (WB:24). Soulless, he can live on for Jesus will have nothing to gain. Once more, his grandfather's heritage leaves a decisive mark on his life. Through his atheism, he manages to free himself of the Jesus of his boyhood. He understands his not having a soul as "something that he had always known" (WB:24). In losing faith, he comes to obey "something in his mind" revealed later as the devil. Virtually, his earlier trap-setting Jesus is a concept close to that of the devil. This, obviously, means that his former disobedience to Jesus was really obedience to the devil and will continue to be so.

Apparently a disbeliever, Hazel cannot yet rid himself of preoccupation with the spiritual truth. Therefore, in a typical existentialist manner, he "places the spirit in himself", as Miss O'Connor says of a modern disbeliever. His truth is human freedom and autonomy. As a Christian despite himself, however, he gives his spiritual autonomy a definite coloring. He means it to be a rebellion against Jesus as the divine Redeemer. Miss O'Connor herself says that Hazel's "presiding passion was to rid himself of a conviction that Jesus has redeemed him" (O'Connor 1970:164).

Thus, boyhood and army experience are the two forces that have shaped the personality of Hazel, such as we meet him at the opening of *Wise blood*. Out of these experiences the complexity of his personality arises: the complexity that makes a quest necessary. Aware of general depravity in the world yet proud of his own sinlessness, redeemed yet fleeing salvation, bound to Jesus yet unable to receive Him, a Christian by his concerns yet an atheist by his choice, he presents a perfect embodiment of Miss O'Connor's modern man a believer whom she describes as one "who can neither believe nor contain himself in unbelief and who searches desperately, feeling about in all experience for the lost God" (MM:159). As a modern believer, therefore, he defies in the novel his attachment to a higher spiritual mystery, the mystery that Miss O'Connor leads him to accept as "our Redemption by Christ".

Already the train journey points out to the quest Hazel will have to make in order to find his identity as a God-follower. That he is a Godseeker may be inferred from the first image we are given of him: he is casting alternate looks at the sun outside the train window and at the porter inside the car. His hesitation between the sun and the porter reflects his divided personality as well as his uncertainty about the direction his life will take. Both the sun and the porter constitute the first offer of mediation. Against the characteristic background of the woods the sun stands out as the emblem of Jesus. In Miss

O'Connor's fiction, the woods, the sun and the vast distance of the countryside bear significance on the anagogical level: they express the divine. Jesus here enters as the external mediator. Subconsciously, Hazel understands that Jesus is the only reality which he wishes to reach. He is looking at the window "as if he might want to jump out of it" (WB: 9). The sun's distinct redness implies that the blood of the Resurrection constitutes the core of his Christian preoccupation. Consciously, Hazel turns to the porter whom he recognizes as one of the Negroes he knew in Eastrod. He wants the porter to acknowledge Eastrod since this is the only place where the question of Jesus as Savior may be forgotten, or at least, alleviated. He questions the porter about Eastrod twice and both times the porter denies any attachment to the place. Hazel's urge to have the porter confirm the reality of Eastrod becomes understandable in view of the fact that Eastrod no longer exists as he learned on his visit there the night before. He bought a preacher suit and hat to perform the role that his family tradition prepared him for. With Eastrod lost, he is homeless and alienated. The porter's sole as the mediator is, therefore, to point his further way.

Asleep on the train, Hazel dreams of his mother's burial. He sees his mother struggling to fly out of the coffin "like a huge bat" but the lid keeps closing down. In the novel, Hazel's remembrance of his mother performs the role of his Christian conscience. The dream thus expresses his profound misgivings about his freshly acquired disbelief. Waking from the nightmare, he imagines himself enclosed in a coffin and calls out for help. The porter then disperses his fear with a curt statement: "Jesus been a long time gone" (WB:27). In this way, the porter performs a parody of Apostle Peter's function. He ultimately closes the door to Eastrod, Hazel's illusory paradise and opens the door for the evil-ridden world. As Hazel is getting on the train he directs him to the left. His two denials of Eastrod and the third one of Jesus as well as the porter function allow us to see him in a mock relation to Peter. His mediation is negative because Hazel's subsequent life will be a deliberate pursuit of sin.

Already the journey makes it evident to Hazel that Jesus is of no importance to the world where sin prevails. Mrs Hitchcock, his train companion and the women he dines with consider him a freak when he speaks of salvation. Hazel is repelled by the indifference and ignorance that these women show in religious matters. He attacks them with a scornful statement: "If you've been redeemed I wouldn't want to be" (WB:16) thus expressing his abhorrence at the fact that people untroubled by sin might also be saved. If salvation counts for so little his own rejection of it assures him in the notion that man's concern can only lie with himself in order to be meaningful to life.

On the whole, the mediation of the journey section belongs to the ne-

gative type. It prepares Hazel's entrance into the city which stands for the world informed by sin. If Jesus is gone the world is not threatened with redemption. Hazel voluntarily chooses the sin of fornication to be initiated into evil that only now will be of no consequence. Insofar as he makes this decision on atheistic grounds his choice is existentialist. He simply wants "to do some things he has never done before". The taxi driver on the way to Leora Watts, the woman he wants to commit the sin with acts, however, as another mediator. He warns Hazel that his disregard for sin and his trust in man as the only reality can be misleading. He reminds him that salvation involves general human imperfection and cannot be easily spurned: "it ain't anybody perfect on this green earth of God's, preachers nor nobody else" (WB: 32). His brief mediation operates on the side of the external one and illuminates for the reader the nature of Hazel's misconception of sin. Hazel has now placed humanity in the highest and ascribed absolute acceptance to human acts. Simultaneously, he has dangerously suspended the operation of the devil on man.

Leora Watts, a city famous prostitute represents again the working of negative mediation. Her mediation is an active embodiment of the porter's judgement of the world. At the same time, it supplants that of Hazel's memory of his mother. Mrs Watts is the agent of Hazel's initiation into carnal sin and thus stands in direct opposition to Hazel's mother who acted mainly as the guardian of his Eastrod innocence. She was, as has been indicated, his conscience. On his second visit to Mrs Watts Hazel remembers an incident from his childhood. Once he saw a fat white woman in a tent at a carnival show. She was placed in a coffin on display. When he came home his mother sensed his experience and flogged him. As she was approaching him with a stick he visualized her gaunt, clothed in black body in a coffin: her face was cross-shaped. In his imagination, his mother is then identifiable with Jesus. In wishing his mother dead he also crucifies Jesus with his sin. The operation of his mother as his Christian conscience is unmistakable. She makes him experience the crucial awareness of inner evil: "He forgot the guilt of the tent for the nameless unplaced guilt that was in him" (WB:63). The punishment he afterwards inflicts on himself is not motivated by genuine regret but rather by a need for a cold-blooded retribution. He walks a certain measured-out distance in shoes filled with rocks and washes his feet in wet sand of a stream. This penitential practice is thus meant as a false purification ritual necessary for him to perform in order to stay within the innocence of Eastrod.

It is important to note that while soaking his feet in stream sand Hazel is waiting for "a sign". Against the awareness of inner evil that he has just come to feel he wants Jesus to acknowledge his sin as personal so that the inner evil may be dissolved. In other words, his individualism demands recognition of his resistance to sin. He expects that Jesus will appoint him as the

chosen one, chosen because clean. As no sign appears he finishes his practice with a belligerent thought: "That ought to satisfy Him" (WB:63-64).

The emblems of Eastrod in Hazel's life are three: a black Bible, his mother's glasses and her chifferobe. The first two he carries with him, forgotten at the bottom of his army bag. The Bible that he never touches is the symbol of his relation to Christian truth, lost in the army yet immersed deeply in his mind. The glasses will later perform the role of improving his vision and will enable him to recognize false truth. Sight and blindness in their opposition form the backbone of the novel's structure. Hazel's eyes, as they appear to Mrs Hitchcock are "passages leading somewhere" (WB:10). His first name, frequently shortened to "Haze" implies, as Miss O'Connor's critics invariably note, misty and obscured vision. The emblematic meaning of his last name is also generally regarded to be linked to biblical beams and notes (Luke 6: 41-42). The critics agree in the point that Hazel must cast the beam out of his own eye in order to see truth clearly. However, from his repulsion to see sinful acts as notes in the eyes of others it seems that the beam he has to see in his own eye is his own inner evil since he continuously strives to deny that he shares in it.

The third object, the chifferobe he leaves in the dilapidated house in Eastrod with a note "This chifferobe belongs to Hazel Motes. Do not steal it or you will be hunted down and killed" (WB:26). The chifferobe carries the greatest significance as the symbol of conscience since it was his mother's most valued possession. By leaving it in Eastrod Hazel cuts himself off from his mother. In his dream on the train he sees the coffin top close on her. Thus, he enters the world of sin apparently conscienceless.

Against this childhood recollection Mrs Watts also continues the mediation of the carnival freak. The reminiscence is brought to Hazel's mind by the sight of Leora's fat white body, naked but with Hazel's "Jesus-seeing" hat on. A marked difference, of course, is that Hazel does not feel any need to atone for the present sin. He has already denied the role of the preacher as an advocate for Christian conscience. Mrs Watts further absolves him of this denial by assuming the mother role: "That's okay, son ... Momma don't mind if you ain't a preacher" (WB:34). As his new mother in sin, Mrs Watts is also identifiable with Eve. The advertisement on a city public convenience stall where Hazel learns of her services as "the friendliest bed in town" has "a large word, *WELCOME*, followed by three exclamation points and something that looked like a snake" (WB:30). Leora's implications here of both Eve and the devil indubitably link Hazel's personal sin to the original sin. His atheism easily explains the first but cannot as yet account for the second.

Hazel's preacher attire becomes an anomaly in the city where sin passes unrecognized but the preacher does not. It distinguishes him continuously as a God-seeker. His quest may seemingly go backwards but it never stops.

On his first night in the city his "shadow was now behind him and now before him and now and then broken up by other people's shadows, but when it was by itself, stretching behind him, it was a thin nervous shadow walking backwards" (WB:37). The shadow here is really that of Hazel as the Christian *malgre lui*. It is his own (not his mother's) conscience which never leaves him. As such, it denotes unrecognized external mediation: Its state of being broken up by other people's shadows anticipates the interference of internal mediation where external one should operate. We also have here a marked emphasis on Hazel's split and alienated personality.

Unlike Eastrod, the city is full of deceit in its offer of satisfaction for all religious problems. The peeler man's stand looks like an altar but what is sacrificed on it are merely potatoes to peel. Against this, Asa Hawks a blind preacher impostor forms competition where religious pamphlets securing one's salvation are distributed. What they really secure is an occasional nickel for Hawks. The question of Jesus is shrunk down to a little stand in the city's vanity fair. On sale is a shrunken Jesus (referred to in the novel as "the new Jesus") and idol embodied in a shrivelled mummy at the city zoo. What this Jesus gains is a meagre crowd of onlookers as potential spenders of mammon. This Jesus sells salvation as Leora the prostitute sells sin. Like the man selling potato peelers the city new Jesus becomes just another salesman.

It is through the contact with such treatment of religion that Hazel's further contempt for salvation develops. The mediation of Asa Hawks allows us to see the mistake he makes: he identifies salvation with nominal religion. Hawks's name literally means 'to peddle goods in the streets by shouting'. In this connection, Taulkinham, the name of the city signifies a general deterioration of religion to empty talk, Asa being the representative of it. Asa once intended to blind himself for Jesus and in this way justify his redemption. Yet, through personal weakness he failed in the attempt. Ever since that time he has been a not too successful peddler of nominal religion to make a living. Hazel who believes in Asa's blindness faces a puzzle in his own negation of Christian truth. If Asa really blinded himself his act would mean a concrete assertion of mystery in which case the mystery would have to be truth. As the case stands, however, Asa's cowardice denigrated mystery to a meaningless abstraction translatable into the concrete worth of money. Still, his treatment of religion in the city is closest to truth for it is pervaded by a deep sense of human imperfection. His urge for Hazel to repent as well as his stress on the point that "Jesus is a fact" remind Hazel of his grandfather. Again, he feels the need to free himself of his family troublesome heritage. He mistakes Asa for a true preacher and cannot see that Asa bitterly mocks the issue of salvation because he himself feels unable to find a relation to it. When the preacher grabs Hazel's arm saying mockingly that Jesus loves him Hazel pulls his arm free with the words "Nothing matters but that Jesus don't

exist" (WB:54). To free himself completely, he buys a car and undertakes to leave the city. His deep urge for pure metaphysics demands that the questions of sin and salvation be treated seriously or not at all. They were treated so in *Eastrod* but *Eastrod* is now embodied in *Asa* who misinterprets the issues making profit out of them in a city way. They must be thus forgotten because a true relation to them is beyond man's reach. For Hazel at this point, *true* means satisfying his autonomy and freedom. The symbol of these two is the car he buys — a shattered *Essex*.

The car, in Miss O'Connor's own comment constitutes for Hazel "his pulpit, and his coffin as well as something he thinks of as a means of escape... The car is a kind of death-in-life symbol, as his blindness is a life-in-death symbol" (MM:72). Hazel purchases the car to escape but also to have "a place to be". As the preacher of the Church Without Christ, he uses it as the cross by which man procures salvation by and for himself. As he proclaims "nobody with a good car needs to be justified" (WB:113). Later, when the car is finally broken it will assume a shape of a crooked cross with its three wheels pointing out, thus passing a judgement on what human salvation amounts to. As his pulpit and the building of his church, the car is a definite parody of what these two objects should mean. The windshield wipers, as Hazel drives out of the city, make "a great clatter like two idiots clapping in church" (WB:74).

Outside the city, Hazel stops to let a herd of pigs cross the highway. This fact constitutes an indication of an imminent operation of the devil in his mind. Presently, he is forced to stop behind a truck with a crate full of chickens. The truck seems to be "reading" the inscription by the road which says: "WOE TO THE BLASPHEMER AND WHOREMONGER! WILL HELL SWALLOW YOU UP?" and "Jesus saves" (WB:75). The capital letters of the first and small ones of the second part of the sign are important here because in the way they are connected Hazel again notices Jesus the Redeemer as relating to personal sin alone. Such Jesus he terms "a trick on niggers". Salvation by Him has nothing to do with inner evil and Hazel can safely dispose of it now on the grounds that it envelops him as if from the outside and is thus irrelevant to his life: "There is no person a whoremonger, who wasn't something worse first... That's not sin nor blasphemy. The sin came before them" (WB:76). Jesus, if He is a fact as *Hawks* contends, was not crucified for man since sin is not man's immediate condition. Man cannot be held responsible for something he is not allowed to control. It is thus that Hazel bestows autonomy on man and frees himself from religion on the conscious level: "I don't have to run from anything because I don't believe in anything" (WB:76). Let us note that Hazel reads the sign immediately after he has seen the crate with the chickens. The association of Jesus with imprisonment is here clearly indicated. Another instance of mediation occurs at this point to make it evident that Hazel's freedom is illusory. The mediator

is a driver of a truck behind Hazel's car. Impatient for Hazel to clear the road, he answers Hazel's question about directions to the city zoo with an ironic comment "Did you escape from there?" (WB:76). The mediation is positive for it shows that Hazel's return to the city will mean a deeper imprisonment.

Hazel's mind dictates him "another plan". To oppose *Asa's* truth that Jesus is a fact he will propose a truth that Jesus is a lie. He now needs *Enoch Emery* as a person who knows *Asa's* address. From this moment in the novel's structure *Enoch* is given a subplot of its own, the purpose of which is chiefly to illustrate Hazel's concern with truth and freedom. *Enoch*, "a moron and a comic character" as Miss O'Connor comments on him, works at the city zoo and desperately tries to befriend Hazel having come to the city shortly before the latter. As he tells Hazel, he spent most of his previous life with his "daddy", an evil, licentious, ignorant man who eventually abandoned him for a woman and "made him come" to the city. As a boy of twelve, *Enoch* underwent a religious training which was sponsored by a welfare woman under whose custody he suffered a separation from his daddy. Eager to rejoin him, he prayed to be shown a way to escape and was given it: he once frightened the woman by exposing himself. The incident is important for its evil and perverted character clearly implies that *Enoch's* prayer was answered by the devil. *Enoch* has always felt his life to be governed by a mysterious force he calls "wise blood": something he has inherited from his daddy. All his actions stem from the urge which initiates in his blood. He always finds himself doing things which, if apparently unreasonable reveal themselves to be its full impulses. The embodiment of this mystery is a mummified man at the zoo museum, the place he considers "the heart of the city".

*Enoch's* daily life takes the form of a primitive ritual the purpose of which is the contemplation of the state of his obedience to the mysterious idol. When Hazel arrives at the zoo *Enoch* sees in it an opportunity he has been waiting for: he can share his curious religion with a would be believer. Hazel is fit to become one for *Enoch* feels they have something in common. He compares his own situation to Hazel's and repeatedly insists on having seen him before. This fact establishes a structural parallel between the two characters which runs deeper than only to illustrate their essential opposition. Both once had contact with backwoods religion. Both rejected it for pursuit of what they considered the expression of their true selves. The essential difference is that *Enoch* has done it to obey "something in his blood" whereas for Hazel it has meant obedience to "something in his mind". The essential similarity, of course, is that both have thus given expression to only one element of the self: *Enoch* to his animalism and Hazel to his spirituality.

This is evident in the course of Hazel's visit. As the first action of his ritual, *Enoch* is lasciviously watching a woman bathe. The same woman arou-

ses Hazel's repulsion through her overt sexuality. Enoch then proceeds to satisfy his blood at the place called "the Frosty Bottle" where he usually goes to have a milkshake and make "suggestive remarks" to the waitress. The name of the place is itself symbolic as it implies imprisonment of spirit. Hazel's impatience to get out of the place throws light on the nature of his spiritual concern. To the waitress's well-meaning comment that he is a "clean boy" he reacts with a violent assertion of cleanliness: "It was as if something inside Hazel Motes was winding up... He only looked pressed down in that blue suit, as if inside it, the thing winding was getting tighter and tighter... 'I AM clean', he said... 'If Jesus existed, I wouldn't be clean'" (WB:91-91). Clearly, the awareness of impurity that the woman brings forth in him is here recognizable as possession by evil spirit. The same compulsion to claim cleanliness occurs at the next stage of Enoch's ritual. As they are walking past the cages with animals Hazel stops before one with an old hoot owl. The bird stares at him with one eye. The eye which might symbolize the all-seeing eye of God transfers to Hazel the knowledge of his secret impurity and of his bondage to the devil. Watching animals arouses an entirely opposite reaction in Enoch. He enjoys observing them because their imprisonment fills him with a superior sense of freedom. Bears and monkeys are of particular interest to him: his detestation of the latter is particularly strong.

The last and crowning event of the ritual is a daily worship of the mummified man. He lies in a coffin-like glass case. The scene at the museum provides the first identification of Hazel with the mummy. Hazel's reflection in the glass is "pale" with "eyes like two clean bullet holes". The mummy is "a dried yellow color" with eyes "drawn almost shut as if a giant block of steel were falling down on top of him" (WB:98). The peculiar quality of the eyes in both cases indicates that Hazel's inability to see Christian truth is due to a blankness caused by a deadening and heavy burden. The appearance of a reflection of the woman who had been bathing imports this burden to be evil. A further identification issues when Hazel, outraged to see the woman makes "a noise" which Enoch instantly accepts as that of the mummy and expects a revelation to follow. Now convinced that he has been duped by a retarded sensual freak, Hazel hurls a rock at Enoch and draws his blood. Thus, the revelation amounts to a drop of red liquid on Enoch's finger which he contemplates as mystery.

Hazel's revulsion at having to contact and tolerate Enoch leaves little doubt about the failure of Enoch's mediation. Hazel simply sees through a primitive fallacy of Enoch's longing to find mystery where it cannot possibly exist: in man's lower animal nature. Nonetheless, the mediation possesses a relevance that cannot be overlooked. Previous to the mediation, Hazel used his body to prove himself unrestricted both on natural and spiritual level. Together with Leora, he treated carnal sin as man's sight to what he called "the usual business". Whatever inclinations he could have had to do "certain things

he has never done before" are now discarded. He terminates his not too successful affair with Leora immediately after she has cut his preacher hat into an obscene shape. Enoch's and Leora's mediations show him how man as a natural being relates to truth. He places truth in the sensual and worships it as false and enslaving mystery, or turns the sensual to corruption to deride spiritual truth. Women's mediation in general endows Hazel's notion of the body with corruption. Consequently, Hazel suppresses his body to turn it into a weapon with which to fight Asa's truth. Before the encounter with Enoch, he proclaimed his disbelief on the grounds that he may turn to other things because Jesus does not exist: "I don't need Jesus... What do I need with Jesus? I got Leora Watts" (WB:56). After the encounter, his approach to matters of the body alters: "He felt that he should have a woman, not for the sake of pleasure in her, but to prove that he didn't believe in sin since he practised what was called it" (WB:110). Thus, Hazel enslaves his natural element to his spiritual one in order to carry on his rebellion against Jesus. He further enslaves himself to "something in his mind".

To fight Asa's truth, Hazel starts his Church Without Christ on the assumption that the gospels lie: "I'm member and preacher to that church where the blind don't see and the lame don't walk and what's dead stays that way... It's the church that the blood of Jesus don't foul with redemption" (WB:105). Hazel blasphemes and his blasphemy is again a deliberate choice of sin as a way to freedom. Yet, free though he may be he still suffers from anguish about the absolute rightness of his choice. As he points out in his preaching truth can only be reached through blasphemy. His concern with truth demands that Asa's mediation be of continuous reference to him. He plans to seduce Sabbath Lily, Asa's daughter to prove his disbelief of sin. He does not fear Sabbath's womanhood the way he fears Leora's because he believes the girl to be still innocent. The two sins he wants to commit now: blasphemy as mental and fornication as a carnal one, attempt to free man in his totality, both body and mind, from Jesus the enslaver. Thus, both body and mind serve the purpose of asserting autonomy of the human spirit. Subconsciously, Hazel hopes that Asa is really blind and lives free of sin in Jesus the Redeemer. An earnestness of negation competes in Hazel's mind with an earnestness for truth to produce a state that Miss O'Connor calls a play of Hazel's conflicting wills.

To carry out his intention to seduce Sabbath Lily, Hazel goes with her for a ride outside the city. A particularly important case of mediation occurs on this occasion for it is accompanied by the operation of external power. As usual in Miss O'Connor's fiction, some aspects of the sky suggest the intervention. As they are leaving the city the sky is clear "with only one cloud in it, a large blinding white one with curls and a beard" (WB:117). The peculiarity of the cloud presupposes an encounter with the one armed gas-station man whose role as the mediator should be crucial for our understanding of Hazel's rebel-

lion. Like the Bethlehem star, the cloud points out the way to lead Hazel into a situation where mediation will be indispensable. As his car stops, Hazel asks help of the gas station-man who, significantly, emerges out of the woods to meet him. The man has thoughtful, slate eyes indicative of deeper vision. He helps Hazel to start the car and fills it with gas without accepting the payment for the service. The mediator's physical deformity is meaningful here. It suggests an outward incompleteness which is compensated by inward wholeness. As such, he stands in contrast to Asa whose physical blindness is fake and thus makes his inner life as ugly and distorted as the scars on his face. At the end of the encounter the taciturn man utters a prophetic remark telling Hazel that his flight from Jesus will terminate in submission. The remark concerns the car: "Some things ... 'Il get some folks somewheres" (WB:127). The mediator sees the car as the vehicle of the quest and foretells the latter's success. Hazel does not understand his mediation, angered at the man's refusal to accept the money since it hurts his sense of self-sufficiency. The man drives off followed by the cloud which now takes the shape of "a bird with long thin wings". The operation of the Holy Ghost is thus unmistakably implied.

Although brief, the mediation illuminates for the reader Hazel's notion that Jesus enslaves. In helping Hazel the mediator acts totally as he is expected to. When offered a payment it would be natural if he took it. Yet, he freely chooses to participate in the operation of higher order since Hazel's car and his quest must still go on. The man derives a balance between his human situation and spiritual freedom from a recognition of mystery. If this balance is lacking mystery cannot be related to and only then becomes an enslaving force. Such is the symbolic meaning of a cage by the man's gas-pump in which a bear and chicken hawk are placed so as to slowly torture each other in never-ending fight. Only when imprisoned do the two animals present a sight of unbearable and grotesque violence: "Most of the hawk's tail was gone; the bear had only one eye" (WB:125). The choice of the two animals is such as to make evident total absence of freedom in Sabbath Lily and Enoch Emery, the two mediators now relevant to Hazel's quest.

Sabbath Lily is the first to be attracted by the cage. The chicken hawk obviously relates to her as Hawks's daughter. Earlier, she has confessed to Hazel the circumstances of her illegitimate birth. In her opinion, being a bastard excludes the possibility of salvation for her. As her letters to the agony column of a paper indicate she wishes to give full expression to her natural sexual instincts. She transfers the natural condition of her birth onto the transcendent plane of mystery. Her stories of unhappy and unloved children who, through natural goodness make sinners realize their evil are pervaded by a deep tone of helpless self-pity. She considers herself inwardly good: "I got a church in my heart where Jesus is King" (WB:121). Simultaneously, she feels predestined for damnation due to an outside condition — her bastardy: "I shall not enter

the kingdom of heaven anyway" (WB:119). The statement denounces her use of religion as a way to be rid of any responsibility for sin. She gladly submits to temptations on the paradoxical assumption that she is free to do so because she cannot be held responsible. Her Jesus denies her salvation but He exists to sanction her promiscuity. Her overt animalism arises out of a heavy mixture of naturalism and protestant theology. By denying herself a relation to mystery she upsets the balance between her natural and her spiritual element and is imprisoned within the nature of her instincts.

As Hazel's mediator, she stands in the same line with Leora since she forces upon him the awareness of the original sin. Her name emphasizes her connection both to Hazel's mother and to Leora. Her mother named her Sabbath — the fact reflects Hazel's mother's religiosity. She herself added the second name Lily which brings to mind the biblical temptress Lilith and imports the girl's wish to express herself sexually. It is, however, her illegitimacy that makes the point of Hazel's identifying her with inner evil. He wants to disperse her worries about damnation by assuring her that she can be saved in his church since as a bastard she "wouldn't be different from anybody else" (WB:122). The devil instantly appears as "something in his mind" asserting that there is no salvation and she, like everybody else, is lost. As usual, Hazel escapes the devil's contradiction by thinking the matter not important. But when Sabbath presently attempts seduction by playfully peering into his eyes with the words "I see you" (WB:122) he recognizes her remark as perception of inner evil and of the devil's possession. Consequently, he gives up the intention of seducing her for fear that she, like other women, will not see him as autonomous but as unclean. Like the children of her stories, Sabbath makes Hazel realize his evil. Unlike them, however, she is not goodness but corruption. Her insight into evil results in an invitation to play. Her mediation belongs to the negative type but it prompts Hazel to be more keen on his human autonomy against not Jesus but the devil. Besides, it urges Hazel to get a decisive insight into the nature of her father's blindness.

Hazel cannot understand how Asa, a Jesus-follower could beget a bastard child. Sabbath explains that before he came to believe her father had been utterly possessed by evil. Hazel can now place his truth in direct contrast to Asa's. He himself chose disbelief to escape corruption which was outside him whereas Asa chose belief to be purified of inward corruption. Asa's blindness mystifies Hazel and drives onward the content of the two truths. If it is fake, Asa like Enoch, placed truth in mystery that is corrupt and enslaving. If it is real he has been purified and can pursue his truth free of corruption. In this case, Hazel's truth is false for it cannot account for corruption.

Meanwhile, Enoch's subplot continues to reveal the fallacy of both truths through the third fallacy of the shrivelled mummy. Having received its sign, Enoch prepares to steal the mummy from the zoo museum. He relies on his wise



blood to conduct the course of these preparations. He proceeds to paint the inside of his washstand with guilt to provide the idol with a becoming tabernacle. His shabby room is dominated by a picture of a moose, the animal he considers a detestable roommate. The moose appears to possess some superior knowledge which disturbs Enoch because in the animal kingdom to which he properly belongs he would like to feel himself king. He considers himself entitled to take up the role since of all animals he alone can pride himself on having a personal attachment to wise blood, the truth that holds the kingdom together. Therefore, he strips the picture off its frames to deprive the moose of any dominance over the place where the embodiment of the truth will be worshipped. Although on the whole obedient, Enoch is capable of rebellion against his wise blood. Of course, it always ends in submission and can only express a childish and perfunctory wish to oppose and cause trouble: "He didn't want to justify his daddy's blood, he didn't want to be always having to do something that something else wanted him to do, that he didn't know what it was and that was always dangerous" (WB:135).

This protest against wise blood as an endangering force is strangely reminiscent of Hazel's childhood fear of Jesus and death. We have here the same wish for freedom which with Hazel has become a grave issue of his adult life and with Enoch merely a troublesome one. Enoch's simultaneous attraction to and repulsion by animals parallels Hazel's ambiguous treatment of sin. Hazel is outraged to see sin unrecognized and yet himself marks it as irrelevant. He is repelled by Leora's obscenity and yet opposes Asa's conviction of evil. Enoch's wish to feel superior over animals corresponds to Hazel's pride in being more autonomous than those who bind themselves to Jesus through sin. In both cases, the feeling of superiority is easily disturbed as we can see on the example of Enoch's attitude to the moose being a reflection of Hazel's attitude to women. Enoch despises the moose (as he does all animals) on the ground of their being dirty imprisoned creatures. Still, there is higher wisdom in their imprisonment: the moose's picture frames are richly ornamented, the bears in their cages at the zoo look like dignified matrons having tea. Hazel detests women and yet cannot help feeling that their corruption has in it a wisdom more profound than his pride in his own cleanliness. Finally, Enoch's reluctance to obey wise blood in its command to carry out the difficult task of stealing the mummy in order to personally relate to its truth can only be seen as a comic relief to the anguished gravity of Hazel's more serious rebellion.

The gist of Enoch's subplot being a parody of Hazel's quest consists in the illumination of the crucial difference between the two characters which is asserted as the two lines of the plot brilliantly converge. Having fully adapted his room to welcome the precious idol, Enoch runs into Hazel preaching in the street:

The Church Without Christ don't have a Jesus but it needs one! It needs a new jesus! It needs one that's all man, without blood to waste ... Take counsel from your blood and come into the Church Without Christ and maybe somebody will bring us a new jesus and we'll all be saved by the sight of him! (WB:140-141).

Enoch will now have stolen the mummy and present Hazel with a gift of a new jesus: the truth that is entirely human.

Naturally, Enoch with his mummy represents animalism and corruption, that is, precisely the human element that Hazel's church had to reject to be started. Hazel, now in need of a disciple must win one other than Enoch. With divine mystery rejected, the only disciple Hazel can win is the devil. The mediation that ensues presents the operation of the devil as no longer "something" in Hazel's mind but as his avatar — Hoover Shoats. Apart from his name, Shoats is otherwise implied to be an agent of satanic power. When Hazel's car gives off "a sound like a goat's laugh... Hoover Shoats jumped back as if a charge of electricity had gone through him" (WB:160). Goats and shoats, let us remember, act as biblical impersonations of the devil. Shoats's appearance also shows signs of typical devilish cunning and guile: "Under his smile, there was an honest look that fitted into his face like a set of false teeth" (WB:148). The radio program he once was in bore a title of "soulsease". The misspelling of *seize* for *cease* clearly implies a devilish intention. Shoats tries to lure Hazel into a new form of truth, one reached not through negation but through understanding. If divine mystery is not to be the issue it need not be denied, it may simply be understood. Having won Hazel to human truth the devil wants to use him as an agent for a wider conquest. Hazel is to become a prophet for Shoats's Holy Church of Christ Without Christ which banishes Jesus the Son of God for a jesus comprehensible to man. Shoats approaches this jesus to be "a little rose of sweetness" inside man. He proposes here a cheap oversentimentalized view of man's essential goodness. This is a new and a winning jesus: its appeal derives from an adequate expression of eternal human longings for innocence. Shoats's satanic skill proves infallible. Hazel, however, recognizes the negative quality of this mediation and refuses to prophesy for Shoats's church.

Immediately after the encounter with Shoats, Hazel falls asleep in the car and has a dream in which his identification with Enoch's mummy is obvious. This is the only other instance of his having a dream after the one on the train. In both cases, the dreams are significant as they present the operation of his apparently lost conscience. Thus, Shoats's mediation allows the operation of his lost conscience. In the present dream, Hazel is locked up in a glass case and looked at by nearly all of his city mediators. Among them, Enoch appears as one to show a particular reverence and worship of his situation. Hazel is trying to get out of the case but the futility of his effort makes him eventually lie motionless: "He was not waiting on the Judgement because there was no

Judgement, he was waiting on nothing" (WB:160). Like the mummy's, Hazel's state in the dream is that of being buried but not dead such also is Hazels state in real life in which the car is his only justification. The glass case of the dream stands for the car: like the car's back window it has an oval opening. The dream makes clear that by locating truth in his human autonomy Hazel is a prisoner of nothingness. It is significant that Asa does not appear among the onlookers as the only one to possess Christian truth. To him does Hazel, therefore, turn on the night of the dream to discover whether his truth frees or enslaves. On proving Asa an impostor he realizes that both of their truths are false because he and Asa are joined by "blankness". Asa's, however, is a deeper blankness since it once saw Jesus.

When Asa undertook to blind himself ten years before, his failure to carry out the act was entirely due to the weakness of his body. While preaching, he lifted his hands full of wet lime to his eyes to burn them out:

He had been possessed of as many devils as were necessary to do it, but at that instant, they disappeared and he saw himself standing there as he was. He fancied Jesus, who had expelled them, was standing there too, beckoning to him: and he fled out of the tent into the alley and disappeared (WB: 114).

Jesus in this scene is clearly the Redeemer. He expels devils and offers to purify sin whereby man is shown an image of himself in God's eyes. Yet, man has a choice to either accept or reject his image and Jesus. Asa's physical weakness prevented this acceptance. His subsequent life has been wretched and unfulfilled. What he claims to be Christian truth is the truth of human weakness and corruption, as two forces responsible for man's estrangement from mystery. His truth is false in its determining impact and it is as such that Hazel rejects it. Nonetheless, it is infinitely more profound in the Christian sense since it admits Jesus and human depravity. Asa's mediation at his point qualifies as negative for it pushes Hazel still further from Jesus. From Asa's abortive assail, Hazel learns that it is Asa's troubled conscience which forces him to pursue the preacher path and eradicate evil with more zeal. In short, his limited vision renders Asa's truth enslaving through conscience. In his preaching the following day, therefore, he teaches that if man is to find peace in his own self he must openly deny conscience:

If there was a place where Jesus had redeemed you that would be a place for you to be, but which of you can find it?... Who is that that says it's your conscience? ... it don't exist though you may think it does and if you think it does, you had better get it out in the open and hunt it down and kill it, because it's no more than your face in the mirror is or your shadow behind you (WB:166).

As soon as these words are uttered Hazel's conscience appears impersonated in Solace Layfield, a man whom Shoats has persuaded to prophesy for his false church, now in competition against Hazel's. Solace closely resembles Hazel:

he is his shadow and his conscience. He has symbolically stolen and abused the chifferobe, left under a guard of the Eastrod note. He must be, therefore, hunted down and killed.

With his conscience thus materialized, Hazel faces still another task. He must manifest his independence of it since whether true or false it is of no consequence. In this context, his act of yielding to Sabbath Lily is finally possible. In her unsuccessful assail to seduce Hazel on the country ride Sabbath admires her white feet. Now that Hazel decides to submit to her pathetic charms he also watches the white shape of his feet. As Sabbath receives him in bed she throws away his hat with the words "Take off your hat, king of the beasts" (WB:170). Like Leora before her, though in a different way, she is disturbed by the hat. After Leora had profaned his preacher hat Hazel bought himself a white panama, symbolic in Miss O'Connor's fiction of the devil. The whiteness of the feet as well as Sabbath's disposal of the hat signify here the fragile sense of cleanliness when man denies his conscience so as to owe it no responsibility and carelessly indulge in sin.

On the next day, however, Hazel comes to feel a peculiar hollow pain in chest which, through the earlier shrapnel wound, suggests that the poisonous effects of his atheism have sufficiently undermined his autonomy to make him face his real conscience. He has seen his human truth denigrated to animalism by Enoch and petty sentimentalism by Shoats. It has been further undetermined by an awareness of evil instilled in him by Leora, Asa and Sabbath. Such truth Hazel can no longer preach. He turns to the car to confirm his conviction of the purest autonomy and plans to preach it in another city "with nothing on his mind". The fact that he abandons the former obedience to "something in his mind" reveals that he has sensed the influence of the devil through Shoats's mediation. It is significant that the only thought in Hazel's mind is to leave the city and his attention is so strongly occupied with the car that he does not notice the heavy rain in which the car is standing. This implies that there will be no purification for him in the scene that ensues.

In his preparations for departure, Hazel puts on his mother's glasses, the object so far untouched. As he is looking in the mirror with these on "his blurred face dark with excitement and the lines in it were deep and crooked" (WB:186). His face now resembles that of Asa because like Asa he sees in the mirror dimly, to use the famous words of Paul. That he may be allowed to see face to face will thus require from Hazel a thorough act of blinding himself. The anticipation of true vision is given in the next reflection Hazel sees: his face is transformed into that of his mother. For the present, however, Hazel shrinks away from it and his mother becomes identifiable with Sabbath Lily who now enters the room with Enoch's mummy brought by the moron earlier that morning.

This tableau of two has often been interpreted as a parody of the Nativity. Doubtless, Hazel himself recognizes it as such since he presently destroys the new Jesus in a fit of rage. With his vision improved he perceives the fallacy of his former concept of the new Jesus as "all man". It has come to mean Enoch's corrupt instincts and Shoats's cheap emotions. Sabbath Lily who combines both is best suited to be the mother of such Jesus. The spiritual depth that Hazel wanted to endow it with is denounced to be "a little cloud of dust" as the mummy breaks. In view of Hazel's earlier identifications with it, it is clear that having denied Jesus Hazel is now ready to deny himself as a handful of dust. Since it is absolute autonomy that he desires his rejection of his humanity becomes a gesture of Luciferian pride. As he is about to snatch the mummy, it squints "as if it were trying to identify an old friend who was going to kill it" (WB:187). Throughout Miss O'Connor's fiction, man's friend is always the devil. Thus, Hazel as the mummy stands for man in service to the devil. Through his present act, he destroys his former status to become man in his attempt to reach the devil's spiritual heights. The glasses in Miss O'Connor's fiction are emblematic of spiritual vision. Now in glasses, Hazel is able to see the rain but his response to it bears marks of evil spirit possessing him. He assaults the rain with "a vicious gesture": "The rain blew in his face and he jumped back and stood, with a cautious look, as if he were bracing himself for a blow" (WB:188). Only after he has taken the glasses off does evil fit cease and he is left a helpless man. As he is shouting at Sabbath his wish to preach absolute autonomy in some other place he is caught by a sudden cough: "It was not much of a cough — it sounded like a little yell for help at the bottom of a canyon — but the color and the expression drained out of his face until it was as straight and blank as the rain falling down behind him" (WB:189). His likeness to the rain emphasizes his present purification of the evil spirit of which, however, he is unaware.

The scene should be seen as the most crucial in the novel because it endows Miss O'Connor's message with cosmic dimensions: when divine mystery is denied humanity disintegrates to turn man satanic or brutal. If Hazel exemplifies the first, Enoch represents the second case. After he has safely deposited the new Jesus with Hazel he expects it to reward him. His hopes are fulfilled in a parody of the American Dream. For Enoch wants to become no less than "THE young man of the future", to better his condition so that some day a line of people may be waiting just "to shake his hand" (WB: 191). Earlier, he unsuccessfully tried to make acquaintance of Gongga the Gorilla, a gorilla-disguised man advertising a monster movie. Enoch considers Gongga's life to be the epitome of success as people line up to shake its hand. Consequently, his transformation into brutal state constitutes his reward. He captures Gongga from the outside of a movie theater called "Victory" and puts on the gorilla outfit to become the happiest gorilla in the world. Throughout this activity there

is now no mentioning of wise blood. He is no longer compelled to do "something dangerous". He sets about the purpose of stealing Gongga with the words "I know what I want" (WB:194). Thus, his former obedience to wise blood has eventually rewarded him with freedom. His quest, as the name of the movie theater indicates, results in victory. He is the happiest gorilla because whether free or determined is of no importance once he lost a human status. However, as he extends the gorilla hand to people to have it shaken they flee in terror Enoch's reward brings further alienation and frustration.

To confirm his absolute spiritual independence Hazel must yet destroy the last vestige of his former self. He kills his double Solace Layfield. In real life, Solace is a family man, suffering from consumption and jobless. He accepts Shoats's offer to be the prophet for his church so as to earn some easy money. At the same time, he puts himself in bondage to the devil and is identifiable with the former Hazel as the new Jesus. Hazel kills him on two charges as "a man that ain't true and one that mocks what is" (WB:204). Through the first accusation, he frees himself of his own conscience for Solace believes in Jesus. through the second, he rids himself of his former truth as thwarted by Shoats and Enoch because Solace as Shoats's prophet mocks the Church Without Christ. Hazel's murder of his double virtually attempts to free man of both Jesus and the devil since only then absolute human autonomy is possible. Solace's mediation, however, shows that Hazel's notion remains false. Before his death, he confesses and dies a repentant sinner open for salvation. In the murder, Hazel again assumes the devil's power and conquers Shoats, Solace's devil. But Solace's confession reveals that Hazel loses with Jesus. As the mediator, Solace anticipates Hazel's subsequent conversion. As his name suggests Hazel will also find comfort in Jesus. On the surface level, the mediation is negative since it prompts Hazel to an even greater blasphemy. After the murder, Hazel immediately gets his car filled with gas and proceeds to leave. As he explains to the gas-station boy:

he had only a few days ago believed in blasphemy as the way to salvation but that you couldn't even believe in that because then you were believing in something to blaspheme. As for the Jesus who was reported to have been born at Bethlehem and crucified on Calvary for man's sins... He was too foul a notion for a sane person to carry in his head (WB:206).

The state of Hazel's car on the road suggests that his human autonomy will be short-lived. The car does not appear to move anywhere: "the road was really slipping back under him. He had known all along that there was no more country but he didn't know that there was not another city" (WB: 207). Since the car is the only place where Hazel's autonomy can be asserted the mediation of the patrolman occurs to rid Hazel of this last tie to illusory freedom. The patrolman continues the mediation of the slate-eyed man. He also encounters Hazel outside the city and his eyes are clear blue. In both

these men there is a highly significant clarity of vision qualifying their mediation as positive. The patrolman destroys Hazel's car on the charge that he does not have a driving licence. Like Jesus of Asa's abortive experience he dispels satanic powers which have bound Hazel to reject his human status in the world. He pushes the car over the embankment with a dry comment: "Them that don't have a car don't need a licence" (WB:219). The licence in this case should be understood as the right to spiritual autonomy which is due an order higher than human. As Hazel's subsequent conduct implies man can at best claim a right to relate to this order. After the car has been broken Hazel discovers the distance of spiritual reality from which he has been separated so far: "His face seemed to reflect the entire distance that extended from his eyes to the blank grey sky that went on, depth after depth, into space. His knees bent under him" (WB:219). In this distance, Hazel is also to find his spiritual freedom. He returns to the city and voluntarily blinds himself with lime. Like Asa, he has been prompted to know God by the devil's strength. Unlike Asa, he has found strength in his own human self to relate to God. He has thus exchanged an outward for inward vision, sight for blindness, pride for humility, individualism of a restless God-seeker for anonymity of a peaceful God-follower.

In the Introductory note to the second edition of the novel Miss O'Connor wrote:

That belief in Christ is to some a matter of life and death has been a stumbling block for readers who would like to think it a matter of no great consequence. For them Hazel Motes's integrity lies in his trying with such vigor to get rid of the ragged figure who moves from tree to tree in the back of his mind. For the author Hazel's integrity lies in his not being able to. Does one's integrity ever lie in what he is not able to do? I think that usually it does, for free will does not mean one will, but many wills conflicting in one man. Freedom cannot be conceived simply. It is a mystery and one which a novel, even a comic novel can only be asked to deepen.

The note written ten years after the first publication was probably intended as an illumination for future readers since Miss O'Connor deplored the fact that the novel had been subject to numerous misinterpretations. If we accept the novel's main concern to be with freedom it seems that Miss O'Connor presents Hazel as an exponent of what the existentialist concept of freedom leads to if assumed by a Christian. His childhood vision of salvation as doom predisposes him to choose atheism later when the desire for autonomy becomes dominant. His subsequent choice of sin is existentialist insofar as it defies authority and asserts his unaccountability to the world. His life forms a chain of escapes from faith into blasphemy and from purity into uncleanness. Through such presentation, Miss O'Connor exemplifies her belief that the rejection of divine truth kills freedom. Hazel's freedom is illusory because in his challenge of Jesus and good he is bound to the devil and sin.

Throughout the novel we do not doubt that Hazel's religious zeal and fanatic concern with sin and salvation qualify him for a believer. He never really can or wants to be free of Jesus. There are frequent indications of invisible ties linking him to some force. On the train he looks "as if he were held by a rope caught in the middle of his back" (WB:12). On his visit to the zoo he has "the look of being held there as if by an invisible hand" (WB:84). At other time, his face resembles "one of those closet doors in gangster picture where someone is tied to a chair behind it with a towel in his mouth" (WB:86). The function of these images is twofold. They stress Hazel's imprisonment in sin for they occur when he wishes to escape Jesus. Simultaneously, they point out to a deepermost human need to be related to a spiritual force. Miss O'Connor strongly puts forth the point that man cannot deny this need. Even if he thinks that he does deny it he merely exchanges a force that is divine for a force that is satanic: it is the devil of pride and self-sufficiency that takes over when man takes spiritual autonomy as his right.

In *The violent bear it away* her second novel, Miss O'Connor shows the devil persuade the protagonist to reject his Christian duty with a statement that man's choice is not between Jesus and the devil but between Jesus and himself. Accordingly, it was her conviction that the devil constantly operates in the modern world. She quotes Baudelaire saying that "the devil's greatest vile is to convince us that he does not exist" (MM:112). She believes it the aim of her writing to make the devil's work visible to the modern eye. It can only be effectively done through violence and grotesque in which all her fiction abounds. For her, it is the devil who prepares the ground for a free act of the reception of grace and mystery. As she states it: "To insure our sense of mystery, we need a sense of evil which sees the devil as a real spirit who must be made to name himself, and not simply to name himself as vague evil, but to name himself with his specific personality for every occasion" (MM:117).

Consequently, all the mediators that appear in the course of Hazel's quest form two distinct groups. One group comprises those whom Hazel meets in the city. They represent concrete aspects of the devil's operation on man. Their actions are presented as not free but predestined which is especially evident in Enoch and Sabbath Lily. For Miss O'Connor, all actions which are predetermined form a source of much of the novel's humor. It is in this sense that we should understand Enoch as a comic character. Asa is also determined by his one-time weakness and his life becomes an ambiguous chain of services to both Jesus and the devil which as yet cannot be reconciled. As noted, Shoats embodies the devil to the fullest and his life aims at an exploitation of human weakness, as the case of Solace Layfield exemplifies. The mediation of this group is negative since the mediators strip Hazel of his humanity. The second group are those mediators whom Hazel meets outside the city.

Their actions are entirely free and thus represent a right relation to mystery. Both the slate-eyed man and the patrolman perceive the car as the symbol of Hazel's imprisonment to the devil. The former makes the car run because Hazel at that point is far from recognition of his imprisonment. The latter destroys the car for it has brought Hazel to an inescapable cul-de-sac where an action of grace is necessary to restore him back to his human situation. The patrolman acts as an agent of grace whereupon Hazel is at last free to abandon his pursuit and his flight. His subsequent blindness confirms the acceptance of grace. The destruction of the car constitutes for him that sign for which he waited as a boy.

Miss O'Connor's concept of freedom is orthodox Christian. The key to it is found in the gospel of John: "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32), as well as in Pauline teaching; "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (II Cor 3:17). As a Catholic, Miss O'Connor believes that man's freedom arises out of a voluntary acceptance of the Christian truth. It lies in acts which fulfil man's basic desire for redemption. Man has to act true to his nature but he is always given a free choice to restrain its evil impulses in favor of the absolute good. He then participates in the operation of grace. Throughout his quest, Hazel is unable to welcome grace because his pride rebels against its sheer gratuity. His is the *take and pay* approach so characteristic of modern man's sense of self-sufficiency. The most obvious example of it is his outrage at the slate-eyed man's refusal to accept the payment. Miss O'Connor holds this approach to be most susceptible to the devil's devious operation. The devil instills man with fatal individualism so resembling the Fall of Angels.

Consequently, Hazel now pays for his previous individualism with a complete loss of it. He must become anonymous to the world, that is to say, he must die. Not to see the world is not to be seen by it. His state of blindness is also a preparation for death. Thus, he discards the mundane for the spiritual. To Mrs Flood, his landlady, he now becomes light, identifiable with the spiritual. The tunnel of darkness in which she imagines him disappear is the abyss separating the this-worldly from the other-worldly. She resembles Mrs Hitchcock in her inability to penetrate the deeper reality:

She felt as if she were blocked at the entrance to something. She sat staring with her eyes shut, into his eyes, and felt as if she had finally got to the beginning of something she couldn't begin, and she saw him moving farther and farther away, farther and farther into the darkness until he was the pin point of light (WB:232).

Mrs Flood is Hazel's last mediator. The failure of her effort to restore Hazel to the world qualifies her mediation as negative. However, it further transforms her own ignorant complacency into at least a hint of anguish at her neglect of Christian awareness. Mainly, however, she provides a contrast to Hazel's slow but deliberate process of dying which really is but a prepara-

tion for new spiritual life. His childhood concept of Jesus as death has been completely reversed for his present choice of literal death means that his vision of Jesus is that of "the Resurrection and the Life". Now, it is Mrs Flood who fears death. In this context, the last section has an additional significance as it gives the novel a circular structure and summarizes the achievement of the quest.

Throughout the last section there is an air of peace about Hazel which contrasts with his former restlessness. It is obviously due to his rediscovery of the lost Eastrod world. What undoubtedly links him to Eastrod is the strong conviction of impurity responsible for his present practice of walking in rock-filled shoes and sleeping with barbed wire around his chest. The renewed need for retribution indicates that Hazel's quest has come full circle and returned him to the point of initial departure. But, in that event, has he really learned anything? Within the course of the quest he fled from Eastrod innocence into sin and has thus repeated the well-known Adamic path, so popular with American writers, though Miss O'Connor treats the theme in its truly biblical sense. But his present penitential practice is different because he has recovered and assumed responsibility to his personal conscience. His childhood acts of retribution were compelled by his mother's and not his own faith. Moreover, he performed them to stay clean. The present retribution is no longer enforced from the outside. It shows that his conscience is truly integrated with him. At the same time, it is not meant to efface all evil. **There is**, necessarily, the conviction of sin that prompts it but it no longer mistakes Eastrod for the innocent world in which Jesus is not welcome. To Mrs Flood's assertion that she is "as good... not believing in Jesus as many a one that does" Hazel answers: "You're better... If you believed in Jesus, you wouldn't be so good" (WB:221). In the Eastrod of his childhood, Hazel felt himself innocent and wanted to preserve the state because he did not want to recognize Jesus the Redeemer. In the adult Eastrod, he realizes that salvation is not merely linked to personal sin but also to that nameless guilt of which his mother made him aware and which makes man a repentant sinner in the eye of God.

Mrs Flood is the epitome of healthy, matter-of-fact stability. As is usually the case with such people, any event transcending the ordinary unsettles her complacency. It leaves her with "a sense of being cheated out of something". Her name, therefore, seems properly chosen. *Flood* suggests chaos of which she has been unaware so far. It also implies that by drowning herself in this reality she is already dead in the spiritual sense. She rejoices in her ability "to see things", her only fear being that she will be blind after death. For her, death equals darkness. If set against Hazel's pin point of light, the fact reveals an impossibility of salvation for those who see this world too well. To her question whether one is blind after death Hazel replies: "I hope so...

If there is no bottom in your eyes they hold more" (WB:222). What is meant here is the broadening of vision until it includes the spiritual. Mrs Flood consequently imagines Hazel's head to include all space and all time. Still, she endeavors to marry him and thus preserve him for the world. Her proposal prompts Hazel to depart and die of strain and influenza in the police car. When Hazel's body is brought to Mrs Flood's house the woman, thinking him alive says: "Well, Mr Motes... I see you've come home". (WB:231). This is an echo of Mrs Hitchcock's question on the train whether Hazel is going home. At that time, Hazel had already learned that his Eastrod home was lost for him. Mrs Flood's present statement emphasizes the point that in recovering Eastrod Hazel's period of alienation has finished. The home he has found through death is the spiritual country which Miss O'Connor calls the Christian's true country. Thus, his childhood misconception of Eastrod as a hiding place becomes symbolic of his false notions of Jesus, sin and salvation. When these have been properly understood true Eastrod is restored.

Already at the beginning of the novel, Eastrod assumes the significance of the country of Jesus. When thinking of Eastrod, Hazel sees it as "the space that stretched from the train across the empty darkening fields" (WB: 12), the space dominated by the woods and the sun. Furthermore, the name of the place implies the rood of the East. In this light, Hazel's venture into the city brings him back to what Northrop Frye calls his peacable kingdom. His quest fulfils the Christian myth.

The necessity for Hazel's quest has been dictated by the false notion of his desire as that for spiritual autonomy. The success of the quest has been granted by his final obedience to his true desire for redemption. It is this desire, therefore, which explains the novel's title. Not only for Enoch but for Hazel as well wise blood comes to mean the need to relate to spiritual mystery. Naturally, the relation Enoch achieves is false because he obeys the literal blood of his instincts. For Miss O'Connor, it is the obedience to the mysterious and truly wise blood of the Resurrection which gives freedom and meaning to Hazel's life. The patterns of mediation, as they have been applied in the present work, help to illustrate the ways in which Miss O'Connor envisions the Christian desire to be thwarted. They also try to point the lines she draws to have this desire revealed in its clear Christian meaning.

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