

“Between the House and the Chicken Yard”:

The Masks of Mary Flannery O’Connor

Jolly Kay Sharp

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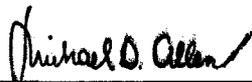
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Jolly Kay Sharp

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Abstract

“Between the House and the Chicken Yard”:

The Masks of Mary Flannery O’Connor

By Jolly Kay Sharp

Mary Flannery O’Connor’s personal idiosyncrasies and literary talents enabled her to don multiple masks that both concealed and revealed segments of herself as she desired. While O’Connor’s personal and social masks were shaped by her Southern and Catholic roots, her vivid imagination and artistry fashioned her literary masks, allowing her to explore life’s grotesqueness. Many of O’Connor’s literary characters shelter features of her own disposition and purpose.

This study uncovers O’Connor’s personal and social masks and then explores her self-identification with six characters: Enoch Emery, Nelson Head, Joy/Hulga Hopewell, Hazel Motes, Old Tarwater, and Rufus Johnson. It considers the manner by which O’Connor distorted traditional Southern myths to formulate her own sense of the Southern grotesque. It analyzes O’Connor’s self-definition through her mentoring of other writers and concludes by highlighting the maturation of O’Connor’s masks from her first published story to its final reworking late in the author’s life.

O’Connor’s masks emerge as metaphorical embodiments of her veiled autobiography. This study underscores the ways in which they illuminate O’Connor’s regional critiques, her reactions to family, friends, and acquaintances, her insights into her own writing, and her successes and growth as an artist.

Preface

On 5 July 1958, Flannery O'Connor wrote to Betty Hester, commenting that "there won't be any biographies of me because, for only one reason, lives spent between the house and the chicken yard do not make exciting copy" (Habit 290-91). O'Connor was definitely mistaken in her premature assessment of how her life would be analyzed as the multiple articles, essays, books, dissertations, theses, movies, and, yes, biographies attest. However, the concept of communing with the chickens was not new. In a letter to Maryat Lee on 9 January 1957, O'Connor wrote, "the parental presence never contributes to my articulateness, and I might have done better at answering some of your questions had I entertained you in the hen house. That's a place I would like to keep two cane-bottomed chairs in if there were any way to keep the chickens from sitting on them in my absence" ("Letters" 1020). Throughout her life, O'Connor felt an affinity to unusual, solitary, or stubbornly independent birds, as evidenced by her choice of Andalusia farm companions. Always in "awe" of the peacock ("King" 6), O'Connor dreamed of peacocks and their disquieting scream (20), which comparably echoes O'Connor's own unusual, solitary, stubbornly independent, and often grotesquely articulated voice. The comfort zone that O'Connor experienced with her peacocks, pheasant cocks, chickens, and other peafowl paralleled or even surpassed that of her closest human friends.

In 1961, discussing with Hester her consternation about the request to write a promotional introduction for a new edition of Wise Blood, O'Connor declared that having to give "explanations" or "directions" regarding the perception of a book is "terrible" (Habit 442). She continued, "In the future, anybody who writes anything about me is going to have to read everything I have written in order to make legitimate

criticism, even and particularly the Mary Ann piece” (442). By this time, O’Connor had written more than one novel and knew that she would “be judged” (442), at least by some readers or critics. When the Sisters at the Help Free Cancer Home in Atlanta asked O’Connor in 1960 to write about Mary Ann, a young girl whose “beautiful brave spirit” had influenced their lives, O’Connor agreed only to edit the Sisters’ manuscript (O’Connor, “Introduction” 4, 7). While she was intrigued by “the mystery, the agony that is given in strange ways to children” (Habit 394), O’Connor “did not want to imbibe Mary Ann’s atmosphere” (“Introduction” 5). Nonetheless, Mary Ann’s picture and the Sisters’ rendition of Mary Ann’s life represented “all the other examples of human imperfection and grotesquerie” that haunt O’Connor’s own stories (20).

O’Connor’s introduction to A Memoir of Mary Ann recounts the historical impact of Rose Hawthorne Lathrop’s founding of the Dominican Congregation of nuns that dedicated their lives to the care of terminal patients, Rose’s accounts of some of the patients, as well as incidents within Nathaniel Hawthorne’s story “The Birthmark,” his sketches in Our Old Home, and his notebooks that deal with human defects and human reactions to them. The combination of grotesqueness, death, and human elucidation surrounding the story of Mary Ann would have touched not only O’Connor’s interest but also her soul. In fact, after reading the Sisters’ manuscript, O’Connor recorded that the literary technique was totally askew but that “the mystery of Mary Ann” was successfully communicated (“Introduction” 14). O’Connor insisted that “[a] story always involves, in a dramatic way, the mystery of personality,” but that understanding of mystery begins “with reality” (“Writing” 90-91). Even though the memoir was not written in a dramatic fashion, O’Connor still experienced what the Catholic Church calls the Communion of

Saints, “a communion created upon human imperfection, created from what we make of our grotesque state” (“Introduction” 20). While she admitted that individuals often mask their evil with “dispassionate” faces (17), O’Connor questioned human capability to understand their own grotesqueness since most people manage to “soften their real look” behind a mask “full of promise” (18).

Psychologist Carl Jung explored the conscious and unconscious psyche in relation to the idea of the mask or persona: “The word persona . . . originally . . . meant the mask once worn by actors to indicate the role in which each appeared on the scene” (276). Jung’s assessment that the persona is merely a mask for the “collective psyche” (276), the combination of the conscious and the unconscious, enables readers to understand the person secreted behind the masks. In fact, Jung attests that dissolving a person’s mask exposes “a compromise between individual and society as to what a man [or woman] should appear to be” (156). In other words, the theatrical mask for a stage is metaphorically donned by the everyday individual as he or she functions within the world, creating societal masks which are abstract, acceptable pretenses. The purpose of these facades is to present a favorable impression, or in Jungian terminology, a “conformity archetype” within acceptable society (Hall and Nordby 44). Paradoxically, masks serve a dual purpose: to conceal and to reveal.

Masks often surface in response to traditional myths, whether the myths are accepted, disputed, or rejected. Myths help people gain perspective about their lives, enabling them to understand their existence and their identity (Campbell, Power 4). Masks, on the other hand, temporarily allow people to escape from or to make fun of the time-honored and often idealized myths. While Bill Moyers suggests that myths are

“stories of our search through the ages for truth, for meaning, for significance” (qtd. in Campbell, Power 5), Joseph Campbell insists that individuals are often not seeking meaning but “an experience of being alive” and the excitement and fulfillment accompanying that sensation (5). Nevertheless, most conventional, historical myths are storerooms of tremendous, horrific, yet fascinating mysteries, “mysterium, tremendum et fascinans” (38), that contain “clues to the spiritual potentialities of the human life” (5). This combination of manners and mystery, the evolution of the mythological South and the mysteriousness of the masked present and future, is applicable to O’Connor’s works.

Intuitively and artistically, O’Connor formulates numerous masks that both conceal and reveal her inner self. The multiplicity of Flannery O’Connor’s created masks throughout her thirty-nine years shows not only her complexity but also her chosen self-defining characteristics. My study of her self-identifying masks uncovers previously unexamined nuances of O’Connor’s disposition, vision, and voice.

Chapter One explores O’Connor’s personal and social masks, ones concealing her frustrations with schoolmates, expectations of social grace, education, and lupus. Other masks reveal her independent, rebellious spirit; her ingenious imagination; her religious inclinations; and her understanding of the South.

Chapter Two links O’Connor’s masks of surly disposition with her self-identified characters: Enoch in Wise Blood, Nelson in “The Artificial Nigger,” and Hulga in “Good Country People.” Both Enoch and O’Connor silently reject societal demands and find comfort in their freakish, satirical expressions, often masking their true feelings through animalistic images. Nelson and O’Connor experience the influence of historical,

Southern racist attitudes and the sentimental attachment to their ancestral land, making their disposition a blend of Southern anguish and loyalty. Hulga and O'Connor lose their carefree innocence when they face serious medical traumas. Intellectually and socially, Hulga and O'Connor distance themselves from their mothers, creating misunderstanding, irritation, and upheaval within their family units. Chapter Two explains why Hulga emerges as an O'Connor heroine; it also investigates physical, spiritual, and literary connections between O'Connor and Simone Weil.

Chapter Three compares the intense secular and sacred vision of Hazel Motes from Wise Blood with O'Connor's own vision. In a grotesque way, Haze's Christ-inspired vision reveals the ultimate surrender to an inner voice that refuses to go away, much like O'Connor's own persistent vision. Readers often regard Haze's and O'Connor's tone and behavior as blasphemous, but Haze's and O'Connor's internal and external quests characterize their tragi-comedic, visionary messages.

Chapter Four discovers the nuances of O'Connor's self-identified prophetic, yet masked, voice through Old Tarwater in The Violent Bear It Away and Rufus Johnson in "The Lame Shall Enter First." The male heretical voices dramatically embody the grotesque violence contained within O'Connor's prose. Even though each devilish prophet conceals his selfish motives from his listeners, O'Connor, by identifying her voice as veiled within both Old Tarwater and Rufus Johnson, reveals a more complete demonic persona. O'Connor was willing to distort a traditional message to capture her readers' attention.

Chapter Five considers the influence of traditional Southern myths upon O'Connor, personally and professionally, and how she altered them into her own unique,

bizarre versions. The traditional magnolia and moonlight romantic myth evolves into O'Connor's sexually bizarre or sinister myths. O'Connor's Southern belle is stubborn, determined, self-centered, intellectual, and rebellious, while O'Connor's Southern ladies are either defiant or almost non-existent. O'Connor's Southern gentleman is usually freakish, displaced, or menacing. O'Connor's Southern blacks are rarely seen as idiotic or clownish; instead, she often elevates their importance. Many of O'Connor's literary masks seem a response or a reaction to a prominent Southern literary myth maker of her time, William Faulkner. Yet, her individualized style guaranteed her position in American Southern literature. Her inventive, masked myths challenge readers to question the validity of traditional Southern myths.

Chapter Six analyzes O'Connor's artistic views by first acknowledging the authors that O'Connor claimed as foundational for her own writing and second by examining the way she mentored casual acquaintances and special friends. Even though she is hesitant and cautious about sharing her assessment of someone else's work, O'Connor, by doing so, discloses her professional and her private masks. She practiced what she "preached" about the craft of writing, especially the comments shared with her closest friends.

I conclude by reviewing O'Connor's maturation from self-indulgent, imaginative juvenile masks to refined, artistic mature masks and trace the development of her disposition, vision, and voice from fictional infancy in her first story "The Geranium" to literary maturity in the reworked version "Judgement Day."

Her family, her Southern region, and her Catholic upbringing influenced O'Connor's personal and social masks. O'Connor almost intuitively accepted these

masks. Later, O'Connor artistically crafted characters who wore her own sculptured literary masks, depicting her disposition, vision, and voice, as well as grotesque, modern, heroic qualities. Posthumously, collected letters, essays, and lectures reveal her mentoring masks, both private and public. O'Connor's challenge, "You can't dispose of a writer with a paragraph about his significance. . . . You'd just better read them if you aim to say anything about them" (Habit 570), has been accepted by many who read her works and by many who have written or are currently scripting biographies and critical analyses of O'Connor's works.

Among others, Robert H. Brinkmeyer Jr. and Marshall Bruce Gentry connect the element of O'Connor's literary grotesqueness to that of Mikhail Bakhtin's theories. Brinkmeyer focuses upon the pressures of O'Connor as a narrator and the manipulations of O'Connor as an author as she explores segments of herself through her dynamic, dialogic interaction with her characters (133). While Brinkmeyer effectively unites O'Connor with Hulga, even illuminating some autonomous references, he focuses on multiple characters, "intellectuals, artists, and prophet-freaks" (149), not necessarily associating them with O'Connor's self-defining features. Without any autobiographical O'Connor references, Gentry draws attention to Bakhtin's and O'Connor's positive approach to the grotesque and to O'Connor's expansion of Bakhtin's theories, effectively contrasting their contributions to the genre of grotesque literature (11-12).

Female authors such as Anne Firor Scott, Anne Goodwyn Jones, Kathryn Lee Seidel, Katherine Hemple Prown, Nathalie Dessens, Doreen Fowler, and Giselle Roberts highlight O'Connor's Southern mythical or Southern historical presence. Yet, their focuses are not solely on O'Connor, nor on her self-identifying characteristics. Recent

male authors such as Henry T. Edmondson III, Paul Elie, Ralph C. Wood, and John Lawrence Daretta explore O'Connor's spiritual journey, personally and literarily, formulating various perspectives, yet offer no definitive analysis of O'Connor's self-proclaimed beliefs through her literary characters.

This dissertation provides a missing facet of O'Connor research: an exploration of how she defined key components of herself through her personal, literary, and mentoring masks.

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Chapter I

O'CONNOR'S EARLY MASKS

In an undated, but obviously early poem (File 3), O'Connor records,

Im [sic] not a little angle [sic]
 I lack that certain grace, . . .
 I haven't got the gift of gab,
 That venture isnt [sic] mine
 And in the conversation
 Im [sic] usly [sic] left behind. (lines 1-2, 5-8)

Even at this age, O'Connor is a distorted angel! The rest of the poem reveals "a temper like a turtle" (9), "a voice like a turkey" (13), and the inability to sing (16). Using the first person "I," O'Connor either speaks as herself or creates a narrator who describes a character whose personality is much like her own.

O'Connor's Savannah Catholic school experiences and pressure from her family influenced the masks that she accepted in childhood. For her first six years of schooling, O'Connor was under the tutelage of Catholic sisters at St. Vincent's Grammar School:

They [Sisters] administer the True Faith with large doses of Pious Crap
 and at their hands I developed something the Freudians have not named—
 anti-angel aggression, call it. From 8 to 12 years it was my habit to
 seclude myself in a locked room every so often and with a fierce (and evil)
 face, whirl around in a circle with my fists knotted, socking the angel.
 This was the guardian angel with which the Sisters assured us we were all

equipped. He never left you. My dislike of him was poisonous. I'm sure I even kicked at him and landed on the floor. You couldn't hurt an angel but I would have been happy to know I had dirtied his feathers—I conceived him in feathers. ("Letters" 983)

The childhood social mask required O'Connor to be compliant and dignified, while behind closed doors she was able to display her independent, rebellious spirit and to struggle with confusing theological concepts. In 1956, O'Connor confessed to "A," Betty Hester, that "[I am] much younger now than I was at twelve or anyway, less burdened" (985).

Identification with feathery beings began early for O'Connor, and the fascination with unusual birds continued all her life. At the age of five, she owned a chicken that was able to walk backwards, gaining O'Connor notoriety with the local television station ("King" 3). During the annual Milledgeville historic house tour, O'Connor, age 11, signed both her name and that of her chicken, Colonel Egvert, noting his address as Hungry (File 283h). "Mistaken Identity," a 1941 story by M. F. O'Connor, spins the tale of a pet goose and a proud owner. When the owner introduces three female geese to the "mighty fowl" named Herman, he ignores them, honking, "You gals can go to Hades." The astonished owner finally realizes that Herman is really Henrietta when the goose lays an egg (Vertical File).

Instead of designing the typical garment for her sewing assignment while in Peabody High School home economics class, O'Connor created an outfit for her pet bantam, complete with coat, belt, and striped trousers (Meaders 378). After hearing a

salesman's story about the demise of his peafowl, O'Connor dreamed that she was "five years old and a peafowl" served as the main course of a celebratory meal ("King" 20). Escaping into scary peafowl dreams or finding comfort and inspiration through observation of or interaction with her peafowl allowed O'Connor to fulfill childhood fantasies, to live in the security of her imagination, and to show both her humorous and satirical inclinations.

O'Connor used her childhood social mask when forced into the presence of children unlike herself. She remembers,

I was, in my early days, forced to take dancing to throw me into the company of other children and to make me graceful. Nothing I hated worse than the company of other children and vowed I'd see them all in hell before I would make the first graceful move. The lessons went on for a number of years but I won. In a certain sense. (Habit 146)

Twelve-year-old O'Connor registered complaints in her notebook, including "Do not see why children twelve years old have to take dancein [sic]" (Vertical File). O'Connor did not don the "southern belle" persona, which would have probably represented conformity to that "graceful move." Instead, she remained true to her nature, quietly aloof and often satirical.

Dancing was not the only tactic to encourage O'Connor's interaction with other children. Occasionally, O'Connor's mother invited orphans to visit their home. However, this experience of "official" love left an indelible mark:

[T]o me, it was the ultimate horror. . . . From time to time, they were allowed to spend the day with me—miserable occasions for me, as they were not other children, they were Orphans. I don't know if they enjoyed coming or not; probably not. . . . Anyway, I have been at least an Imaginary Orphan and that was probably my first view of hell. Children know by instinct that hell is an absence of love, and they can pick out theirs without missing. (Habit 244)

These childhood experiences show the uniqueness of O'Connor, a child who felt most comfortable with her vivid imagination as her favorite companion. Most childhood masks or fantasies are harmless and usually conceal childish emotions, allowing the masked persona to experience valuable, life-long lessons from a comfort zone of immature inscrutability. While O'Connor disclosed that her family's "only emotion respectable to show [was] irritation," she developed that emotion into the writing of literature ("Letters" 997-98).

While writing her autobiography during a first-year class at the University of Iowa, O'Connor formed her own caricature with the words, "a pidgeon-toed, only-child with a receding chin and a you-leave-me-alone-or-I'll-bite-you-complex" who recognized that adults "will read with uncritical naivete and delight any statement, however candid, coming from his [a child's] crayon" (File 6). Her creative, satirical tone was evident even in the third grade when she "substitut[ed] 'St. Cecelia' for 'Rover'" in primary sentence exercises (File 6), while some of her earliest stories were based on autobiographical occurrences.

One example is an untitled and incomplete story about a little girl, her rooster, and two hens illustrating Mary Flemming's love for and devotion to her fowl, as well as her childish yet thoughtful deceptive actions directed toward her neighbors and her mother (File 9c). A more grotesque and intense story fragment involves yet another young girl, a rooster, and a mother. In this draft, Caulda, the young protagonist, is angry over her mother's killing of Sillow, Caulda's pet rooster. Caulda suffers harsh and violent thoughts about death since Sillow was as precious as her own flesh and blood (File 10).

These childish pretenses and frustrations linger and mutate into knowledgeable anecdotes for her later published stories. For example, physically and spiritually, the insecure, unusual, yet imaginative, youngster Ruller fights with a feathered bird in "The Turkey," leaving Ruller certain that "Something Awful was tearing behind him with its arms rigid and its fingers ready to clutch" (53), much like O'Connor's own fight with her invisible angels. Again mirroring O'Connor's personal and intense struggle to understand both the personal and the spiritual aspects of life, the angel in "A Circle in the Fire" becomes a devilish participant in twelve-year-old Sally Virginia Cope's imaginative fight with the three boys who are intent on destroying her family's land. O'Connor even refers to her tin-like, non-dancing legs by incorporating this image into the characterization of Hulga in "Good Country People" (Habit 145). Many O'Connor stories reveal the devastation created by an absence of love or the presence of anger created as a result of misunderstood love, such as in Walter's book in "Why Do the Heathen Rage?" (486) Each of these examples illustrates O'Connor's tendency to camouflage a little of herself

through her literary characters, making them more realistic. However, O'Connor's childhood societal mask remains intact as she matures and publicly displays the Southern manners taught by her elders through school and family experiences.

O'Connor followed a traditional pattern of schooling and like most students often remembered little about what she was taught. In fact, after graduation from Peabody High School and Georgia State College for Women, O'Connor evaluated her undergraduate education as a weak foundation for her literary career, stating that even though she obtained "what passes for an education" she was "not deceived by it" ("Letters" 918). In a 2 March 1954 letter, responding to questions about Wise Blood from the editor of Epoch, Carl Hartman, O'Connor reported that her education neither helped nor hindered but "haunted" her (922). Almost ten years later, in a letter to Janet McKane, O'Connor complained that her education courses were "Pure Wasted Time" (Habit 564). Admitting that "total non-retention has kept my education from being a burden" ("Letters" 945), she was able to dismiss most academic discussions regarding her formalized educational experiences, while hiding behind a typical student mask.

As a child, O'Connor enjoyed the Greek and Roman myths from The Book of Knowledge while labeling her other reading as "Slop with a capital S," except for Poe (950). Edgar Allan Poe's tales ranked as her top reading material for many years, leaving a lasting impression for and tendency toward the grotesque in her own works. O'Connor recoiled when recalling her "progressive" high school days when students participated in the organizational scheme instead of actually learning (1047). Reading what she

considered important to her writing and her theology influenced her more than any class assignments.

Caustically, O'Connor told Robert Lowell that if he would bring his daughter to the South "she wouldn't have to go to school" and could become a part of the "next generation being uneducated" (1087). Not until her Iowa stint did O'Connor begin to read authors such as Joseph Conrad, William Faulkner, Franz Kafka, Gustave Flaubert, Honore de Blzac, Samuel Johnson, James Joyce, Allen and Caroline Tate, Katherine Ann Porter, Virginia Woolf, Eudora Welty, Peter Taylor, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Catholic novelists, and many Russian authors (951). Yet, even with these additional resources, she relied most on Poe for her concrete images that reveal violence and her emphasis on the grotesque, while her theological and philosophical readings helped her balance the concrete with the mysterious.

Feeling self-pressure because of her non-classical education, O'Connor determined to read "Cicero, Caesar, Tacitus and any other of them boys . . . [so she could] at least have a classical veneer" (Habit 150), a premeditated, conventional mask. Minimizing her amazing ability to understand literary, theological, and philosophical works, O'Connor humbly described herself as a person who was "not an intellectual and ha[d] a horror of making an idiot of [her]self with abstract statements and theories" when asked in 1957 to contribute to The Living Novel, a symposium that Granville Hicks was editing (202). Very little research is required, however, to discover that O'Connor's self-education was strong and vibrant.

Even though many critics focus on O'Connor's lupus, most of the time after her diagnosis she preferred to display as healthy a persona or mask as possible, arguing that her "lupus has no business in literary considerations" (Habit 380). Encouraging a girl who also had been diagnosed with lupus, O'Connor consented to the girl's visiting Andalusia and assured her that "lupus does not deter me much" (415). DeVene Harrold recalled that O'Connor "was of the opinion that it [lupus] was a fine ailment to have—if you HAD to have one—simply because it was a mystery. . . . Her attitude was an oh-what-the-hell sort of acceptance" (Letter File). More often than not, O'Connor used lupus as an impetus for writing. When she wished to focus on writing, lupus became a convenient excuse to get out of any other time-consuming obligations. In correspondence with Maryat Lee, O'Connor even revealed satirical humor about her medical situation:

You didn't know I had a DREAD DISEASE didja? Well I got one. . . . I owe my existence and cheerful countenance to the pituitary glands of thousands of pigs butchered daily in Chicago Illinois at the Armour packing plant. If pigs wore garments I wouldn't be worthy to kiss the hems of them. . . . What you met here was a product of Artificial Energy.
(“Letters” 1063)

The healthy persona was replaced by an honest view of herself in 1964 when O'Connor admitted, "I'm sick of being sick" in a postscript to Louise Abbot (1210), told Hester that the transfusions did not seem to be working (1218), or informed Lee that "I feel lousy but

I dont [sic] have much idea how I really am” (1219). Whatever energy O’Connor mustered, whether naturally or artificially, her desire was to devote herself to writing.

Almost instinctively, O’Connor’s region and her religion allow her opportunities to express her versions of historical manners and religious mysteries, forming historic and religious masks willingly accepted by O’Connor. In a 1963 interview with C. Ross Mullins for Jubilee, O’Connor indicated that the

South has survived in the past because its manners, however lopsided or inadequate they may have been, provided enough social discipline to hold us together and give us identity. Now those old manners are obsolete, but the new manners will have to be based on what was best in the old ones—in their real basis of charity and necessity. In practice, the Southerner seldom underestimates his own capacity for evil. (104)

Just as O’Connor’s perception of historical manners changed during her lifetime, so did her portrayal of religious characters. Speaking at Sweetbriar College, Virginia, in March 1963, O’Connor addressed this issue:

Of course, as a novelist I’ve never wanted to characterize the typical South or typical Protestantism. The South and the religion found there are extremely fluid and offer enough variety to give the novelist the widest range of possibilities imaginable, for the novelist is bound by the reasonable possibilities, not the probabilities, of his culture. (“Novelist” 164)

Obviously, O'Connor challenged readers to expand their socially accepted concepts. While she often deviated from the stereotypical southern hospitality mask in her stories, O'Connor most often fulfilled her role as the daughter of an established Southern family, following the local customs and protocol. As O'Connor told Maryat Lee, "I observe the traditions of the society I feed on – it's only fair" ("Letters" 1094-95). O'Connor constantly invited friends for visits, sent peacock feathers or special gifts through the mail, retained close contact with friends through written correspondence, politely answered questions from strangers (with a few exceptions), or entertained local school groups at the farm. Never quite at ease during public lectures or interviews, O'Connor depended upon the training from her Southern upbringing to cover any awkward moments. Telling Hester about one of her public lectures, O'Connor claimed that "I was an object of considerable curiosity, being a writer about 'Southern degeneracy' and a Catholic at oncet [sic] and the same time" (1030), yet she maintained a polite sense of decorum during her public presentations. Any frustrations or complaints were stored to share later with friends or family.

Since part of knowing oneself is understanding one's region, the juxtaposition of O'Connor's "outer and inner worlds" ("Fiction" 35), the South and the religious self, was a vital component of her personal life and her artistic creations. From her Southern heritage, O'Connor fashioned a mask that enhanced her writing style: "This discovery of being bound through the senses to a particular society and a particular history, to particular sounds and a particular idiom, is for the writer the beginning of a recognition that first puts his work into real human perspective" ("Catholic Novelist" 197).

Throughout her fiction, O'Connor incorporated Southern settings, idioms, situations, and personalities without diminishing their importance. Listening to local speech, observing local behavior and traditions, and experiencing geographic boundaries all affected O'Connor's perspective, yet instead of the Southern atmosphere restricting her stories, she argued that Southern regional writing shared "a small history in a universal light" ("Regional" 58). Her correspondence with Cecil Dawkins reveals that the South, their shared place of identity, allows writers "some real extension outside of the mind" (Habit 493). Knowing one's region for O'Connor did not mean accepting "all the misconceptions that go with it" ("Some" 37) but being able to overcome its stereotypical myths.

O'Connor attributed the freakish quality of her stories to growing up a religious Southerner: "To be able to recognize a freak, you have to have some conception of the whole man, and in the South the general conception of man is still, in the main, theological" (44). A resident of the Bible-belt area that she labeled "Christ-haunted" instead of "Christ-centered" (44), O'Connor evaluated the distortion of region and of religion that gave her an unusual depth of vision. Writing to Ben Griffith, O'Connor admitted that she had "one of those food-chopper brains that nothing comes out of [it] the way it went in" ("Letters" 918). Distortion for O'Connor is based upon truth which is expanded or altered to gain the attention of the reader. O'Connor observed a minefield of explosive conflicts from which to choose since she was a Catholic in the Protestant South. Noting her tone and tendencies, O'Connor admitted that "Conviction without experience makes for harshness" (949). In O'Connor's expansion of her southern

religious culture, she consciously bemoaned the real world of all humans, echoing Joseph Conrad's grotesquely pessimist perception regarding the future of humanity: "The horror! The horror" (85)! Ironically, this revelation occurred after "a change that came over his [Kurtz's] features. . . . as though a veil had been rent" (85). Upon occasion, humans may temporarily remove their masks to reveal their deepest thoughts, while other times, people may allow their masks to become their reality.

O'Connor's stories often serve to mask her own religious faith. The idea that pious language offends more than it attracts leads to O'Connor's belief that down-to-earth language is more effective when attempting to convince people to think about their spiritual status. No "pie-in-the-sky" imagery exists in O'Connor's works. In reality, the carefully constructed or reconstructed ideas revealed in her lectures and essays in Mystery and Manners expose O'Connor's true dedication to her faith, since most of these encounters are with Catholic groups.

Chapter II

O'CONNOR'S SURLY DISPOSITION:

ENOCH, NELSON, AND HULGA

O'Connor's works were not written for the stage, but are nonetheless filled with dramatic characterizations, establishing another major category of masks, the literary. O'Connor created many of her characters as larger-than-life because she realized that her readers might not have the same perspective or concept that she did: "to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost-blind you draw large and startling figures" ("Fiction" 34). The duality of O'Connor's manners and mystery in her personal life and in her literary achievements is comparable to the comedic-tragic Greek masks. Greek theatrical productions required the use of large, sometime elaborate masks since only two or three actors played all of the characters within a dramatic performance. These masks acted as natural megaphones in an open arena but soon became quick identifiers of the various characters. These theatrical masks were large so that spectators could see them from longer distances. Large masks or exaggerated characters have a tendency to look distorted, especially for a viewer or reader who is not familiar with the intent of the artificial veneer. For O'Connor, the correct use of distortion led "to greater depths of vision" which required the novelist "to descend far enough into himself to reach those underground springs that give life to his work" ("Writing" 89, "Some" 50). These types of characters, therefore, expose beliefs or values of the author or, at least, selected revelations in disguised form. Robert H. Brinkmeyer Jr. contends that O'Connor "wrote about certain types of characters not only because she could make them live but also

because, in their hidden if not surface selves, they expressed some aspect of her own teeming personality" (135).

In a letter to Hester on 24 September 1955, O'Connor responded to the question about how much an author reveals of herself through her characters:

I understand that something of oneself gets through and often something that one is not conscious of. Also to have sympathy for any character you have to put a good deal of yourself in him. But to say that any complete denudation of the writer occurs in the successful work is, according to me, a romantic exaggeration. A great part of the art of it is precisely in seeing that this does not happen. . . . Everything has to be subordinated to a whole which is not you. Any story I reveal myself completely in will be a bad story. ("Letters" 957)

However, O'Connor did occasionally identify segments of herself in her stories or her novels, usually located in the works that she felt were her best. O'Connor stated "that fiction writing is something in which the whole personality takes part – the conscious as well as the unconscious mind" ("Writing" 101). O'Connor explained this relationship between self and writing in a 9 December 1961 letter to Hester: "Writing is a good example of self-abandonment. I never completely forget myself except when I am writing and I am never more completely myself than when I am writing" (Habit 458). Knowing that "[i]n most good stories it is the character's personality that creates the action of the story," O'Connor "start[ed] with a real personality" ("Writing" 105, 106), sometimes one resembling that of her own and one "with the marks of a believable

society” (“Catholic Novelist” 198). She recognized her disposition as a combination of Enoch in Wise Blood, Nelson in “The Artificial Nigger,” and Hulga in “Good Country People” (“Letters” 922, 954).

The three identified characters who mirror O’Connor’s disposition demonstrate her propensity towards negativity (954). Readers may find Enoch childish, gullible, or even mentally challenged, but O’Connor argued that Enoch is an essential character who is misunderstood if the reader believes that a connection between Enoch and the “criticism of humanism” is necessary (Habit 355, 403). As usual, O’Connor wanted readers to look at the concrete not the abstract, to understand how the character would actually respond.

Her characterization of Enoch is that of a slightly eccentric young man searching for meaningful relationships. Using animal imagery, O’Connor describes Enoch’s appearance as that of “a friendly hound dog with light mange” (Wise 21). Enoch’s own speech echoes this image when he spots Hazel and his dilapidated car: “Well, I’ll be dog. Well, I’ll be dog” (42). Climbing out of the bushes on all fours where he has been hiding, Enoch’s behavior even resembles that of a dog. Most animals, especially gorillas, fascinate him, and in his own manner he appears to envy these primates. His determination to meet the gorilla movie star Gongga foreshadows Enoch’s erratic actions that lead to his desire to become THE star himself. While Enoch is obsessed with the zoo and its animals, O’Connor’s “passion” for unique birds resulted in her life-long association with peafowl (“King” 4). The eerie-sounding peacocks or other slightly distorted fowl became regular inhabitants of Andalusia, inspiring her as she sat on the

porch in the afternoons or visited their haunts around the farm. O'Connor told Maryat Lee, "Don't know how I could live without them birds" (Habit 331). Not only did they become a part of her personal "quest" ("King" 4), but they also participated in her stories, sometimes as casual references such as explaining the sensitivity of the peacock about his tail in "Good Country People" or as religious references like the peacock's feathery pose symbolizing Christ's return in "The Displaced Person." Both Enoch and O'Connor make personal connections with their respective zoological or aviary quests, tending to locate significant meanings in these relationships. Interestingly, Enoch and O'Connor seem to mimic the characteristics that they admire in their respective, beloved animals.

Throughout his life, Enoch tries desperately to do what he thinks is right, even if his actions seem ridiculous to others. He argues that he has wise blood and that he can sense the emptiness of Hazel Motes' life (Wise 30). His intentions focus on finding solutions to Hazel's problems. O'Connor said that she wrote Wise Blood "just like Enoch would have, not knowing too well why I did what [,] but knowing it was right" ("Letters" 919). Even though Enoch and O'Connor encounter people who misunderstand or refuse to understand, they remain true to their own instinctual goals. Enoch senses a mysterious calling from his "wise blood" (Wise 40, 41, 46, 50, 52, 66, 69), forcing him to move outside his comfort zone. O'Connor's writing was her "vocation" and her calling: "I write because I write well" ("Letters" 1036, 979). Her writing enabled her to move others outside their comfort zone.

Enoch and O'Connor faithfully follow their organizational patterns. Enoch loves his regular routine and feels almost fixated by its repetition. In like manner, as long as her

health permitted, O'Connor followed a self-imposed, strict schedule, reserving morning hours for writing and thinking about her work. O'Connor referred to her writing patterns as making her feel "just like a squirrel [sic] on a treadmill" (Habit 537). For both Enoch and O'Connor, habits offer consistency, security, and focus, while deviation from the familiar invites inconsistency, insecurity, and chaos. For Enoch, his survival relies on his ability to follow an ordered existence, probably as a defense mechanism helping him escape his dysfunctional childhood. For O'Connor, her literary output depended on her thoughtful and disciplined mornings. To Hester, O'Connor confessed, "Routine is a condition of survival" (465). While writing to Cecil Dawkins, O'Connor emphasized the importance of that routine: "I'm a full-time believer in writing habits . . . at the same time and the same place" ("Letters" 1042). Such repetition also reveals intensity and purpose, which are characteristics evident in O'Connor's and Enoch's basic natures.

O'Connor's often gruff and churlish tone is evident in the characterization of Enoch's silent actions and his vocalizations. Adjectives that describe Enoch's personality include "surly and rebellious," "sullen and disgruntled," and "very sullen" (Wise 69, 89, 90). In a letter written to Hester, O'Connor acknowledged that "I went through the years 13 to 20 in a very surly way" ("Letters" 985). O'Connor's quiet demeanor and short answers often created that same dour temperament, especially if she felt that the interviewer or reporter was twisting her words or her ideas: "At interviews I always feel like a dry cow being milked. . . . If you do manage to say anything that makes sense, they put down the opposite" (1083). Even in her letters, when she had total control of the

wording, she occasionally opted for silence: “The ominous silence is preserved best when I can’t think of anything to say” (986). This silence served as a muted mask.

Even though Enoch and O’Connor desire purposeful lives, they are uncomfortable and awkward communicating in strange social situations. Enoch’s masks include hiding in the bushes to observe scantily-clothed women, disguising himself as a detective to steal the mummified “new jesus,” and stealing and wearing Gongga’s gorilla suit (Wise 41, 88, 101). Although O’Connor did not go to these extremes, at times, she consciously removed herself from the limelight or accepted invitations entirely because of financial enticements. Occasionally using her illness as an excuse to avoid undesired invitations, O’Connor hid behind a temporarily masked persona for the sake of privacy. When she did participate in special social affairs, she kept her true feelings hidden: “Whoever invented the cocktail party should have been drawn and quartered” (“Letters” 1095). Enoch and O’Connor both practice “strategic retreat” whenever possible since they find that “it works very well” (Habit 574), as they escape behind their subdued camouflage.

Both Enoch and O’Connor are intrigued by the freakish, whether in their own behavior or in their honest perceptions of life. Enoch exhibits freakish behavior when he attacks the actor playing Gongga and steals the gorilla suit, the fight leaving Enoch with a “dull insensitive look” externally but the “intensest kind of happiness” internally (Wise 101). O’Connor had the same juxtaposed feelings after steroid treatments, experiencing a “moon face,” yet clinging to hope (“Letters” 1187). Within the grotesque, however, Enoch and O’Connor sense comedic as well as realistic views of life. Enoch admits that his favorite part of the newspaper, the part that gives him inspiration, is the comic strips

(Wise 99). In fact, it is while reading the comics that his awakening occurs, his understanding of what he thinks will fulfill his life (99). O'Connor shared Enoch's love of "cartoons" ("Letters" 1191). During her time at Peabody High School and Georgia College, O'Connor sketched humorous and satirical scenes for various school publications, later sending some of her cartoon drawings to the New Yorker, even though they were never accepted for publication (1191). This combination of freakish images and humor creates a satirical approach evident in Enoch and O'Connor's lives and on their figurative masks.

While O'Connor confessed that she "unfortunately. . . [has] Enoch's disposition" (922), she proclaimed to be "flatter[ed]" that her "disposition was [also] a combination of Nelson's and Hulga's" (954), therefore creating two more personal literary masks. In letters to Ben Griffith and to Hester in 1955, O'Connor discussed her enjoyment of and favoritism for "The Artificial Nigger" because the story exceeded her expectations of combining both the southern quandary regarding slavery and the mysterious religious concept of denial (932, 953-54). In 1957, writing to Maryat Lee, O'Connor still contended that this story was "probably the best thing I'll ever write" (1027). The physical descriptions of Nelson and Enoch are almost caricatures of their personality traits, showing bug-eyed, open-mouthed, innocent yet rebellious children encountering concrete absolutes about life. Nelson is younger than Enoch, yet Nelson has an "ancient" look, "as if he knew everything already and would be pleased to forget it" ("Artificial" 251), in contrast to Enoch's innocent simplicity. Likewise, by the age of 12, O'Connor acknowledged feeling "ancient" in comparison to other children her own age and being

repulsed by typical teenage actions (“Letters” 985). With their perceived maturity, Nelson and O’Connor feel intellectual superiority over their childhood peers, influencing their “I must be better than you” attitudes and demeanors.

Personal attitudes affect one’s voice or tone, so it is no surprise that Nelson’s tone mirrors that of O’Connor’s. Nelson displays an argumentative, questioning tone with his grandfather throughout the story. Most of his questions deal with learning about his role in society, while his comments are confidently blunt and harsh. Most of O’Connor’s frustrations and questionings appear masked through a character’s voice or in her personal correspondence with friends or family, instead of through public or even family confrontations. Nelson often mutters “under his breath” or uses a “voice that [does] not sound like his own” to deal with the strange feelings that he experiences while encountering people who are different from him (“Artificial” 261). In the same sense, O’Connor’s literary masks created characters through whom she could project various voices and opinions, including parts of her own.

Nelson’s and O’Connor’s dispositions, therefore, are influenced by their upbringing and surroundings. Nelson’s education about the Negro comes from the stereotypical southern white man’s hatred. Raised a Catholic in the South, O’Connor, like Nelson, exhibited a questioning attitude in this story about the racist portrayal of the black man. She deliberately forces a closer examination of the truth when she has Nelson explode at his grandfather, “How do you expect me to know anything when you don’t tell me right?” after finding that a Negro’s skin is actually tan, not black (255). O’Connor revealed her intentions about this story in a letter to Ben Griffith: “What I had in mind to

suggest with the artificial nigger was the redemptive quality of the Negro's suffering for us all" and to have the ending of the story "gain some altitude and get a larger view" about the relationships between races in the South ("Letters" 931). She preferred to write about racial issues instead of answering questions regarding race during interviews (1189). Ultimately, however, Nelson and O'Connor deal with the "tragedy of the South" (954) by presenting the issue in a brash, shocking tone which demands a thoughtful and, hopefully, an intellectual and spiritual response. In the same way that Nelson senses another ghostly figure "scowling at him" in the train window, O'Connor, through characters such as Nelson, reflects a persona that permits deeply philosophical and theological questions and allows that specter to give "impudent answer[s]" ("Artificial" 253, 250). Nelson would probably agree with O'Connor that "[p]eople are harder to handle than cows and white folks than niggers" (Habit 226).

Even if they must first leave their homes to fully appreciate them, Nelson and O'Connor realize the importance of their familial roots. Planning a trip to the city, Nelson's grandfather, Mr. Head, wishes to teach Nelson that his country upbringing does not result in stupidity or lack of pride ("Artificial" 251). Upon experiencing a type of segregation when he is banned from entering the train kitchen because he and his grandfather are not members of the crew, Nelson has a revelatory moment regarding the protection and connection that his grandfather offers (257). Later, in town, when his grandfather denies any relationship to him, Nelson's arrogant, casual questions change to silent, crucial ones, accompanied by a "dignity he had never shown before" (266). The "grandfather's treachery" confuses and ages Nelson (267). Fighting with conflicting

emotions, Nelson mechanically follows his grandfather until they stop in front of a statue of an “artificial nigger.” This life-changing event shows Mr. Head as “an ancient child” and Nelson “like a miniature old man . . . faced with some great mystery” (269). For one short moment, “Nelson’s eyes seemed to implore [his grandfather] to explain once and for all the mystery of existence” (269). This mysterious encounter leads to Mr. Head’s understanding mercy, and Nelson’s mixed contemplation (269-70), typifying O’Connor’s fiction that combines the sense of mystery with that of manners. In a 6 November 1957 letter to Brainard and Frances Nell Cheney, O’Connor compared the possibility of her and her mother’s pilgrimage to Rome to “The Artificial Nigger”: “My mother and me facing Europe will be just like Mr. Head and Nelson facing Atlanta. Culture don’t affect me none and my religion is better served at home; but I see plenty of comic possibilities in this trip” (qtd. in Stephens 61-62).

Like Nelson, O’Connor faced a journey from the family’s rural home to an unknown urban atmosphere. Choosing to further her education in Iowa, O’Connor left the small town of Milledgeville, Georgia, separating herself from her southern roots and the close scrutiny of her mother. O’Connor’s childhood was not as secluded as Nelson’s, but after leaving Georgia, she did meet individuals whose behavior, beliefs, and backgrounds were very different from her own. Like Nelson, O’Connor encountered a specific object that forced her to evaluate her direction in life. O’Connor’s “artificial nigger” was lupus. The discovery of this illness that had taken her father’s life led O’Connor back home to accept again the protection and connection that her mother offered. Not only did O’Connor begin her mysterious journey with her disease but also with the intensity of the

mysteries of salvation and the “moment of grace” that she included in each story (“On” 112). Like Nelson, O’Connor searched for meaning through the mysteries of life.

While Enoch and Nelson reveal the younger version of O’Connor’s disposition, an adult culmination of her personality can be seen through the character of Hulga, resulting in the literary mask most often associated with O’Connor. In “Good Country People,” a healthy young girl named Joy loses a leg in a hunting accident which changes her outlook on life and, ultimately, transforms her into Hulga, a brash, bitter bulwark. Joy loses the carefree innocence of childhood in exchange for the harsh “look of someone who has achieved blindness by an act of will and means to keep it” (273), proving that the legal name change to Hulga is indicative of alterations in her personality.

O’Connor did not legally change her name, but, after graduation from Georgia College for Women, she consciously decided to use only her middle name, “Flannery,” instead of “Mary Flannery,” as she was known by her family. “Mary Flannery O’Connor sounds like somebody’s washwoman,” she complained (Habit 226). For Hulga Hopewell and Flannery O’Connor, a name change signifies a turning point in identity, thus creating veiled personae and common misunderstandings with their mothers. In the literary character of Hulga, O’Connor establishes a mask within a mask, herself within Hulga as well as Hulga within Joy. Mrs. Hopewell is “at a complete loss” in attempting to understand what her daughter thinks or why her daughter acts the way she does (“Good” 276). In an attempt to cling to the past, Mrs. Hopewell refuses to refer to her daughter by any name other than Joy (274). O’Connor shared with Cecil Dawkins that her mother asked “why I didn’t try to write something that people liked instead of the kind of thing I

do write” (Habit 326), which garnered O’Connor’s frustrating response: “All I can ever say is, if you have to ask, you’ll never know” (326). Hulga considers her altered name as “her highest creative act” (“Good Country” 275). In like manner, O’Connor’s alteration of her name freed her to become independently creative.

When questioned by their mothers about their non-traditional attitudes or actions, Hulga and O’Connor bristle but usually retreat to hide their inner turmoil. Instead of Enoch’s temporary flight into a gorilla suit or Nelson’s intentional escape from an “artificial nigger” statue and real blacks, Hulga and O’Connor must live daily with their disabilities. Joy receives a wooden leg as a result of an accident, while O’Connor must rely on crutches after the onset of lupus and prescription steroids. Forced to accept these artificial legs as a result of medical intervention, the women become more introspective, with infrequent bursts of blunt and confrontational speech. In a 1 March 1955 letter to Caroline Gordon and Allen Tate, O’Connor confessed, “as for Hulga I just by the grace of God escape being her” (Letter File). The Hulga mask conveyed only part of O’Connor’s disposition, not her total identity.

One of the most obvious connections between Hulga and O’Connor is their return home to mother and to farm life after their educational experiences. Exceeding the education of their mothers, Hulga’s Ph.D. in philosophy and O’Connor’s M.F.A. in creative writing from the University of Iowa indicate the daughters’ intellectual capabilities and achievements. Mrs. Hopewell openly expresses sentiments about her daughter that Mrs. O’Connor’s comments only infer: “She was brilliant but she didn’t have a grain of sense” or “[Her reading is] like some evil incantation in gibberish”

("Good Country" 276, 277). The complexity of the daughters' theories and goals surpassed those of their more domestic-minded mothers, thereby leaving an educational void in the daughters' lives when they returned to their childhood homes.

Searching for someone else with whom to discuss her beliefs, Hulga innocently trusts Manley Pointer, expecting to be in control of their relationship. Hulga's clandestine rendezvous with Manley allows her a fantasized, temporary escape from her humdrum life. Based on O'Connor's own comments about Erik Langkjaer, Sally Fitzgerald and later Mark Bosco researched the possibility that "Good Country People" is an autobiographical, albeit fictionalized, story of O'Connor's and Langkjaer's relationship. In her 28 August 1955 correspondence to Hester, O'Connor innocently revealed that "I used to go with her [Helene Iswolsky's] nephew [Langkjaer]" ("Letters" 949). Almost a year later, 24 August 1956, in response to Hester's questioning of the autobiographical nature of "Good Country People," O'Connor did not deny the connection and went so far as to profess that she had "consented" to being in love "frequently" (1000). With more detailed information uncovered by Fitzgerald, Bosco, and Jean Cash, along with Langkjaer's own reassessment of O'Connor letters, O'Connor's "unrequited love" for Langkjaer and its "likely source of inspiration" for Hulga's tale becomes more plausible (Bosco 285). For example, Langkjaer, a book salesman carting a portfolio that he referred to as his "bible," remembered that he and O'Connor often "joke[d] about his being a Bible salesman," that they would take drives in the country, and that they did experience an awkward first kiss (qtd. in Bosco 290-92). The tone of O'Connor's letters to Langkjaer changed from the personal to the detached

and from the flirtatious to the gracious after his engagement announcement in April 1955 (Bosco 288). After the withdrawal of Pointer and Langkjaer, Hulga and O'Connor become more realistic about the impossibility of a romantic relationship with a traveling salesman. While O'Connor did cautiously admit that "one's personal affection for people or lack of it carries over and colors the work" ("Letters" 954), she was careful always to fictionalize her own characteristics, specific incidents, and personal memories. After Langkjaer read "Good Country People" and questioned O'Connor's autobiographical intent, O'Connor replied, "Your contribution to it was largely in the matter of properties. Never let it be said that I don't make the most of experience and information, no matter how meager. But as to the main pattern of the story, it is one of deceit which is something I certainly never connect with you" (qtd. in Bosco 294).

In the short story "Good Country People," Hulga is limited to one encounter outside her immediate family. In contrast, O'Connor had many correspondents with whom she could discuss issues of faith, writing, publishing, and everyday living. These non-familial contacts gave Hulga and O'Connor an objective chance to voice hopes as well as fears. Even though Hulga's situation was imaginative, fictionalized through O'Connor's story, O'Connor's concrete and realistic correspondence still allowed her to speculate, to dream, and to grow personally, spiritually, and socially with people outside her home environment.

These non-familial associations influence Hulga's and O'Connor's attitudes, but farm life itself gives Hulga and O'Connor a rooted security. Comfortable with elements of nature, they could isolate themselves from people when they desired, or they could

find humor by interacting with or watching their mother's relationship with the farm help. For example, in "Good Country People," Hulga comically distorted the names of the hired help's daughters, changing Glynese and Carramae to Glycerin and Caramel (272). O'Connor ironically formed the names Mrs. Freeman, the farm worker; Mrs. Hopewell, the cliché-spouting optimist; and Manley Pointer, the phallic male symbol. Mrs. Hopewell is always aware of intimate stories about her farm workers' lives. Likewise, Mrs. Regina O'Connor constantly intervened in the lives of her hired help, either getting them out of jail, keeping them from injuring each other in domestic fights, or taking care of their illnesses. These humorous tales are often included in an objective fashion in Flannery O'Connor's personal correspondence or sometimes as anecdotes in her published works.

Another connection is Hulga's and O'Connor's disinterest in fashionable clothing and their defensiveness about their choices. Hulga feels comfortable in a "six-year-old skirt and a yellow sweat shirt with a faded cowboy on a horse embossed on it" and thinks that her attire is funny, especially since her appearance irritates her mother (276); O'Connor's embossed sweatshirt that she "wore . . . all the time . . . to create an unfavorable impression" blazoned "a fierce-looking bulldog on it with the word GEORGIA over him" ("Letters" 946). O'Connor's mother judged her daughter's attempt "of making a spectacle" of herself after the age of thirty as appalling (946). At least on these occasions, Hulga and O'Connor resorted to quiet stubbornness instead of open, vindictive rebellion regarding their clothing.

Trying to discover their own voices or their own purposes in life, Hulga and O'Connor found themselves dealing with unusual circumstances. Realizing that their lives would most likely end at an early age, they concentrated more on personal concerns and callings. Their thoughts became more philosophical or theological, their actions more pronounced, their behavior less traditional, and their relationships more selective. Overall, their lives were intensely concentrated as they attempted to maintain masks showing control over their own lives.

Yet, in the eyes of most literary critics, Hulga falls far short as an exemplary model of humanity. Sarah Gordon suggests that Joy/Hulga "has been completely deceived" and that the "last image of Joy/Hulga is a pathetic one," even if the loss were necessary for Hulga to find her moment of grace from God (177, 179). Discussing the violent conflicts in O'Connor fiction, Frederick Asals posits that several O'Connor stories project characters who reflect each other "like a distorting mirror," such as Hulga and Manley Pointer (95). While Hulga confesses nihilism and Manley's façade is goodness, Manley's true identity is "as hollow as the Bible he reveals in the barn" while Hulga is truly an innocent girl (105). Ralph C. Wood perceives Hulga as a demonic, "deadly vampire who would draw the very life out of Manley" (207). While she "ludicrously defie[s] herself" by allowing the removal of her wooden leg and "descend[s] into an uglifying solipsism," she is ultimately set free to discover meaningful relationships with family and God (207, 209). Describing Hulga as a "psychic cripple" entrapped in a defective body, Josephine Hendin groups Hulga with O'Connor characters

“who are martyred by silent fury and redeemed through violence” (86, 87). Some see these same conflicting dispositions in the author herself.

These appraisals of Hulga do not take into consideration the subtle, but effective, way that O'Connor uses words and images to imply that Hulga is a manipulator instead of an innocent victim, proving that O'Connor is also an effective manipulator. Marshall Bruce Gentry explores “the possibility that Hulga desires her betrayal by Manley” (115). His examination of the mythical story of Vulcan and Aphrodite, the puns of the philosopher Malebranche, and the similarity of the way Mrs. Freeman and Manley look at Hulga all give close textual evidence of this theory and of Joy/Hulga's intent (115-17). Gentry stops short of giving Hulga and, in essence, O'Connor full credit for such a knowledgeable plan since he argues that the end of the story does not constitute a sexual or a religious freedom for Hulga and that Hulga seems shocked by Manley's true nature (117).

Other textual clues, however, support Hulga's skills and strategies. Recreating herself into Hulga gives Joy a sense of “full genius,” resulting in a “vision” of possibilities (O'Connor, “Good Country” 275, 276). Convinced of her own superiority, she is positive that a “[t]rue genius can get an idea across even to an inferior mind” and that she can explain “a deeper understanding of life” to Manley (284). Notice O'Connor's careful word choices in the following examples. Hulga cautiously phrases her answers to Manley's questions by responding “[i]n my economy” or “in a sense” leaving ambiguous intent (286, 287, 288). Hulga does not believe in *his* (my emphasis) Bible. Hulga is not ashamed of but is “sensitive about the artificial leg,” the part of her

that is false (288). Hulga says, "I'm one of those people who see *through* to nothing" (287) which reminds her that everyone is "damned" and that is "a kind of salvation" (288). Manley accuses Hulga of believing "in nothing" (290), but actually that is Manley's belief (291). The change of "through" to "in" alters the significance of the belief. Hulga's seeing "through to nothing" leads to a questioning, while Manley's belief "in nothing" is empty and void. Since Hulga lies about her age, the reader may question some of her other statements as well.

During the sexually charged hayloft scene, even Manley begins "to understand that she [Hulga] might be trying to insult him" (290). Joy seems to be enjoying the Hulga mask that she has chosen. Instead of "presumably" hiding from Mrs. Freeman's "steel-pointed eyes" and Manley's "eyes like two steel spikes," the Hulga persona slips when Manley manages to activate her sexual appetite, at least temporarily stopping her brain and her plan from working (275, 289). Mrs. Freeman and Manley are the ones able to see through the Hulga façade to reveal her true being, the vulnerable Joy hidden deep within her soul. When Manley "disappear[s] down the hole" with Hulga's wooden leg, Joy is still sitting "in the dusty sunlight" with a blurry vision (291). As a matter of fact, Hulga's "churning face" is "toward the opening" and appears to envision a Christ-like figure walking on the water (291). O'Connor's usage of "churning" does not necessarily have a negative connotation. People knowledgeable about farming understand that the churning process agitates milk to create butter, another quality product. Her vision is not destroyed, only altered. O'Connor, like Joy, seems to be enjoying the Hulga mask that she has chosen.

Hulga's status is apparent when O'Connor states, "My heroine already is, and is Hulga" ("Letters" 958). While Hulga clearly does not fit the standard profile of a mythical hero, a romantic hero, a tragic hero, or a frontier hero, she does exemplify O'Connor's modern hero, "the Outsider" with the "borders of his country" between "the sides of his skull" ("Catholic Novelist" 199-200). To O'Connor, a modern hero is "religious . . . without God and a reformer who will go great distances to relieve his conscience, burdened with the sins of others" (File 281b). Hulga fits O'Connor's description of the modern hero as one "set over against some stubborn community" and "one who belongs everywhere and nowhere" (File 281b, 281c). In one of her drafts about the Southern novelist, O'Connor expanded her understanding of Southern heroes:

Every society needs superhuman heros [sic] to measure itself by and in the South enough people have the same heros to make it possible for a writer to see the patterns which move them. The surface heros of the South are General Lee and Stonewall Jackson, but the real heros are Moses and the prophets. It is in this body of Southerners who never read anything but the Bible and the newspaper, and who read the newspaper [sic] in the light of the Bible, which makes it possible for a Southern writer to write fiction rich in meaning, and it is the slash that occurred in their spirits when the Bible meets the newspaper that accounts for the violence of Southern fiction. Moses and the prophets are heros who bother us, [those in the Bible Belt, the South] less than Christ because they do not claim to be divine or to have redeemed him. It is to Christ that the terrible obligation

is owed, by him the bad conscious [sic] is assured unless one can convince [himself] that he has faith and is saved by it. This must be felt in the heart and it often takes frenzy to feel it. When the feelings are exhausted he faces nothing and nothing is everyday confirmed by the newspaper, and in the end Christ comes not to save him, but to haunt him.

It is about this Christ-haunted South that I have written. (File 281d)

While Hulga is not Christ-centered, she is definitely Christ-haunted in her recognition of “nothing to see” which mysteriously relates to God. Hulga is, in this sense, an O’Connor modern heroine.

Anyone who is forced to face circumstances out of the ordinary begins an adventure into the unknown, and how that individual chooses to react to the mysterious journey determines his or her heroic contribution to life. O’Connor declares, “For the things that I want them to do, my characters apparently will have to seem twice as human as humans” (“Letters” 968). Joseph Campbell, in an interview with Bill Moyers, defines a hero or heroine as one “who has found or done something beyond the normal range of achievement and experience . . . who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself” (Power 123). When asked about a hero’s deeds, Campbell identifies two types: physical and spiritual. Most readers expect a physical hero who fights a courageous battle or sacrifices his life for another. However, the spiritual hero “learns to experience the supernormal range of human spiritual life and then comes back with a message” (123). In this spiritual journey, the hero must live to tell the story. O’Connor’s heroine, Hulga, exhibits the characteristics of both kinds of heroic deeds in O’Connor’s typical

ironic, distorted style. Hulga's battle becomes spiritual after a partial, personal physical sacrifice, much like O'Connor's spiritual and physical battles.

Campbell declares that "the basic motif of the universal hero's journey [is] leaving one condition and finding the source of life to bring you forth into a richer or mature condition" (124). Hulga's message is not forthcoming like the voice of a prophet but is secreted within her words and her questions, much like O'Connor's spiritual messages contained within her work. A heroine such as Hulga may not even recognize her potential to change others who examine her life and her message, but the message exists nonetheless. O'Connor intentionally pits her favorite characters, including Hulga, against the harshest circumstances ("Letters" 973). In spite of this, Hulga survives external forces, learns pertinent lessons because of her perseverance, and, ironically, defiantly rejects religious standards that divulge spiritual truths. Readers' arguing that Hulga is cowardly instead of courageous is a matter of perspective: "Whether you call someone a hero or a monster is all relative to where the focus of your consciousness may be" (Campbell, Power 127).

Katherine Prown focuses on Hulga's becoming "literally and figuratively paralyzed, herself reduced to nothing" when Pointer steals Hulga's leg (44). For O'Connor, Hulga is a heroine who is able to take care of her wooden leg "as someone else would his soul, in private and almost with her own eyes turned away" ("Good Country" 288), yet sacrificing that leg/soul. After spending most of her adult life proclaiming atheism and mind control, Hulga loses her artificial physical and spiritual support. Forced to evaluate her once wooden foundation, Hulga must now locate her

strength through other means and prove that she is a heroine, capable of mastering a difficult and intense test. Hulga's journey represents that of many disillusioned or disabled people, whether their journey is physical, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, or a combination thereof. While the final conclusion of Hulga's story is left to each reader's interpretation, Hulga does ponder problems "beyond" the natural, not becoming a Southern surface heroine but a bothersome one that forces others to contemplate their beliefs.

In late September 1955, speculating to Hester about future writings, O'Connor commented on her recent reading of Simone Weil: "If I were to live long enough and develop [sic] as an artist to the proper extent, I would like to write a comic novel about a woman—and what is more comic and terrible than the angular intellectual proud woman approaching God inch by inch with ground teeth" ("Letters" 957-58). Continuing this line of thought, O'Connor conjectured that her heroine in this type of novel would be Hulga as a "projection of myself into [Simone Weil's] kind of tragic-comic action" (959), creating a Hulga, Weil, and O'Connor artistic triptych. Even though the majority of Weil's works were written in the 1940's with English translations beginning in the early 1950's, not until August 1955 did O'Connor begin reading Weil's own writings (944-45). Yet O'Connor's respect for Weil's life parallels her high opinion of the comic and terrible heroine, Hulga (958), and, probably unintentionally, her own.

One requirement of a heroine is separation from the norm. Simone Weil, O'Connor, and Hulga all isolate themselves from what society deems acceptable. Weil, an intellectual and sensitive female philosopher, never agreed with the status quo of the

aristocratic lifestyle. Her “moral intensity and active involvement in leftist causes” while in her French elite schooling was not just a passing interest (Springsted 14). She was dismayed by the inhumane conditions of the factory workers, so, to fully understand their plight, she became one of them (15). At first, Weil could not comprehend the working class’ lack of initiative to change their situation. However, she eventually recognized that the workers lost “all sense of human dignity” and “count[ed] for nothing” to others or to themselves, which she refers to as “affliction” (17). Weil explains her view in “The Love of God and Affliction,” stating that “In the realm of suffering, affliction is something apart, specific and irreducible. It is quite a different thing from simple suffering. It takes possession of the soul and marks it through and through with its own particular mark, the mark of slavery” (41). Weil and O’Connor experienced physical affliction but were more concerned about the spiritual suffering of mankind. Writing about “affliction” became a major focus in almost all of Weil’s writings and in many of O’Connor’s, even with their obvious discrepancies in religious thought. In the scenario of Manley Pointer stealing Hulga’s wooden leg, “the reader realizes that he has taken away part of the girl’s personality and has revealed her deeper affliction to her for the first time” (“Writing” 99). For Hulga, as well as many readers, physical affliction is less shocking than spiritual suffering.

Another responsibility evident in the lives of Weil, O’Connor, and Hulga is that of giving others attention. Weil’s connotation of “attention” is that of “suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty and ready to be penetrated by the object. . . . [o]ur thought should be empty, waiting, not seeking anything, but ready to receive in its naked

truth the object which is to penetrate it” (qtd. in Miles 5). For O’Connor, Weil’s life was “almost a perfect blending” of the tragic and the comic, culminating in a “remarkable” and courageous extraordinary woman (“Letters” 957- 58). Therefore, O’Connor’s projection of herself would be well suited to a tragic-comic novel: “In my own experience, everything funny I have written is more terrible than it is funny, or only funny because it is terrible, or only terrible because it is funny” (957). Even Hulga’s “nothing to see” philosophy suggests emptiness and comic grotesqueness.

Physical disabilities connect Weil, O’Connor, and Hulga. Weil’s physical disability differed from O’Connor’s and Hulga’s in that Weil’s hands were affected instead of her legs: “Her [Weil’s] hands were too small in proportion to her body and she experienced great difficulty in using them” (Miles 4). The swollen, painful hands, horrific headaches, her own refusal to eat and, eventually, tuberculosis took a toll on her life (31). Besides similarities in education, spiritual questioning, and physical disabilities, Weil also shared O’Connor’s and Hulga’s disinterest in fashion: “Her disregard for conventional dress, behavior, manner and appearance made her conspicuous” (46). While Weil’s dress was a rejection of upper-class superiority, O’Connor’s and Hulga’s was more a protest of familial expectations.

Upon writing “Good Country People,” O’Connor sensed that “[i]t is the best thing I have done . . . because it is one of those examples of the will and the imagination fusing” (“Letters” 930-31), a combination of the tragic and the comic. Hulga exemplifies this amalgamation as a “maimed soul” (1000). According to O’Connor, Hulga “is full of contempt for the Bible salesman until she finds he is full of contempt for her,” but she

discovers that “she ain’t so smart” when Manley Pointer’s devious practicality supersedes her precocious education (1000). Since O’Connor declared that “I can’t allow any of my characters, in a novel anyway, to stop in some halfway position” (1107), any heroine in O’Connor’s Simone Weil-inspired novel would need to grapple with the serious issues of faith, respect, and love. Plus, any O’Connor story is “a dramatic event that involves a person because he is a person, and a particular person—that is, because he shares in the general human condition and in some specific human situation” dealing with “the mystery of personality” (“Writing” 90). These realities and mysteries of Simone Weil probably contributed to O’Connor’s speculative contemplation of a tragic-comic Hulga heroine, especially since O’Connor admitted that “Simone Weil is a trifle monstrous, but the kind of monstrosity that interests me” (Habit 522).

Weil, O’Connor, and Hulga were determined to find answers, to share beliefs, and to test others as they struggled to conquer their own problems and to fulfill their quests. Weil and O’Connor accomplished this feat through their writings. To Weil, “Writing is like giving birth: we cannot help making the supreme effort. But we also act in like fashion. I need have no fear of not making the supreme effort—provided only that I am honest with myself and that I pay attention” (“Attention” 214). O’Connor agreed with Weil’s sentiment: “I write what I can and accept what I write; [sic] after I have given it all I can” (“Letters” 959). Giving one’s all for a cause, for a vision, defines a heroine or a hero. While O’Connor could acknowledge the heroic qualities of Weil and even her character Hulga, she maintained her Southern mannered mask, downplaying her own accomplishments and dedication.

Enoch, Nelson, and Hulga, mirroring O'Connor's composite disposition, are often detached observers instead of intimate participants, initially relying on animalistic or instinctive behaviors, eventually learning educational or intellectual finesse, and then refusing to conform to standard societal expectations. These representative characters exhibit the childish and youthful qualities of inquisitiveness, selfishness, egotism, and arrogance, plus a desire for understanding, a desire to communicate, and a desire to belong. The adult personality struggles with the conflicting stages of dependence vs. independence, immaturity vs. maturity, ignorance vs. intelligence, or, in essence, secular vs. spiritual. Throughout the search for individual identity, Enoch, Nelson, Hulga, and O'Connor explore Southern history, social manners, and religious mysteries, yet they accept personal deviations from the norm, constructing their own masked personas.

Even though all three characters with whom O'Connor identified are often considered blunt, misunderstood, and even deplorable individuals, O'Connor demanded "the right of the artist to select a negative aspect of the world to portray" the abysmal realities that most people prefer to ignore (1002). Through Enoch, Nelson, and Hulga, O'Connor deals with typical reactions to the grotesque: "Most of us have learned to be dispassionate about evil, to look it in the face and find, as often as not, our own grinning reflections with which we do not argue" ("Introduction" 17). O'Connor's characters definitely "have an inner coherence" deviating from the "typical social patterns" that leads them "toward mystery and the unexpected" ("Some" 40). That being said, O'Connor nonetheless insisted that any psychological comparison was only "useful up to a point," since knowledge of the author should lead to "a sense of something beyond,"

and that “[t]he more we learn about ourselves, the deeper into the unknown we push the frontiers of fiction” (“Novelist” 165). O’Connor often depicts hideous qualities of characters for a positive reason: to force readers to contemplate their own position about and within life itself. Nelson’s childish wonder, Enoch’s youthful exuberance, and Hulga’s adult resignation show a progression from innocence and stability to individual experimentation and then to perceived intellectual superiority. Yet, in reverse order, while identifying her temperament as Hulga’s, the adult; Enoch’s, the teenager; and Nelson’s, the child, O’Connor subconsciously formulates a “HEN” acronym that for the astute reader appropriately connects these three characters into O’Connor’s very own distorted peafowl disposition.

Chapter III

O'CONNOR'S INTENSE VISION:

HAZEL MOTES

O'Connor's literary masks extend from her disposition hidden within the characters of the youngster Nelson, the teenager Enoch, and the young adult Hulga to her vision revealed in the character of Hazel Motes in Wise Blood. Hazel Motes' vision is much like Joy's final one in "Good Country People," blurry, yet Christ-inspired. O'Connor disclosed that she "unfortunately [had] Haze's vision" ("Letters" 922), suggesting another literary self-identification. Her inner vision remained focused on the reality of Christ but was masked because the world affected how she could share the mysteries of her faith.

Haze constantly internalizes his concepts of sin and redemption which results in a Christ-haunted soul whose tone and behavior appear blasphemous to others. The Milledgeville town folk often considered O'Connor in this same vein. On page seven of a draft of a lecture about fiction, O'Connor wrote that she was often asked how she "who has led a sheltered life [could] write about what [she] might call the unsheltered experience" (File 251a). Her response combined the ideas of "self-knowlege [sic]," "consciousness," "creative imagination," and "God" (File 251a). O'Connor explained to Robert and Sally Fitzgerald that "at times I feel that a feeling for the vulgar is my natural talent and don't need any particular encouragement" ("Letters" 905). Corresponding with Beverly Brunson of The Culinary Review, O'Connor insisted that "absurdity is in me, not what I stand for" and that her knowledge "about violence [is] only from hearsay"

(928, 929). In essence, she combined her instincts, her knowledge, her fancy, and her faith as she composed the lives of her literary characters.

O'Connor's lengthy 2 March 1954 response to Carl Hartman's questions about Wise Blood offers detailed authorial insight into the intended purpose of Hazel Motes. O'Connor analyzed Haze as "somebody whose insistence on what he would like to think is the truth leads him to what he most does not want" (920). He "does not want to have been redeemed . . . [but] to be shut of God" (920). O'Connor asserted that "Haze cannot get rid of his sense of debt and his inner vision of Christ" (920). While Haze would like to live in his own way, he cannot escape his conscience convicting him of guilt. O'Connor compared Haze's external vision to that of people who feel that they must in some way pay for their own salvation or to those who cannot accept the mysteries of faith. O'Connor's external vision involved making "corruption believable before . . . mak[ing] the grace meaningful" (1182), which, of course, made her vision seem violent and callous.

O'Connor disagreed with George Beiswanger's interpretation of the word "filthy" regarding Haze (Letter File). Highlighting her own assessment of Haze's vision, O'Connor argued,

[Haze] doesn't see death as filth but as mystery. He ends up in death himself still moving and moving toward the truth which he has always been seeking. The theme of this book is expiation and the form of love in it is penance. The light Haze is traveling toward is the light of Bethlehem by way of the cross. To my mind, tenderness, beauty, and love are amply

contained within his suffering, and as much absolution as the writer, not being God, can give.

O'Connor's vision always traveled toward the holy birth and the sacrificial death of Christ, even when the phraseology and images appear sadistic and sacrilegious. She realized her human limitations in revealing the mysteries of God, yet accepted the juxtaposition of love and of pain that could lead to that understanding for Haze and, ultimately, for herself and others.

Admonishing Margaret Meaders not to share any of his thoughts with people in Milledgeville, Jim Love shared his perspective of the characters in Wise Blood:

I knew O'Connor had a somewhat acid sense of humor. I had seen her cartoons in the college yearbook, but I wasn't prepared for the preachiness, the dogmatism, . . . or the violence. . . . It wasn't O'Connor's fault that she had had very little real experience with the sort of people she was describing—how they lived, what they thought and did, but the fact shows in her attempts to create real characters. So many of the utterances of her protagonists (if you knew Flannery at all) were just Flannery talking. (Letter File).

O'Connor's vivid imagination, acerbic humor, religious spirit, writing skills, and inimitable observance of others coalesce to formulate characters such as Hazel Motes who share her veiled vision.

To better understand O'Connor's and Hazel Motes' vision, one should read O'Connor's early manuscripts for a "behind-the-scenes" view of Haze's character

development. After drafting the first few chapters of the novel that later evolved into Wise Blood, O'Connor wrote at least two early synopses for the 1947 Rinehart-Iowa Award. These early drafts depict a man named Hazel Wickers who meets Asa and Sabbath Moats, a husband and wife team working for "David's Aspirants, a local evangelical religious group" and for its leader, Mr. Cruise (File 22a). Haze is torn between allegiances to the sacred, represented by Asa and Sabbath, and to the secular, suggested by his sister and brother-in-law, Ruby and Bill Hill. Ruby and Bill's city life in Taulkinham includes cocktail parties, sexy female neighbors, and a renter named Chin, a psychologist and an atheist who relies on Freudian psychology to analyze Haze and his religious difficulties. Chin informs Haze that sin does not exist; however, when Ruby dies in childbirth on the same night that Hazel "succumbs finally to his desire for Lea," the upstairs neighbor, Haze's guilt increases. Recalling his mother's "agonized hard-shell religion" and her insistence about "eternal damnation" for sinners, Haze decides to return to the religious zealots. Associating Sabbath's face with his mother's, he resolves to follow Sabbath and Asa on their annual pilgrimage to Mr. Cruise's residence, Mount Pitkin. "Confusing religious sentiments with sexual ones," Haze seduces Sabbath in the height of the emotional revival. As soon as a culpable Haze returns to the country searching for a home like he used to have, Sabbath follows to warn him that Asa will kill him if he returns to the city. Sabbath then commits suicide. However, when Haze returns to the city so Asa can take him out of his misery, Asa is cordial and has already remarried. In the first synopsis, O'Connor emphasized that Haze's search for a home is

impossible, but that his spiritual search “saves him from becoming a member of the Wasteland” (File 22a).

In the second synopsis, O’Connor observed that Haze’s search for a home always detoured to a woman and that Haze’s demise will be determined creatively “in the process of writing” (File 22b). O’Connor’s search for the novel’s “final home” parallels Hazel’s, an evolving experience dependent upon both internal and external stimuli. O’Connor, through Haze, masks her visionary search for a peaceful home, through the reality of sin, guilt, and temptation.

In her introduction to Three By Flannery O’Connor, Sally Fitzgerald noted that T. S. Eliot was a major influence for Wise Blood, indicating that “O’Connor at first intended to base her novel and the encounters of her then bewildered hero on those of the speaker in The Waste Land” (ix). O’Connor described a war-torn waste land, a “fragmented and mobile modern world . . . [filled with] many spiritual casualties . . . [and] wandering refugees” searching for new beginnings, new roots, and new meanings (qtd. in Fitzgerald x). As a hero, Haze is much like Eliot’s speaker, unsure of where to go and what he might discover yet determined to escape from the devastation of the land and of his inner being. Something mysterious beyond the worldly values is essential to satisfy his emptiness and longing. Though the second synopsis suggested that a woman might be the solution for fulfillment, the completed novel quickly dispels that plan. Initially, Haze used Leora and an occasional whore to prove that he could rebel against his mother’s distorted views of sex and religion. Later, after encounters with Sabbath and Mrs. Flood, he realizes that no woman will satisfy his emptiness. O’Connor’s literary vision included

over-emphasizing man's sinful nature, in hopes to force readers to evaluate sin since sin effectively blinds individuals' spiritual vision.

Almost two years after the first two synopses were written at Iowa, O'Connor applied for a Guggenheim Scholarship and wrote current plans for her work in progress. By this time, O'Connor had clarified Hazel's definition of home, an essential element of physical and spiritual visions:

The principle character, an illiterate Tennessean, has lost his home through the break down of a country community. Home, in this instance, stands not only for the place and family, but for some absolute belief which would give him sanctuary in the modern world. All he has retained of the evangelical religion of his mother is a sense of sin and a need for religion, which eventually torments him into taking up with a blind man and his wife, members of a small religious sect called in the novel, David's Aspirants. This sense of sin is the only key he has to finding a sanctuary and he begins unconsciously to search for God through sin. The ultimate sin becomes the seduction of the blind man's wife. (File 23)

These 1947 and 1948 documents, as well as the development of these later excised elements from the published novel in early manuscript drafts, feature Hazel's intense trauma regarding his mother's stringent and conservative religious beliefs, his preoccupation with his sister and her pregnancy, and his sexual inhibitions relating to women in general.

As O'Connor stated, "in good fiction and drama you need to go through the concrete situation to some experience of mystery" (Habit 520). In Haze's life, the concrete situations involved a dysfunctional family, intense sexual encounters, and death, all embedded with spiritual implications. Grasping a sense of Hazel's familial background clarifies the duality of his personal religious struggle. Haze, a recently released soldier, sorts through his memories of his mother, her father, and her siblings (File 28i). He recalls that his maternal grandfather, Emmet Hugh Jackson, was a forceful circuit preacher and the author of Divine History. Not only does Hazel physically resemble his grandfather, but another early draft reveals Hazel's name as Hazel Emmet Wickers (File 35), creating a constant reminder that the grandfather and grandson have an intentional spiritual connection. Haze remembers his mother's brother named Zaccheus (File 28i), constructing still another religious image of a sinful man so determined to see Jesus that he climbs a tree (Luke 19.2-4). Haze visualizes his mother's beating him with a broom to force him to think about God (File 85b), an image O'Connor later used in "Parker's Back" when Sarah rejects Parker's Byzantine Christ tattoo. In the published Wise Blood, Haze's mother punishes him by switching his legs with a stick when he refuses to reveal what he saw at the circus tent (33). On the train after his release from the army, Haze concocts a story about his mother's "beating a man's head on a rock" (File 30) to express his animosity toward her and to emphasize her apparent hatred of sinful man. All of Haze's memories of his mother portray her as harsh and foreboding, always wielding punishment in the name of religious cleansing. She emits a pious coldness from which Haze cannot seem to escape.

Influenced by his troubled family, Haze's vision becomes self-centered and grotesque. The controlling religious influence of his childhood dominates his entire existence. Haze's itinerant grandfather preached from his car, shouting for people to find salvation. He often used Haze as an example of a "sinful unthinking boy" (O'Connor, Wise 10) who will never escape from the redemption of Jesus, which, of course, creates a distorted religious fascination for Haze. Haze feels as if he has also inherited his grandfather's "strong confidence in his power to resist evil" (11). His grandfather's calculating manipulation continues through his mother. When Haze does not answer his mother's question about what he saw at the carnival, she gives him the disappointed, "shut-mouthed" mother glare, producing a "nameless unplaced guilt" deep within him (33). Later, while having sex with Leora, Haze hears a voice in his head and remembers a nightmare in which he was a chicken, violently beheaded (File 119h). Killing chickens with one's bare hands was a part of a typical country farm experience that Haze would have associated with his mother. Subconsciously, Haze's sin results in punishment from his mother. These three episodes show that Haze's grandfather and mother affect his thought processes and his distorted vision in every aspect of his life.

Seeking to combine the discrepancies between secular and sacred visions, O'Connor admitted that her fiction would be "violent and comic" ("Some" 43). One example, located in multiple manuscripts, is the way that Haze equates his mother with predatory birds. For instance, O'Connor described Haze and his partner in a barn loft sexual scene as two "white like skinned snakes, wiggling in the grain" with the "buzzard-faced" mother "swoop[ing] down . . . like they were a speck she was going to snap down

her throat to hell” (File 86b). In the published novel, O’Connor transforms this early idea into Haze’s perception of a naked circus woman in a coffin and his mother’s subsequent vulture-like reactions (Wise 32-33).

O’Connor always expected her characters and her animals to be true to their nature. For example, chickens represent human pleasure; buzzards, bats, panthers, and hawks are predators; bears growl and can either attack or retreat; and peacocks and doves are religious symbols for the transfiguration and the Holy Spirit, respectively.

O’Connor’s use of corresponding animal characteristics to describe her characters explains why Haze associates buzzards and bats with his mother and chickens, panthers, snakes, and/or hawks with sex.

While Haze’s maternal family members are always dominant, religious individuals, his father is only a vague memory. A conversation between Haze and Leora reveals that they both thought their fathers were crazy. Leora remembers visiting her father in the local insane asylum, while Haze insists that he is not sick or crazy, even though his “pa was off his head” and usually just sat and watched people or occasionally hid a still (File 86a). O’Connor indicated that Hazel’s mother had married Lemuck Wickers because she was pregnant with his child and considered the union a just punishment for her sinful nature (File 29). This same manuscript draft portrays an eerie atmosphere, mentioning that Haze’s paternal grandparents may be buried between the first and second floor of Haze’s home. In the early development of Haze’s character, therefore, O’Connor identified his father’s influence as detached, passive, and eccentric. O’Connor declared to Hester, 13 July 1956, that she “really only knew [her own father]

by a kind of instinct” since he died young (Habit 166). Like Haze, O’Connor’s vision was more maternally influenced.

The overwhelming indoctrination of sin and retribution by his mother, the religious zeal of his grandfather, and the contrasting aloofness of his father leave Hazel conflicted and tattered. The discrepancy between the religious zealot and the subjugated sinner hovers in Hazel’s thoughts and partially explains his distress about his own identity and his distorted obsession with spiritual cleanliness. Nevertheless, his inclination before his army stint was to become a preacher just like his grandfather and to remain untainted by sin so he would not act like his mother who never forgave herself for becoming pregnant out of wedlock. While in the army, Haze slowly yields to the sense of sin or worldly temptations and alters his vision from a serious religious calling to a satirically nihilistic belief. O’Connor assured Ben Griffith, 3 March 1954, that “no one but a Catholic could have written Wise Blood . . . because it is entirely Redemption-centered in thought” (“Letters” 923). She contended that people were fooled because “H. Motes is such an admirable nihilist” and they cannot see that “[h]is nihilism leads him back to the fact of his Redemption” (923). Writing to Robie Macauley, 18 May 1955, O’Connor conceded, “Everybody who has read Wise Blood thinks I’m a hillbilly nihilist” (934), proving that many readers associated O’Connor with her character Haze. Yet, O’Connor wanted to change that image to a more correct one, a “hillbilly Thomist” (934), one who, like St. Thomas, proclaimed that “prophetic vision is dependent on the imagination of the prophet, not his moral life” (Habit 367). Misreadings of Haze’s

spiritual journey and eventual redemption are much the same as misunderstandings of his creator, O'Connor.

Haze's relationship with his sister Ruby is an additional part of his familial and spiritual exploration. One early draft shows Ruby, who was responsible for young Haze on a trip into the city, leaving him to find his own way back home. As he searches for the correct route home, he gets lost (File 25a). Nonetheless, of his three sisters, Ruby is the one who writes Haze while he is in the army, keeping him connected to and informed about the family and community changes. Even so, when Ruby writes that the Eastrod "families had scattered and even the niggers from up and down the road had gone in to Memphis and Murfreesboro and other places," Haze refuses to accept her account that his home and community are disappearing (File 148a). At times on the train, Haze fuses his memories of Ruby and his mother, but other times he fears that he cannot even remember what Ruby looks like. In various drafts, O'Connor showed Ruby and Haze not recognizing each other when they first meet, more like strangers than siblings. In one manuscript, Haze even confuses Ruby with Lea, the neighbor with whom he later has a sexual relationship (File 39b). After finally reuniting with his citified sister Ruby, Haze regards her as a sinful woman because she wants to abort her unborn child (File 102). As Haze discusses Ruby's possible abortion with Lea, he imagines "a picture of a child hanging in a chimney by a silk stocking. . . . [that] he had murdered and hung there" (File 148g). Haze is definitely his mother's son in this scene, imagining murderous punishment for himself since he does not believe he will change Ruby's mind about the abortion. O'Connor revised this image in the published novel, having Sabbath tell Haze a

story about a couple living in sin who murder their baby and hang it in the chimney with a silk stocking (26); nonetheless, the moral issue still vexes Haze. Likewise, moral issues vexed O'Connor. As a Christian novelist, O'Connor focused on sin and characters whose "burden of meaning" extends beyond themselves ("Novelist" 167), leading to a "more than wordly" vision.

The most obvious "burden" for Haze and Ruby is their strict religious heritage. Ruby rebels by pretending to be a gypsy, selling her mother's furniture, and arguing with Haze about whether their mother used snuff (File 41). In defiance, she dyes her hair (File 44) and demands that Haze share gory details about the war (File 40). In all of the early drafts, O'Connor portrayed Ruby and her husband, Bill Hill, as secular city folks who made fun of anything associated with the country or with religion. Haze cannot find deep spiritual comfort while in Ruby's presence nor in his memories of his country childhood. He is still unable to find home. The sister-brother connection reveals secular tendencies, not sacred growth.

Haze's relationships with women outside his family also affect his physical maturity and spiritual exploration. Two women clearly force Haze to think about the meaning of home. In "The Train," the final story in O'Connor's Iowa thesis, Mrs. Hosen incessantly talks about herself, her family, the weather, and anything else that comes to mind. Although she does ask Haze a few questions, she mainly talks to hear herself talk. Even though she does not make any sexual advances, Haze is intimidated when he physically runs into her in the train aisle and cannot seem to extricate his body from hers, especially since she is in her night clothes ("Train" 59). Various early manuscripts for

Wise Blood have Haze spouting obscenities when the now renamed Mrs. Hitchcock questions him about his experiences in the army (Files 30-35). Sharing a drunken childhood memory with her, Haze remembers thinking he was both a beheaded John the Baptist and a water-walking Jesus or a combination of the two (File 32). Throughout these early drafts, the woman on the train functions as a practical outlet for Haze's childhood memories, his sexual frustrations, and his spiritual questionings. In Wise Blood, Mrs. Hitchcock's direct statements about home introduce Haze to one of his main dilemmas: "I guess you're going home" (3), "Well, there's no place like home" (4), and "Are you going home?" (5). With the realization that his physical home is gone, Haze feels the need for a substitute home.

Strategically, Leora Watts' first three responses to Haze expand the initial idea of "going home" suggested by Mrs. Hitchcock. Leora grabs a nervous Haze to keep him from bolting and then asks, "You huntin' something? (16) and "Something on your mind?" (17) His controlled, crass reply that he is there for the "usual business" is answered by Leora's simple reply, "Make yourself at home" (17). Haze's loss of home haunts his every word and action throughout the novel, even though he is not quite sure what will qualify as home. The concept of "home" is an essential element of O'Connor's personal and literary vision, clearly portrayed by Haze's desperate search. Again, O'Connor parallels both physical and spiritual searches, which is a distinctive quality of her own vision, one that combines the known and the unknown.

As Henry T. Edmondson III proposes, "O'Connor's nihilistic characters employ their sexuality as a destructive and controlling act so that sexuality becomes a

revolutionary weapon in her fiction" (41). Haze's interludes with Lea/Leora and Sabbath show his frantic attempts to find that elusive substitute for home.

Lea, later named Leora, serves as Haze's first sexual temptation. O'Connor experimented with various scenes involving Haze and Lea/Leora. Initially, Lea, an upstairs neighbor of Ruby and Bill, is Ruby's friend (File 22a). In other drafts, she becomes Leora Watts, a whore who is despicable in Ruby's eyes. Hearing Ruby use the word "whore" resurrects Haze's whorehouse experience during the war, where, in his distress, he jumps out the window rather than surrender his virginity (File 40, 148f). In other versions, Leora invites Haze into her apartment for a drink and begins to seduce him before he makes his strategic getaway (File 86a) or places her hand on Haze's leg while he is pretending to be asleep in the swing (File 86b). Haze responds to Leora in a variety of ways, including ignoring her, calling her a whore, kissing her, and telling her he wants to go to bed with her (Files 93-103). O'Connor explores a plethora of sexual encounters, including Haze's first sexual experience with Leora (File 104a), his savagely taking her again the same night (File 104e), his first homosexual encounter at age ten (File 106a), his rejection of other homosexual offers (File 108c, 108d), and his lessons from Leora about sexual prowess (File 107a), which lead to passionate sexual images involving intense sex on the floor (File 118a). A devastating coldness penetrates his body after this passionate sex with Leora (File 118a), causing a feeling of a third party, "something black like a panther," struggling with them during sex (File 118b), or the sensation that Leora intimately becomes a second self within his own (File 142b). In the midst of these sexual episodes, O'Connor wrote at least one scene revealing the

significance of Haze's obsession: "I'm after something . . . but I don't know what it is.

Before I went in the army, I kept thinking it was there, something I'd see maybe; everything I'd see. Then I saw there wasn't nothing to see, everything I saw wasn't nothing" (File 104f). Leora counters with, "I know what you think. . . . You think you're going to hell for this [sex]" (File 104f), which, of course, Haze verbally denies.

However, guilt accompanies all of Haze's sexual experiences with Lea/Leora.

Throughout these early manuscripts, O'Connor toyed with Sabbath's characterization, as a domineering wife, a forceful missionary, a religious zealot, a self-centered creature, an obedient daughter, a wily female, and/or a mistreated soul. Most of the earliest manuscripts render Sabbath as Asa's wife, a woman who has religious "spells." When Haze turns them away from Ruby and Bill's party, Sabbath discards Haze. Initially, Haze would like to ignore Asa and Sabbath and their emphasis on Jesus, but he finds himself inextricably drawn to them either in his dreams or in person (File 135 a-h). In one draft, Asa evaluates his wife of three months. He wonders if Sabbath's spells are tests from God, is jealous that he does not have her "gift of vision," and even questions whether she might be "chosen by the devil" instead of God (File 136). Asa reveals that Sabbath's feet are a source of embarrassment to her, that she is suspicious of machines, and that she may even hate him because he forced her to show him her feet which look like elongated turnips left too long in the ground (File 136). From Asa's perspective, his relationship with Sabbath is tenuous, which helps explain how easily Haze could capture Sabbath's attention. Haze is sometimes obsessed with Sabbath, such as when he seduces her at the end of a revival (File 22a), follows Asa and Sabbath to

their apartment (File 135a), flirts with Sabbath in her own kitchen (File 142b), or makes Asa jealous by moving into their apartment building (File 148i). In another synopsis by O'Connor entitled "General Direction of What Is to Follow," Asa is blind, Sabbath is his fifteen-year-old wife, and Hazel Motes has determined that "if he can commit the worst sin he can think of, he'll prove that he doesn't believe in Jesus" (File 148j). That premeditated sin is to seduce Sabbath, but O'Connor indicated that Hazel may or may not follow this plan (File 148j). Not only is Sabbath a sexual temptation, but she also becomes a spiritual test for Haze.

For the first half of the published novel, she is merely an extension of the "blind" preacher and is known only as Hawks' child. Not until she determines that she wants Haze and hides in his car does he learn her name, Sabbath Lily, and its religious implications of a day of rest and of purity (Wise 60). By this time, Haze's sexual interest in her has waned. Sabbath changes dramatically from O'Connor's early renderings, but Haze remains consistently haunted by sin and by Christ. Nonetheless, Haze's relationship with Sabbath influences the way he sees himself as a man, physically and spiritually. Not only was O'Connor humanizing the actions of her characters but also refining her vision, one that could be "transferred, as nearly whole as possible" to readers ("Novelist" 162). This dramatic portrayal of sin and salvation exemplifies an unconscious search for a spiritual home. If understanding Sabbath leads to Haze's own understanding, understanding Haze leads to a better understanding of O'Connor and her vision. All three, Sabbath, Haze, and O'Connor, deal with human misunderstandings of a spiritual quest.

By the time O'Connor completed the final manuscript, she omitted almost all of the early sexual scenes. Nevertheless, the early scripting of Hazel Emmet Wickers/Motes' feelings about his own sexual interests, behavior, and expectations gives a picture of a youth tortured by instinctual cravings. In the published version of Wise Blood, Lea and Ruby herself are both eliminated, leaving only a professional whore, Leora Watts, who is interested only in Haze's money, not his religious affiliation, his moral struggles, nor his sexual performance. This change effectively omits any clear familial connection. In fact, Haze opportunely stumbles upon Mrs. Leora Watts' number on a bathroom stall and takes a taxi to her residence, having never heard of her before, Haze's mother has died, and Sabbath is an unmarried, young girl.

O'Connor's fictional vision for many of her characters involved "a descent through the darkness of the familiar," resulting in a mysterious understanding of the spiritual ("Some" 50). She did not "approach the infinite directly. . . [but] penetrate[d] the natural human world" ("Novelist" 163), through characters like Haze who depict her culminating vision of a sinner ultimately facing the realization of a spiritual home.

In a postscript of a 7 June 1951 letter, Robert Giroux, future publisher of Wise Blood, asked O'Connor, "Why not more of Hazel's past—the Army, for example—since he's so hard to understand in the beginning?" (Letter File). Whether O'Connor made any changes in response to this prompting is not evidenced by a reply or in any published documentation. However, O'Connor's working and reworking of Haze's character in her early drafts elucidate some of Haze's religiously-inspired dreams, actions, and reactions

located in the finalized novel, representing O'Connor's determination to clearly enunciate her own vision.

In the published novel, these overwhelming images and feelings continue in Haze's visions of death. While Haze is sleeping in an upper train berth, his discomfort in such an enclosed area makes him dream about several coffins, beginning with his grandfather's (Wise 9). Haze remembers that he thoroughly expected his grandfather to barricade the coffin lid with a strategically placed elbow to avoid the closing of the casket. Another image he recalls is of his seven-year-old brother's coffin with Haze frantically opening the coffin's lid to make sure that he is not the one being buried (9). Dreaming about his father's death, Haze pictures his father stubbornly positioning himself on hands and knees so the lid cannot be closed (9). In the vision of his mother's coffin, Haze wonders if his mother's ghost protects the only remaining item in the house, her chifforobe (12). Recollecting the sour-looking demeanor that she had in death when he expected her to rise up from the coffin in protest, Haze sees his mother as "terrible, like a bat," an ominous, evil presence, ready to fly out of the darkness (13). In a claustrophobic flashback, Haze imagines his body blocking the sealing of his mother's coffin. Waking with a sickening sensation, Haze screams to be released, twice calling the name of Jesus without adhering to its spiritual significance (13).

Haze's visions of coffins began with his ten-year-old rebellious act of convincing the barker to let him slip into the "SINsational," "EXclusive" tent, permitting him to witness a white, naked, fat woman lying on a black cloth inside a casket, moving seductively to entice the male crowd (32). Haze also heard his father's voice, close to the

woman, jesting that if “one of themther” would be in each coffin, he, like most men, would more readily anticipate death (32). In all of his coffin visions, Haze seems to understand that death physically subdues even the most obstinate individuals but that their spirits will continue to haunt his psyche. A disquieting example transpires when on the city’s bathroom stall door, Haze sees a crayon-marked sign that reads “WELCOME followed by three exclamation points and something that looked like a *snake* [my emphasis],” followed by Mrs. Leora Watts’ name, address, and occupation (14-15). Seeing Leora in her bed must have reminded Haze of the carnival woman in the casket, both white-skinned, large women ready to please paying men, but this time he was old enough to participate.

Haze even has a vision of his own burial while he is sleeping in his Essex after Hoover Shoats, alias Onnie Jay Holy, threatens to raze Haze’s Church Without Christ (82). This dream includes many parallels to his earlier coffin visions:

[H]e dreamed he was not dead but only buried. He was not waiting on the Judgment because there was no Judgment, he was waiting on nothing. Various eyes looked through the back oval window [of his car] . . . like the boy from the zoo . . . three women with paper sacks who looked at him critically as if he were something—a piece of fish—they might buy . . . [a] man in a canvas hat . . . a woman with two little boys . . . grinning. After a second, she [the woman] pushed the boys out of view and indicated that she would climb in and keep him company for a while, but she couldn’t get through the glass. . . . All this time Haze was bent on getting out but

since there was no use to try, he didn't make any move one way or the other. (82-83)

Haze's body is not shut up in an actual coffin, but his soul is definitely darkened and lifeless. Haze's sexual fantasies and coffin hallucinations influence his views about secular and sacred choices.

Visions of eyes haunt Haze throughout the novel, all relating to sexual or spiritual images. He constantly feels the presence of an EYE watching him, whether that of his grandfather, his mother, Ruby, Leora, the zoo's hoot owl, strangers, or Jesus. As a teen, Haze has a vision of Jesus, "mov[ing] 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" (10). O'Connor maintained that for her, "Hazel Motes' integrity lies in his" NOT "trying to get rid of the ragged figure who moves from tree to tree in the back of his mind" ("Introductory" 2), proving that both O'Connor's and Haze's vision was Christ-haunted. Like the speaker of The Waste Land, Haze is haunted by what he does not fully understand or accept. On his second night in the city, Haze views the dark sky "underpinned with long silver streaks that looked like scaffolding and depth on depth behind it were thousands of stars that all seemed to be moving very slowly as if they were about some vast construction work that involved the whole order of the universe and would take all time to complete" (18). These visions remind Haze that a higher being has power over the world and wants to control him, but Haze continues to rebel.

Visions of birds and animals pursue Haze. After purchasing his Essex and driving off into the rain, Haze “had the feeling that everything he saw was a broken-off piece of some giant blank thing that he had forgotten had happened to him,” including a recurring chicken image (38). Later, when Sabbath hides in the back seat of his car and they stop to sit under the trees, Sabbath tells Haze a story about a “child [who was] locked up in a chicken crate” because the evil grandmother did not like anything innocent and good (63). Haze separates himself from Sabbath’s presence by placing his hat over his face, effectively sealing his coffin-like body. However, when she raises “it off like a lid” and makes sexual advances, Haze shouts and jumps violently which sends Sabbath running to hide behind a tree (63). Hearing another voice from behind a tree that says “I see you,” like his dream of Jesus, adds to Haze’s discomfort, so he retreats to his car (63). Finding that the car will not start, Haze and Sabbath walk to a gas station to find assistance but first spot a cage that contains a chicken hawk and a bear, “TWO DEADLY ENEMIES,” each partially destroyed by the other (64). These animals mirror Haze and Sabbath: Haze, the grumpy, growling bear, who sometimes attacks and other times retreats, and Sabbath, the chicken hawk, a sensual predator, each wanting to control the other but failing in their attempts. The one-armed service station attendant leaves them in a cloud of dust after starting their car. To an almost-blinded Haze, the “white cloud [turns] into a bird with long thin wings” flying away from him (65), as if the Holy Spirit no longer wants to be near him. These visions of distorted birds, chickens, bears, and hawks/Hawks blend both sexual and spiritual aspects, reminding Haze of daunting childhood illusions and foreshadowing his bewildering, spiritual journey.

Multiple religious images torpedo Haze and the reader in both the early manuscript drafts and the published novel. For example, Ruby and Bill Hill sell MIRACLE PRODUCTS (File 42). The MIRACLE sign looms ominously in Haze's sight, especially as Bill attempts to convince Haze to join their enterprise. In the published work, the first image shows Haze deliberating about which way to go (Wise 3), while the final image symbolizes his decision to follow the pinpoint of light which Mrs. Flood had identified as the movement toward the star of Bethlehem (113). Christ-haunting images appear, especially with Haze or Enoch, such as Haze's "I AM" statements (47, 49), his Church Without Christ (54), Onnie Jay Holy's description of Haze as "the Prophet" (76), Solace's confession (105), Enoch's perception that his "daddy looks just like Jesus" (26), his "tabernacle-like" slop-jar cabinet to house the mummy (67), or his calling to find a "new Jesus" (52). The repetition of the trinity includes Enoch's pictures on the wall (68), Haze's preaching points (84), the remaining wheels on the upturned Essex (107), the number of hours it takes Haze to walk back to town (10), and the strands of barbed wire around Haze's body (116). Justification is parodied when Haze declares, "Nobody with a good car needs to be justified" (58), Enoch does not want to "justify his daddy's blood" (69), or Mrs. Flood attempts to justify her plan to get Haze's governmental money (110). Contrasting demonic images also capture Haze's sight, such as Asa as a "tall cadaverous man with a black suit and a black hat" (19), Enoch's appearance as a hidden devil (41), and 666 signs (38, 106). O'Connor masked common but ominous Southern and religious signs as Satanic images to pressure

Haze into making eternal decisions. Almost everything that crosses his path (and hers) requires spiritual attention, the concrete images suggesting mysterious, religious visions.

Four specific concrete images reveal significant segments of Haze's secular and sacred visions: his preacher's hats, his mother's glasses, the mummified Jesus, and the rat-colored Essex. Haze's first physical description in Wise Blood focuses on his "stiff black broad-brimmed hat . . . that an elderly country preacher would wear" and his brand new blue suit (3). The taxi driver taking Haze to Mrs. Leora Watts' calls Haze a preacher because of his hat and his looks (15). When Haze cautiously enters Mrs. Watts' bedroom the second night, his hat hits the bare light bulb hanging in the middle of the room. When he removes it, a naked, comical-acting Mrs. Watts places the "Jesus-seeing hat" on her head (31). The hat adorns Haze's head the next morning when he goes to buy his car (34), but after Mrs. Watts "cut the top of his hat out in an obscene shape" (57), Haze determines to change women and hats. Haze buys a white hat with a colorful band, removes the band and reshapes the hat, making it "just as fierce as the other one" (57), not realizing at this point that his repentance must be internal, not external. At first, Haze used his hat as a blockade against Sabbath's advances (65), but when he discovered her in his bed, she threw his hat across the room (87), effectively eradicating that barrier. Haze denies the religious implication of his hats until Shoats dresses Solace Layfield in the same attire as Haze's. This duplication leads Haze to righteous indignation and murder (104-05). Haze's hats, whether black or white, signify his constant struggle with sin and salvation, a central component of his and O'Connor's vision.

Haze takes his mother's eyeglasses and her black Bible with him to the Army and to the city. In the Army, if he decided to read the Bible, he always wore his mother's glasses which did not match his vision (11). With tired, blurry sight, Haze never had a clear understanding of the Bible's message. Clearly donning the glasses as a disguise of external piety, Haze alienated his army buddies. Eventually deciding to ignore his soul and believe in nothing, he basically forgot the glasses and the Bible until packing his belongings so he could flee from Sabbath. When Haze rediscovers the glasses case and once again puts on his mother's second eyes, "The silver-rimmed glasses gave him a look of deflected sharpness, as if they were hiding some dishonest plan that would show his naked eyes" (96). With his face blending into that of his mother's, Haze's altered perception sees Sabbath enter the bedroom cradling the mummy in her arms, creating a bizarre Madonna and child image which Haze promptly annihilates by smashing the mummy, shouting at Sabbath, and throwing the glasses out the bedroom window into the rainy abyss (97). His mother's glasses embody religious vision, an affiliation that Haze simultaneously abhors and desires. With or without the glasses, Haze still retains a distorted view of life impacted by his mother's vision.

When Enoch brings the mummy from the museum and declares that it is the "new jesus" that Haze has been searching for, Haze does recognize its importance. O'Connor clarified for Hester that

Haze is repulsed by the shriveled man he sees merely because it is hideous. He has a picture of his new jesus—shriveled as it is. Therefore it certainly does have meaning for Haze. Why would he throw it away if it

didn't? Its meaning is in its rejection. Haze, even though a primitive, is full of the poison of the modern world. (Habit 403)

When Haze recognizes that the modern world is attempting to replace Jesus with other objects, he destroys Enoch's "savior" since he wants nothing tangible to make him focus on any "jesus."

Haze purchases a car to find his own freedom, so he can have a "place to be," a house (Wise 37). This house has missing and aging parts, such as the windshield wipers that make "a great clatter like two idiots clapping in church" (38), yet this dilapidated car, an Essex, a combination of a snake sound and the word "sex," captures Haze's distorted vision. Ralph C. Wood analyzes the car as "Motes's only sacred space . . . serv[ing] as both pulpit and residence, enabling him to incarnate his message in a life of perpetual isolation and vagabondage" (169). Instead of finding the solitude that he desires from owning a car, Haze encounters society: Sabbath hides in the back seat (O'Connor, Wise 60), Onnie Jay Holy jumps in uninvited (79), Haze kills Solace Layfield with it (104-05), and the patrolman shoves it over an "embankment" (107). The loss of this car that functions as a personal vehicle, a temporary house, an anti-spiritual pulpit, and a murder weapon actually leads Haze to a clearer religious vision.

These four concrete objects create substitutions for Haze: a new look, a new vision, a "new jesus," and a new church. His hats remind others of a preacher; the glasses keep him connected to his religious heritage; the mummified body speaks to Enoch's wise blood, to Sabbath's maternal instincts, and to Haze's anger; while the car eventually enables Haze to find and then lose another home.

The last two chapters of Wise Blood complete a circular pattern for Haze in his search for home. Mrs. Flood comments that Haze like all preachers are “a little bit off in their heads” (109), which links Haze back to his own father and his maternal grandfather, a familial home. Mrs. Flood “see[s] nothing at all” regarding death and eternity (115), but Haze is now sensing a spiritual home. Mrs. Flood selfishly proposes marriage, telling Haze that “Nobody ought to be without a place of their own” (118), an earthly home. Realizing that an earthly home is not the answer for his soul’s unease, Haze leaves (118). Ironically, when a dead Haze is returned to Mrs. Flood, she proclaims, “Well Mr. Motes . . . I see you’ve come home!” (120).

Throughout the novel, Haze tried various methods of escape, including the army, sex, establishment of his own Christless church, the Essex, self-mutilation, and even murder, but he finally realized that he could not escape, except through total commitment to his inner vision. In a letter to John Hawkes on 13 September 1959, O’Connor indicates that Haze knew that he must “either throw away everything and follow Him [Christ] or that nothing else mattered” (“Letters” 1108). O’Connor’s inner vision guided the development of Hazel Motes and his home-bound search.

O’Connor told Hester, 25 November 1955, that she “struggled over Haze” at the same time that she discovered her “energy-depriving ailment” and had to take “cortosone [sic] in large doses” (970). Admitting the parallelism of her life and Haze’s, O’Connor “conceived the notion that [she] would eventually become paralyzed and was going blind,” so she wrote Haze’s life as she pictured her own (970). A relieved O’Connor confessed that “God rescues us from ourselves if we want Him to” (970). While the

remission of lupus temporarily released O'Connor from such personal, depressing thoughts, Haze did fulfill his misguided mission to pay for Christ's sacrifice by blinding himself. Years later, in a 5 July 1958 letter to Hester, O'Connor confirmed that as a writer she was "trying to make it plain that personal loyalty to the person of Christ is imperative, is the structure of man's nature, his necessary direction" and that "[t]he Church, as institution, doesn't come into it one way or another" (Habit 290). The portrayal of this concept is explicit in the early renditions of Hazel Motes, a man with hazy visions and a spiritual mote in his own eye, a man who senses that his journey is taking him nowhere, not even to the "nothing" that he desires.

O'Connor wrote that Hazel Motes and Enoch Emery shared the fault of being "pursued by forces [they] let loose [themselves]" (File 134a). Paul Elie states that O'Connor's early struggles parallel Haze's and Enoch's "wise blood" because "she was trying to make out her calling, to figure out how to do what she believed she was called to do" (155). Answering a letter from Ben Griffith, O'Connor on 13 February 1954 returned to the Oedipus-like Haze: "At the time . . . Robert Fitzgerald translated the Theban cycle with Dudley Fitts, and . . . I was much taken with it" ("Letters" 918). She was searching for the "truth" of her own insightful vision, not attempting to blind herself.

During a panel discussion at a 1984 symposium at Georgia College & State University, Sally Fitzgerald contended that O'Connor did not approve of Haze's self-blinding but that, like Oedipus, man's violent nature, not destiny, leads to the blinding (Video File). James Tate responded during this same discussion that Haze is heroically violent, a tragic hero, because he blinds himself to stay true to his own beliefs.

Acknowledging the "dramatic impact" of Haze's blinding, Dorothy Walters also contends that O'Connor's purpose was intended "to awaken the full force of the many symbolic implications of sight-ignorance, blindness-knowledge, light-darkness, [and] death-life" (45). The parallel between Hazel and Oedipus emphasizes the hazardous insistence for truth. Knowing that the truth may destroy their security, Hazel and Oedipus still refuse to deviate from their searches. This concept is also true in O'Connor's life. Knowing that her insistence for her own vision in her own voice may destroy her hometown reputation and possibly even her literary reputation, O'Connor still refuses to deviate from her search.

O'Connor's characterization of Haze as an Oedipal figure deepens the significance of Sophocles' drama, taking the search for secular truth or human sight to the level of eternal truth or holy vision. O'Connor told Ben Griffith that she considered Haze "a kind of saint" with "integrity" ("Letters" 941), albeit a grotesque one. This description could also denote O'Connor herself. From a manuscript for her third talk at Georgia State College for Women, O'Connor defined modern grotesque characters as ones who "seem to carry an invisible burden and to fix us with eyes that remind us that we all bear some heavy responsibility whose nature we have forgotten" (File 245a). Haze embodies the message that O'Connor wished to proclaim.

O'Connor's vision for Wise Blood included the intentional incorporation of grotesque elements, not gothic ones. Writing to William Koon on 15 Dec. 1962, O'Connor specified, "I define [gothic] as an excess of morbidity for the sake of itself and I don't like it," but grotesque is a completely different matter (Letter File). Responding

to a written question from Margaret Turner about her writing as Southern Gothic, O'Connor answered, "I prefer to call my own work 'grotesque,' and to mean by this that I do not write in a naturalistic vein but use distortion to make what is not readily observable more observable" (File 287). Granville Hicks records O'Connor's argument that "the most reliable path to reality . . . is by way of the grotesque" (84). She posited that "when the grotesque is used in a legitimate way, the intellectual and moral judgments implicit in it will have the ascendancy over feeling" ("Some" 43). Two years before the publication of Wise Blood, 18 Feb. 1949, O'Connor wrote John Selby, insisting that his negative perception of the "peculiarity or aloneness" of the novel would actually give the novel its quality and direction (Letter File). Proud that her work was grotesque, O'Connor captured readers' attention and demanded their evaluation of what is normal, what is distorted, and what is true. The grotesque, for O'Connor, is only an exaggeration of the semblance of truth. Haze reveals spiritual truths while he masks himself as a nihilist and becomes what Carter W. Martin calls a "grotesque saint" (123). O'Connor would probably enjoy that same phrase associated with her own life, since one of her objectives was to write about issues of faith in her own distinctively grotesque voice, as evidenced by the development of her work.

O'Connor's vision was self-centered in that she emphasized what was most important to her, faith. She shared her soul on three levels: "the [deepest] one that KNOWS what is . . . , the 2nd SENSES what is, and the 3rd DOES what is" (File 276). These three levels were evident in the life of O'Connor and of many of her characters, like Hazel Motes. In response to the question, "Do you experience what you write

about?" submitted by Betsy Locheridge for O'Connor's perusal before an interview in October 1959, O'Connor wrote, "My characters are perhaps figures for certain concerns of my own that I share with everybody else" (File 284a). Characters like Haze embody O'Connor's desire to "see by the light of [her] Christian faith. . . [and have] the sharpest eyes for the grotesque, for the perverse, and for the unacceptable" ("Fiction" 33).

O'Connor also insisted that, "The novelist must be characterized not by his function but by his vision, and we must remember that his vision has to be transmitted and that the limitations and blind spots of his audience will very definitely effect the way he is able to show what he sees. . . . which . . . increases the tendency toward the grotesque in fiction ("Some" 47). In essence, O'Connor's function masked her "prophetic vision" ("Catholic Novelists" 179), her "realism which does not hesitate to distort [or mask] appearances in order to show a hidden truth" (179). In a self-centered, grotesque way, Haze's blurry, Christ-inspired vision reveals the ultimate surrender to an inner voice that refuses to go away, a vision that exemplifies O'Connor's as well.

Chapter IV

O'CONNOR'S PROPHETIC VOICE:

OLD TARWATER AND RUFUS JOHNSON

The character of Hazel Motes embodied O'Connor's spiritual vision, but as she revealed to John Hawkes, O'Connor veiled her voice as two other characters as well, the first as Old Tarwater in The Violent Bear It Away ("Letters" 1108). O'Connor maintained that the subject for a novel should be "of the gravest concern" for the author and for her that was "always the conflict between an attraction for the Holy and the disbelief in it" (1107). Stating that southern religion "is a do-it-yourself religion" and that a southerner's "unconscious pride" tends to create chaos, O'Connor admitted that she and her religious characters must work out "their practical heresies" in a dramatic way (1107). Explaining The Violent Bear It Away as "a more ambitious undertaking" than Wise Blood, O'Connor described Old Tarwater as a non-puritan prophet who steals and trains his great-nephew, Francis Marion Tarwater, to be the next prophet (1108). Understanding that most readers will identify with Old Tarwater's nephew schoolteacher Rayber who represents more modern liberal beliefs or non-belief, O'Connor made her choice clear: "it is the old man who speaks for me" (1108).

Both Hazel Motes and Old Tarwater are prophets, but as O'Connor told Hester in a 25 December 1959 letter, "there is a distinction that must be made between having prophetic vision and the proclamation of the same" (Habit 367). Haze's prophetic vision does not result in truthful religious proclamation; Old Tarwater's prophetic voice vibrates truth but is selfishly motivated. O'Connor admitted that an author who writes creating a

prophet-freak is revealing “an image of [her]self” (“On” 118). Each prophet illuminates a partial picture of Christianity, while O’Connor, through the literary masks of Haze and Old Tarwater, is able to present a more complete prophet persona.

All three prophets, Haze, Old Tarwater, and O’Connor, were most comfortable in the country but did go to the city to proclaim their distorted Christian message. Rejected by the city population, Haze personally discovers the truth of his prophetic vision, while Old Tarwater must train another Tarwater to maintain his prophetic voice. O’Connor also struggled about whether to publicly defend her fictionalized voice, and in a letter to Sister Mariella Gable, O’Connor explained,

Ideal Christianity doesn’t exist, because anything the human being touches, even Christian truth, he deforms slightly in his own image. . . . The writer has to make the corruption believable before he can make the grace meaningful. . . . About the fanatics. People make a judgment of fanaticism by what they are themselves. To a lot of Protestants I know, monks and nuns are fanatics, none greater. And to a lot of the monks and nuns I know, my Protestant prophets are fanatics. . . . Old Tarwater is not typical of the Southern Baptist or the Southern Methodist. Essentially, he’s a crypto-Catholic. When you leave a man alone with his Bible and the Holy Ghost inspires him, he’s going to be a Catholic one way or another, even though he knows nothing about the visible church.

(“Letters” 1182-83)

The historical, Bible-belted South was predominantly Protestant, but O'Connor was surrounded by the traditional "evaporating into secularism and respectability . . . replaced . . . by all sorts of strange sects" (Habit 407). O'Connor and Old Tarwater chose a less "socially desirable" Christianity but one they considered "real in the sight of God" ("Letters" 1183). O'Connor told William Sessions, 13 September 1960, that Old Tarwater "has to be a natural Catholic," yet she clarified that statement on 29 September 1960, insisting that "Old Tarwater is a Protestant and his being a Protestant allows him to follow the voice he hears which speaks a truth held by Catholics," since a Protestant will ignore the church's teachings if he perceives a message is from the Lord (Habit 407, 410). O'Connor's encrypted Catholic beliefs were often spouted through Protestant literary voices full of secret codes or hidden messages such as Old Tarwater's.

In her 27 January 1963 response to Dr. Ted Spivey's review of her work, O'Connor identified Old Tarwater as a prophet of action and as one who sees people "dammed by themselves," not by God (506-07). In a letter to Dr. Rosa Lee Walston, Henry King Stanford recalled his September 1961 conversation with O'Connor regarding The Violent Bear It Away: "Almost immediately I realized, as I had suspected earlier, that her own hero in the book was the old fundamentalist preacher, who without thinking or reasoning, felt himself compelled with relentless fury to baptize the child" (Letter File). Clearly, O'Connor and Old Tarwater recognized the presence of Christ and the devil, the faults of mankind, and their own obligations to proclaim what they understood.

Old Tarwater's voice evolved over a seven-year time span, occasionally spinning off into or leading to another character's development. O'Connor's earliest manuscripts

have no name for an old man who “had had a partial stroke and the muscles in his throat had been affected” to such an extent that “[h]is voice always came now with a guttural force” (File 160a). This old man interacts with his daughter Estella, his unbelieving son-in-law, and his three grandsons (File 160b). Several drafts cite a burning cross in the son-in-law’s yard the night after the old man’s death, with associations varying from the Klan, the crucified Christ, or a symbol for a religious call (Files 161-64). Rufus Johnson appears in files 165-70 only to resurface in “The Lame Shall Enter First.” File 175b depicts Old Tarwater taking his grandson to see a “wooden nigger” in town, the idea later converted into Mr. Head and Nelson in “The Artificial Nigger.” File 176c records that when the nephew touches Old Tarwater’s arm, Old Tarwater shouts, “I’m alive! I can act! . . . your inheritance is the bread of life,” reminiscent of the Grandmother’s touch in “A Good Man Is Hard to Find.” File 177 explicitly refers to the biblical prophets, “Elias and Eliseus [sic]” in describing the relationship between Old Tarwater and Francis Marion Tarwater. Old Tarwater’s shock treatments in the asylum correspond to the biblical prophet Isaias [sic] whose “lips . . . were burned with a coal” (File 177). Many revisions later, Old Tarwater still responds like the Old Testament prophets, sensing a call to action, going to the wilderness to prepare, and reemerging in an altered form.

In her customary way, O’Connor formulated an interesting name for her prophet. Josephine Hendin notes, “Tarwater [is] an embodiment of things that do not mix” (57). That combination of unlike substances is suggestive that a human is a mixture of dark and light, of earthly and heavenly components, or of stubborn and flowing materials.

O'Connor's usage of Old Tarwater could suggest the preparation of an Old Testament prophet with the New Testament idea of a prophet contained in Matthew 11.12, the scripture that precedes the novel. In the acknowledgement that Old Tarwater spoke for her, O'Connor portrayed the struggle between the human and the spiritual elements in her own life and her desire to leave evidence of her voice.

Old Tarwater and O'Connor's voices are intense, filled with an overwhelming yearning to share their deepest spiritual insight no matter how the message is received. Old Tarwater relies on inspiration for his words (Violent 169), presenting Jesus as the bread of life throughout the novel (135, 159, 160, 177, 198, 258, 266). Not knowing the full impact that his message would have on his protégé, Old Tarwater dies. His voice is sustained through Young Tarwater's. Even though O'Connor could not know the full impact that her voice would have on others, her voice continues to resonate throughout her designated messengers such as Old Tarwater or Rufus Johnson in "The Lame Shall Enter First," as well as through a multitude of undesigned personal friends and literary critics.

Old Tarwater's voice divulges a mysterious message, like O'Connor's. Religious faith cannot be proven by scientific facts but can be strengthened by biblical stories or references. Old Tarwater and O'Connor incorporate biblical allusions, leaving the reader the option to research or to ignore any spiritual meanings. The assignment for the prophet is to speak; the assignment for O'Connor as author is to record. Old Tarwater reminds young Tarwater, "It's no part of your job to think for the Lord" (129), echoing O'Connor's sentiments that writers "have to give Him the best we've got for His use and

leave the uses to Him” (Habit 360). In an interview with Joel Wells, O’Connor observed that Robert McCown “seemed to understand everything I did about the book [The Violent Bear It Away]” (88). McCown proposed that Old Tarwater represents “the spirit of prophecy” or “faith in the supernatural” and that his “backwoods” experience is a “symbol of the Garden of Eden where man lives in innocence and intimacy with God and the wilderness where prophets are forged” (73, 74). McCown challenged readers to “look below the surface of backwoods eccentricities of the old prophet, below the comical fulminations, to the heart of the man” to find the violent love that Old Tarwater has for his nephew and his great-nephew. Observing that throughout the novel Old Tarwater fights hard to achieve the respect of Rayber and of Francis Marion Tarwater, McCown argues that Old Tarwater’s love enables his nephews to be tough and resilient individuals. Plus, Old Tarwater plants the seeds for possible spiritual fruition to occur in their lives (78). Through the voice of Tarwater, O’Connor masks the same desire for her writing. She often stated that a moment of grace was present in all of her stories, whether the characters accepted or rejected it.

Old Mason Tarwater refuses to change his voiced message, even if that requires strange tactics to achieve the desired results. For example, the old man convinces young Tarwater to act like a simple-minded boy so the truant officer would not demand that the youngster attend school (Violent 133). O’Connor wrote that “it is when the freak can be sensed as a figure for our essential displacement that he attains some depth in literature” (“Some” 45). Through Old Tarwater, O’Connor fleshes out her statement that “[b]elief

. . . is the engine that makes perception operate” (“On” 109). However grotesque the vision or the voice appears to others, O’Connor’s belief is a catalyst for her characters of vision, like Haze, or her characters of voice, like Old Tarwater.

Old Tarwater’s voice parallels O’Connor’s in story-telling ability. His running commentary to his great-nephew includes detailed information, colorful imagery, and even occasional dialogue. However, his “thought did not always move at the same rate of speed through every point in his story” (Violent 128). Sometimes the voice resonates with fire, other times with calm assurance. So, too, does O’Connor’s. Old Tarwater’s voice “would run away from him as if it were the freest part of his free self and were straining ahead . . . to be off” (135). However, Old Tarwater’s freedom of speech leads to his incarceration in an asylum, curtailing his voice (160). Recognizing that he must change his loud boisterous voice, he “proceeded about the Lord’s business like an experienced crook,” mapping out his future plans with caution (160). Old Tarwater is speechless after reading Rayber’s psychoanalytic article that mocked Old Tarwater’s life and calling. The next morning, all Rayber finds in the baby’s crib is a written note of prophecy from Old Tarwater: “THE PROPHET I RAISE UP OUT OF THIS BOY WILL BURN YOUR EYES CLEAN” (168). Old Tarwater’s thunderstruck voice finds resonance through the written word. As O’Connor confirmed to Spivey in a 16 March 1960 letter, “the violence of love [gives] more than the law demands, of an asceticism like John the Baptist’s” (Habit 382). Violent love often dictates a prophetic voice, whether that of Old Tarwater, O’Connor, or John the Baptist.

O'Connor wrote Maryat Lee that "the best stage [of her work is the time] before it is published and begins to be misunderstood" (339). While O'Connor often felt misunderstood, Old Tarwater also felt discarded by the city folks who had ignored his warnings about upcoming destruction for those who "abandon [their] Savior" (Violent 126). Both knew that the secularized city population would either discount their religious voice or attempt to destroy its message. As O'Connor knew, society "doubts both fact and value" which forced her "both to mirror and to judge" ("On" 117). She insisted that a "prophet-freak is an image" of the novelist who must create a world with a sense of balance since the real world was unbalanced (117-18). After seeing an unfavorable review of The Violent Bear It Away in Library Journal, O'Connor wrote Hester, 16 January 1960, that the comments were "[h]ints of things to come" (Habit 370), with the review stating that Tarwater was part of O'Connor's "band of poor God-driven Southern whites" (371). O'Connor later responded, "I hate the racket that's made over a book and all the reviews. The praise as well as the blame—its [sic] all bad for your writing" ("Letters" 1184). No wonder the voices of Old Tarwater and O'Connor seem to come from "fury" (Violent 126), as from prophets corrected by fire after such remarks. In her fiction, O'Connor experienced freedom to yell or to protest, yet in her audible voice she showed restraint, having been taught well the required Southern manners. Following Southern tradition, she and Old Tarwater chose to share their innermost voice with those closest to them or to disguise it through the written word.

When the world rejects Old Tarwater's message, he focuses on his immediate family. Failing to convert either his sister or his nephew Rayber with his prophetic

message, Old Tarwater baptizes and later kidnaps his great-nephew, Francis Marion Tarwater, slowly, intensely indoctrinating the prophetic voice deep within him. Initially through defiance and prompted by devilish voices, Young Tarwater begins to fulfill Old Tarwater's mission, eventually becoming his messenger both in action and in words, drowning yet baptizing Bishop, Rayber's idiot child (242), the next child that Old Tarwater had tried to baptize. When friends misunderstood her, O'Connor often quietly, yet defiantly, corrected their views. For example, in a 13 September 1960 response to William Sessions, O'Connor chastised his sexual, Freudian interpretations of natural objects, telling him to "recover [his] simplicity" (Habit 407). When the critics rejected O'Connor, she focused on her own perceptions and those who truly understood her work.

O'Connor's strong identification with Old Tarwater can be traced through her written communication with Maryat Lee from December 1959 through July 1964. After receiving a "color reproduction of the jacket of [her] book [The Violent Bear It Away], O'Connor commented on the "Southern degeneracy" that publishers unrelentingly emphasized and then signed the December 1959 letter as "Tarflue" because of her cold (Letter File). Whimsically, over the next four and a half years, O'Connor and Lee used various versions of Tarwater signatures for O'Connor and Rayber derivatives for Lee, including Tarsoul, Tarbutton, Tarbaby, Tarpatch, Tarpot, Tarberry, Tarbilge, Tarbuter, Tarsquawk, Tarfeather, Tarsot, Tarsume, Tarfunk, Tarbus, Tarpaulin, Tarfaulkner, Tarblended, Tarbone, Tarweary, Raybum, Thoughtful Ray, Raychile, Rayplot, Rayculture, Raybuter, Raybug, Raystarch, Rayflake, Rayplay, Raydoom, Raybucket, Rayswatter, Raybog, Raytax, Raybush, Raycheck, and Raybat. Upon occasion, these

names signified in a teasing manner what was going on in their lives. For instance, O'Connor signed her 1 March 1960 letter to Lee as Tarbutton in response to a funny Savannah book review that mislabeled the hero as Tarbutton (Letter File, "Letters" 1125), and Lee called O'Connor "Tarballs" after O'Connor sent her homemade bourbon balls (Letter File). O'Connor and Lee readily adopted the interchanging of their names with Tar and Ray derivatives both with humorous and serious concerns, with Lee even referring to one of her plays as "TARCHAMBER" (Letter File).

At least four letters from O'Connor to Lee have the explicit Tarwater signature. On 9 March 1960, O'Connor signed her letter to Lee with "Love & cheers, Tarwater himself" after recalling that her "My Relatives" chronicle that she wrote at the age of ten was "in the naturalistic vein and was not well received" (Letter File). Tarwater is also her closing autograph to a January 1961 letter that discussed the future possibilities of segregation laws in the South (Letter File), recognizing the difficulty of blending two opposing elements. Responding to Lee's irate letter condemning O'Connor for writing a preface for the ten year anniversary reprint of Wise Blood, O'Connor agreed with Lee's sentiments:

You are eckjactly [sic] right. I refused to do a note for over a year. Then they found out they couldn't get the copyrite [sic] changed unless I did, so I done it. Called in my Jesuit advisers and said, 'Holy Fathers, let's nail this thing up.' Where I made my mistake was not putting it in Latin. Next time I will. It's really a swell note. I like it. It'll make a lot of people quit

reading me that should have quit long ago! – Yours, Tarwater, Emory &

Motes (Letter File, 16 Aug. 1962)

The inclusion of Enoch and Haze with Tarwater definitely shows the intensity of O'Connor's attitude. Her surly disposition, voice, and vision are all represented in this animated response. In a July 1963 letter, O'Connor wrote, "I don't know that my insides have ever made a book—too muddy & obscure," but she recognized Elizabeth Sewell's "Now Bless Thyself" as "exhibiting insides" that she liked. The signature for this letter was, "Take care of your insides. Devot [sic], Insidetarwater" (Letter File). O'Connor clearly connected her voice with Tarwater's and with his struggles to make his voice heard before and after his demise. Old Tarwater masks O'Connor's unruly, energetic voice that she did not feel comfortable revealing as her own and exhibits O'Connor's seriousness regarding prophetic understanding.

O'Connor's respect for Tarwater, whether Old or Young, is evident in a 27 August 1962 letter to Mrs. William (Grace) Terry when she insisted that Tarwater's "call is real," that "[o]nly the strong are called in this way and only the strong can answer," and that his vocation "can only be understood in religious terms" (Letter File). Like Tarwater, O'Connor sensed a strong call to her vocation. Her writing career cannot be fully understood in secular terms only, because O'Connor readily admitted that her Catholic faith and her Southern heritage influenced her voice which might be explained as a "theo-Southern-tragicomedy," like Old Tarwater's.

The second character's voice that O'Connor claimed as masking her own was the devilish voice of Rufus Johnson in "The Lame Shall Enter First" ("Letters" 1157).

Speaking “counter to prevailing attitudes” in many of her works (“Some” 47), O’Connor often utilizes exaggerated or bizarre images to capture her reading public. Her voice definitely does not fit the socially acceptable preacher’s role in the South. She is first and foremost an author. O’Connor contended that a novelist “does not draw a moral . . . [but] lets the moral draw itself” (File 282a). Old Tarwater speaks of the spiritual in a harsh, traditional backwoods preacher’s voice while Rufus Johnson’s devilish speech deceitfully twists biblical language and stories. These two literary voices represent extremes regarding spiritual proclamations, one from a feverishly intense prophet and the other from a satirically hellish demon. Therefore, her effective juxtaposition of these two characters’ voices portrays the multiplicity of O’Connor’s own voice and her construction of Old Tarwater and Rufus Johnson as alter egos of each other and as two of her masked voices.

O’Connor informed Hester of her struggle while writing “The Lame Shall Enter First” in a 16 September 1961 letter: “[“Lame”] is a composite of all the eccentricities of my writing and for this reason may not be any good, maybe almost a parody” (Habit 449). In letters to both Cecil Dawkins and Elizabeth McKee, O’Connor reiterated her dissatisfaction with the progression of this short story, even as she was correcting the final proofs (460, 463, 475, 490). Yet, O’Connor rebuked Dawkins’ contention that Sheppard was Freud and argued that “nothing *in* the story could possibly suggest” that connection (490). O’Connor often cautioned people to read the story as a story, not to get carried away with unintended interpretations. If readers accept authorial voice,

O'Connor's fiction should always be read first as creative narratives, not religious declarations, since her works contain both secular and spiritual aspects.

Before seeing Johnson as a devil, the reader should recognize Johnson as a young boy without family support who resorts to petty crime and to deceptive wordplay for survival. However, as critic Ronald Schleifer discerns, Rufus Johnson truly "embodies . . . the reality of the devil" (84). An on-going epistolary debate between O'Connor and John Hawkes about their perceptions of the devil sheds light on O'Connor's and Johnson's voice in "The Lame Shall Enter First." On 20 April 1961, O'Connor wrote Hawkes that "the devil teaches most of the lessons that lead to self-knowledge" ("Letters" 1150). By 28 November 1961, O'Connor clarified her stance emphatically: "My devil has a name, a history and a definite plan. His name is Lucifer, he's a fallen angel, his sin is pride, and his aim is the destruction of the Divine plan" (1156). Rufus, as her Lucifer, brings satanic light into the lives of Sheppard and Norton with the arrogant intent to dominate their very existence. According to O'Connor, "Hawkes' view of the devil is not a theological one. His devil is an impeccable literary spirit whom he makes responsible for all good literature" (Habit 506). Hawkes acknowledged that O'Connor "reveals what can only be called brilliant creative perversity when she brings to life a denuded *actuality* [her devil]" (16). In "The Lame Shall Enter First," O'Connor's grotesque portrayal of a demonic voice speaking through Rufus Johnson is gifted imagination, whether representative of an actual devil or of a metaphorical evil.

Joyce Carol Oates posits that "the way into O'Connor's dimension of the sacred is through the secular or vulgar" (44). Interestingly, O'Connor said, "It's hard to make your

adversaries real people unless you recognize yourself in them—in which case, if you don't watch out they cease to be our adversaries" (Habit 145). Physical deformities often force the afflicted to perceive life with darkened vision and a negative voice. A devil-infested Rufus Johnson exhibits only the negative, O'Connor's first fictional inclination as well. This point of view echoes from an adversary through a real person, projecting one of O'Connor's masked utterances. O'Connor maintained that "[t]he novelist can no longer reflect a balance from the world he sees around him; instead he has to try to create one. It is the way of drama that with one stroke the writer has both to mirror and to judge" ("On" 117). Presuming spiritual depravity in most of her readers, O'Connor determined to push her own fiction "outward toward the limits of mystery," to expand the normal sense through the literary technique of distortion ("Some" 41). She admitted that this type of grotesque fiction would contain "wild," "violent and comic" voices "because of the discrepancies that it seeks to combine" (43). Old Tarwater and Rufus Johnson epitomize these characteristics of O'Connor's voice.

With O'Connor's penchant for distortion, this approach and the language should not surprise her readers. O'Connor explained to Eileen Hall, "It's almost impossible to write about supernatural Grace in fiction" without a negative slant ("Letters" 988). In "The Fiction Writer and His Country," O'Connor asserts that the "novelist with Christian concerns will find in modern life distortions which are repugnant to him, and his problem will be to make these appear as distortions to an audience which is used to seeing them as natural" (162). To emphasize the devil's control in Rufus Johnson, the lame-footed, solitary rebel of "The Lame Shall Enter First," O'Connor portrays him as the devil

incarnate in his demeanor, his looks, and his speech. Throughout the story, Johnson's dark, black-suited figure suddenly vanishes, as if he has supernatural powers. He has an abnormal gait because of his distorted club foot, his smile is usually a smirk, his expressions are predatory, and his intentions are destructive. Rufus, meaning reddish or red hair, signifies an appropriate name for a fiery, evil spirit. However, Johnson's eyes and voice dominate his devilish persona. O'Connor agreed with Msgr. Romano Guardini that "the roots of the eye are in the heart" ("Church" 144). Therefore, Johnson's eyes emphasize his true identity. For example, his eyes harden from internal pride ("Lame" 450), paralyze and stare through Norton (453, 454), become narrow and blank (462, 463), gleam with hate (465), try to disguise his true feelings (469), show triumph when his remarks visibly affect Sheppard (471), or become "like distorting mirrors in which he saw himself made hideous and grotesque" (474). If the eyes are a clear indication, Johnson's heart is devilishly evil. The old proverb that eyes are the mirrors of the soul appropriately describes the depth of O'Connor's meaning. Johnson's eyes illuminate the darkness of his inner spirit, the devil.

Like his eyes, O'Connor describes Johnson's voice as equally demonic. His voice sounds "cracked" (459), "outraged," "disembodied," "sullen," "low and hoarse, as if it were being forced out with difficulty" (468), "silent" (475), or even "jubilant" when he senses victory (478). As he talks, he hisses like a snake (463, 474) or snarls like a savage animal (479). All of these descriptors suggest images readily associated with the devil. While O'Connor did not personally hiss or snarl in public, at times the sounds of her voice parallel Johnson's, especially when she was overcome by interviewers, critics, or

lupus. One humorous example is when O'Connor wrote to Hester describing her frustration about a newspaper article. O'Connor commented, "I think they [newspaper people] are the slobber-heartedest lily-mindedest piously conniving crowd in the modern world" (Habit 537). That statement reflects O'Connor's type of hiss or snarl.

O'Connor's message, like the devil's through Johnson, is sly and twisted. The title of the story, "The Lame Shall Enter First," has a biblical implication yet is not scriptural. O'Connor seems to twist three verses that contain analogous meanings. In Mark, the scripture indicates that "it is better for [a person] to enter life lame, than having [one's] two feet [and] be cast into hell" (9.45). Zephaniah presents God as saying, "I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will turn their shame into praise and renown in all the earth" (3.19), while Matthew 19.30 asserts that "many who are first will be last; and the last, first." At one point, O'Connor considered changing her short story title to "The Lame Will Carry Off Its Prey" (Habit 449-50). That choice would have focused more on the devil and less on Norton and the opportunity for grace. O'Connor's tendency was to let the characters reveal the story and any coded message instead of announcing any blatant message. Ironically, Norton is not lame in body like Johnson, but because of his lame understanding, Norton does enter the heavenly realm first.

Likewise, Johnson's biblical knowledge allows him to alter its message. Johnson informs Norton, Sheppard's young son, that Sheppard does not even know his left hand from his right ("Lame" 458). This comment alters Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6.3 for followers to give their offerings without "your left hand know[ing] what your right hand is doing." Again adjusting biblical concepts, Johnson tells Norton, who is still grieving

over the death of his mother, that the way to reach his mother is to die in innocence:

“Right now you’d go where she is but if you live long enough, you’ll go to hell” (“Lame” 462). Of course, Norton’s suicide can be attributed to this advice.

Both Johnson and O’Connor exhibit a drive to create (or re-create) others into what they consider appropriate images. Their creative speech conveys unusual concepts and freakish ideas to those who hear or read their words. Johnson does not hide his identity from Sheppard, confessing “Satan has me in his power” (450). Nevertheless, Sheppard, the nihilistic counselor, rejects Johnson’s explanation and tries to replace it with one of his own (451). In an early draft, after Sheppard told Johnson that he would explain Johnson’s devil to him, Sheppard “carefully made his [devil’s] existence impossible,” conceding that the world had evil, “but the evil had no author, no place in it for a devil to hide” (File 202c). In the published story, Sheppard continues to deny the existence of God while Johnson satanically takes pleasure in antagonizing Sheppard with biblical revelations, such as the reality of a fiery hell (“Lame” 461, 476) and the necessity of salvation (462, 474, 480). Johnson’s devilish characteristics dramatically transfer into an enraged Sheppard when Johnson blasphemously ingests a page from the Bible (477, 481), proving the power of the devil in Johnson’s life to impact others. Thus, spiritual deformity overshadows physical handicaps. Like Johnson’s, O’Connor’s voice did not avoid the religious teachings of hell and available grace. Instead, O’Connor’s voice powerfully manipulated those messages through the distorted voices of Old Tarwater and Johnson. The combination of these two prophetic voices creates a balanced one for O’Connor, who has the freedom to modify her literary masks.

O'Connor's literary masks show her diversity: Enoch, Nelson, and Hulga, her disposition; Hulga, her heroine; Hazel Motes, her vision; and Old Tarwater and the devilish Rufus Johnson in "The Lame Shall Enter First," her voice. While these characters best depict O'Connor, occasionally she identifies with a few others. These temporary masks reveal O'Connor's affinity with her creations. O'Connor shared this anecdote with one of her agents, Catherine Carver, on 10 November 1955:

I can now travel 60 miles an hour on these crutches. The other day I was in Atlanta in a department store. An old lady got on the elevator behind me and as soon as I turned around, she fixed me with a moist gleaming eye and said in a loud voice, 'Bless you, darling!' I felt like the Misfit and gave her a lethal look whereupon greatly encouraged, she grabbed me by the arm and whispered in my ear, 'Remember what they said to John at the gate, darling!' I don't know what they said to John at the gate but I didn't stay to find out. It was not my floor but I got off and I suppose the old lady was astonished how quick I could get about on crutches. (Letter File)

O'Connor created her own "pleasure in life" that escaped the Misfit in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" (133). O'Connor even described the purchase of her new car in 1958 as a "black, hearse-like, dignified, a rolling memento mori" car, which was reminiscent of the Misfit's (Habit 294, "Good Man" 126). A 3 March 1957 letter to Granville Hicks reveals O'Connor's consternation in feeling "like a displaced person" regarding her attempts "to write a talk . . . [about] regionalism and religion in fiction" for delivery at Notre Dame (Habit 205-06). Even though Mr. Guizac in "The Displaced Person" receives that name

recognition (234), almost every character in the story feels a type of displacement, illuminating O'Connor's perception of mankind. The Misfit and The Displaced Person represent typical feelings of most people at some point in their lives, including awkward moments for O'Connor.

After Caroline Gordon and Allen Tate read a manuscript of "Good Country People," O'Connor responded 1 March 1955, thanking them for their letters of praise and their editing advice. In that letter, O'Connor confessed, "[T]he Bible salesman [Manley Pointer] . . . came without effort. I am might [sic] afraid he is my hidden character" (Letter File). O'Connor did not give any explanation as to the association, however. Almost always disappointed with her picture, O'Connor reported to Hester, 13 February 1960, that a Time magazine photographer came to the farm, took "about a million pictures," and would probably use the one that most "looked like Bishop" (Habit 374). O'Connor also told Hester that during the interview she was sure she "sound[ed] like him [Bishop] if he could talk" (374). O'Connor's depiction of Bishop was that of a "dim and ancient" child who did not have the full capacity for intellectual growth (Violent 177), which is how she usually felt about herself when she saw her picture in print or stammered through an interview where she had not been able to submit questions. Manley Pointer and Bishop embody concealed insecurities for O'Connor.

With a more positive association, O'Connor claimed to "emulate [her] better characters," one of whom was Mr. Shiftlet from "The Life You Save May Be Your Own" ("Letters" 1199). In January 1964, she was more concerned that "Revelation" reach a receptive audience than she was about monetary issues, so she followed the inclination of

Mr. Shiftlet's words, if not his actions, that there "should be some folks that some things mean more to them than money" (1199). Another alliance occurs with Mrs. Turpin from "Revelation." In the capricious signatures on letters to Maryat Lee, O'Connor became Mrs. Turpin on 21 May 1964. O'Connor and Lee had been corresponding about the short story and Mrs. Turpin's ability to get "the vision" (1207). According to O'Connor, finding a Mrs. Turpin-like character was her "reward for setting [sic] in the doctor's office" during one of her many medical visits (Habit 579). Therefore, O'Connor emulated the finer qualities of Mr. Shiftlet and Mrs. Turpin, the ones submerged beneath their quirky behavior.

O'Connor's conscious association with her characters discloses some of her obvious personality traits, as well as some deep concerns and desires. Critics have made links between O'Connor and other characters, especially focusing on all farm mother/daughter scenarios, missing fathers, or intellectual, rebellious females. These speculations must remain as such, unless newly disclosed O'Connor manuscripts or letters confirm actual intentions. Yet, O'Connor did acknowledge the temporarily donned masks of *The Misfit*, *The Displaced Person*, *Manley Pointer*, *Bishop*, *Mr. Shiftlet*, and *Mrs. Turpin* as having either internal or external connections to herself. These identified characters, along with *Enoch*, *Nelson*, *Hulga*, *Hazel Motes*, *Old Tarwater*, and the devil's voice from "The Lame Shall Enter First," show the shifting temperaments of O'Connor's personality, all characters maintaining the constant focus of finding one's place or purpose in life, or in Haze's world of finding one's home. In her search for a literary home, O'Connor masks her vivid imagination, her southern roots, her religious leanings,

and her own experiences to create a grotesque fiction that has found its permanent home within the literary community.

Chapter V

O'CONNOR'S SOUTHERN MYTH MASKS

C. Vann Woodward maintains that “[t]he best of the Southern novelists have never set out to defend the values or the prejudices of the errors of any particular age or section. . . . They have proved themselves able to confront the chaos and irony of history with the admission that they can fit them into no neat pattern and explain them by no pat theory” (38). Nonetheless, Nathalie Dessens posits that the Southern legend including its “glorious past, the chivalrous gentlemen, the pure and virtuous ladies, their heroic actions, the beauties of the region, the blessings of slavery, [and] the privileged relationships between the generous planters and their loving slaves” was a “political and ideological” minefield (159). Antebellum Southern legends continue to be a post-war mythical presence, not only in regional tales but also in current American and world literature.

Even though all myths hold some universal traits, most are refined by individual cultures to contain pertinent information for a particular people during a certain period of time, usually including the group’s value system, historical lineage, and religious beliefs. O’Connor’s societal values, historical region, and Catholic religion affected her personality and her work, yet she disputed that she was merely a Southern writer. Her artistic stance was not only “to deal with the life of man in a particular time and place” but also to write in a manner that integrated all people and eternity (File 236a). O’Connor’s particular time and place did explore myths of the Old South, its mysteries, its history, and its religion. As O’Connor maintained, “The image of the South, in all its

complexity, is so powerful in us that it is a force which has to be encountered and engaged” (“Catholic Novelist” 198). Even though she asserted that she “never think[s] in terms of fable or myth” (“Interview” 29), her personal and literary masks reveal the strong influence of established Old South myths upon her life and works, such as the romance of Southern magnolias and moonlight, the gentility of a Southern belle, the hospitality of a Southern lady, the superiority of a Southern gentleman or Colonel, and the loyalty of the slaves. While O’Connor argued that “Southern identity is not really connected with mocking-birds and beaten biscuits and white columns any more than it is with hookworm and bare feet and muddy clay roads” (“Regional” 57), she recognized that “the average reader believes that the fiction of the South can be divided into two kinds, which he would call the Romantic and the Realistic” (File 236a). For O’Connor, the Romantic novel basically established good public relations, while the Realistic one focused too much on the “sordidness” of life (File 236a). Avoiding what she called “the sentimentality of the veranda” and the “sentimentality of the outhouse” (File 236a), O’Connor established her own unsentimental style, moving beyond the mythic South to create a distorted combination of the two - the Southern grotesque. Knowing that she dealt with “something the majority don’t believe in or wish to see,” she knew she had “to get and hold their attention usually by extreme means” (qtd. in Turner 43).

In an unpublished letter to William Van O’Connor, an author, English professor, literary critic, and editor of American Quarterly, Flannery O’Connor explained her “theory” of the grotesque in her works:

I am not and have never been interested in the grotesque for its own sake or in freaks and abnormal people because of their freakishness or their abnormalities. It seems to me that the grotesque can have no meaning in fiction unless it is seen or felt in relation to what is right and normal. My own belief about what is (morally) right and normal comes from Christian orthodoxy; comes from believing that Christ should be the center of life and of the individual soul; whereas, the most obvious thing about the society I live in and write about is that Christ is hardly the center of it. Even in the "Bible Belt" where I come from, Christ only haunts us from the fringes. I am a Catholic living in a society that is nominally Protestant but isn't even that with much vigor any more. My angle of vision being what is, I am probably conscious of many things as being grotesque, which people who are more a part of this society, more adjusted to it, would simply consider normal.

Also, I think that these are times when one who sees from a religious point of view will tend to certain violences of expression and form to get his vision across to what he will take to be a hostile audience. Writers who do believe in religious realities and propose to get them across in fiction, have to cope with a deaf, dumb, and blind reader; and the grotesque may be one of our desperate answers. (Syracuse Collection)

O'Connor's altered responses to these Old South myths show how she distorted Southern customs into her own Southern grotesque style, creating a self-defining mask

evident through the literary characters that she acknowledged as sharing her own characteristics. These formerly identified characters appear in Wise Blood, “The Artificial Nigger,” “Good Country People,” The Violent Bear It Away, and “The Lame Shall Enter First.” As Anne Goodwyn Jones maintains, “to have a voice is to have a self. Learning to express the self in language is intimately related to learning to be. . . . For southern women, particularly, the quality of voice reveals the condition of selfhood” (37). Throughout the South and all around the world, women’s power through the written word is still accepted more easily than women’s power through the spoken word. Fiction is a positive way for women to speak since readers can rationalize or justify the truths or falsehoods that are suggested through stories. O’Connor accepts that challenge in her Southern-based narratives and issues that same challenge to her readers.

When O’Connor began writing, the “mythical entity, The School of Southern Degeneracy,” limited her imagination until she became “less naïve” and wrote from the mysterious inspiration within her deepest recesses instead of from surface expectations (O’Connor, “Some” 38-39). Combining this emerging mystery with concrete realism enabled O’Connor to show “possibility” instead of “probability,” as well as characters “forced out to meet evil and grace” in bizarre situations (42). Eventually evolving into a prophetic “realist of distance” (44), O’Connor incorporated into her stories her knowledge of and relationship with the stereotypical Southern sociological myths, the ones revealing group values and cultural identity. Yet, she altered the original Southern historical myths to formulate her own personal grotesque, humorous versions that included peculiarities of myths applicable to any region.

Magnolia and Moonlight Romantic Myth

O'Connor's works are purposeful distortions from the refined idealistic or physical passionate romantic senses of the Old South magnolia and moonlight myth. O'Connor maintained that an artist's use of distortion, if used correctly, would "lead to great depths of vision" but cautioned that an author must first understand the original before rearranging its elements ("Writing" 98). O'Connor's rearrangement of the Southern romantic ideal into her own grotesquely comical versions depicted the societal, historical, and religious modifications of her particular time and place, the South, and beyond.

Instead of the magnolia and moonlight scenes depicting Southern romance, O'Connor's "romantic" scenarios in Wise Blood include Enoch's sexually bizarre scenes, Hazel Motes' fumbling seductive encounters, along with light and landscapes that belie tender atmospheres. An early manuscript even alludes to a possible homosexual encounter involving Enoch. A darkly-clad, bearded stranger stealthily follows the unaware, young eighteen-year-old Enoch back to his apartment and bounds through the door without knocking (File 147b). In the published novel, Enoch escapes from the "Welfare woman" who took him away from his daddy by entering her room without his pants on (Wise 24), knowing that she would be offended and scared. The most obvious romanticized scene for an excited Enoch takes place when he hides in "abelia bushes" in broad daylight, spying on swimsuit-clad females who are initially unaware of his presence (41). Enoch's urge for love and acceptance even leads him into criminal actions such as stealing and assault.

While Enoch's naiveté keeps most of his personal, passionate thoughts internalized or disguised, Hazel Motes openly acts upon his religiously-connected, sexual impulses. In early manuscripts of Wise Blood, a light coming through the window into Leora Watts' bedroom captures Haze's attention when he cannot fall asleep after sex. The "triangle of light" illuminates the dark colored bottles on her bureau, giving Haze a "vague and uneasy [feeling] like an unidentified shadow" that compels him to fiercely take her again (File 104e). At the bottom of a subsequent page, O'Connor wrote "THE SHINING IN THAT DARK ROOM" (File 104f), words emphasizing the psychological impact that the triangle of light had on Haze. The light may have stemmed from moonlight or possibly a street light; nonetheless, the light originated outside the room. In the published novel, Haze's romantic moments transpire in artificial light, sunlight, or darkness, never in moonlight. Now, one bare electric light bulb illuminates Mrs. Leora Watts' bedroom, the place of Haze's first sexual experiences, with Haze always extinguishing the light before slipping into her bed (Wise 16, 31), as if he cannot face his own rebellious actions.

In contrast, Haze's second relationship involves a young girl, sunlit shade trees, and dandelions (60), still quite the reverse of a magnolia and moonlight aura, however. Sabbath Lily Hawks always initiates any sexual contact, even though Haze had originally intended to seduce her. At first, Haze manages to evade Sabbath's childish sexual ploys, but when she waits for him in his own bed, he turns out the light, undresses, and lies down in the dark seemingly to accept her advances, not to instigate his own (86). Much

later, after blinding himself, Haze discovers himself in another female's wiles, those of Mrs. Flood, an enterprising widow.

Haze's affairs with an experienced whore, a young temptress, and finally a landlady widow do not include magnolias and moonlight, flowers or candy, elaborate trappings, or any typical Southern romantic techniques. Because of O'Connor's Southern-based grotesqueness, Enoch and Haze find themselves surrounded by unromantic effects, weeds and shadowy landscapes instead of flowers, bright or artificial lights instead of enticing moonlight, and oblivious or aggressive partners instead of loving companions. O'Connor masked a distorted Southern concept of romance in Wise Blood in much the same surly, egocentrically focused, cantankerous manner as her acknowledged disposition and vision depicted by Enoch and Haze.

Even with the structural framing of full moonlight in O'Connor's "The Artificial Nigger," romance is not the focus. While Nelson's grandfather, Mr. Head, views the grave and dignified face of the moon (249), he visualizes the responsibility that he has for his grandson. As they wait for the train that will take them to the city, the insufficient moon creates an eerie atmosphere for the objects surrounding them, much like the atmosphere affecting Haze in early manuscripts of Wise Blood. O'Connor's moonlight seems to be telling Nelson and his grandfather to stay home since the weak moonlight refuses to offer them any guidance. Only when Nelson and his grandfather return from their awkward city excursion to their isolated country home do they re-experience the "full splendor" of the moon (269). A Garden of Eden analogy reveals the landscape embracing and protecting them, allowing Mr. Head to experience "the action of mercy"

(269). The moon's light suggests a spiritual communication between man and God, not a romantic relationship between individuals. With partial comprehension, a weary, apprehensive Nelson senses a change as he returns to his country roots, paralleling O'Connor's own conflicting spirit upon her return to Milledgeville because of her illness. Typically, O'Connor masked spiritual thoughts as a substitute for romantic ones in her distorted moonlight scenes.

At times, O'Connor's characters' romantic experiences begin in their dreams. Campbell differentiates a dream from a myth in that "a dream is a personal experience of that deep, dark ground that is the support of our conscious lives, and a myth is the society's dream. The myth is the public dream and the dream is the private myth" (Power 40). In "Good Country People," O'Connor portrays Hulga's private romantic desires first through a dream. Feeling in control after the dream, Hulga responds affirmatively to Manley Pointer's pick-up line, "I like to walk in the woods and see what Mother Nature is wearing" (284). Yet, prepared only with her seduction image instead of picnic food, Vapex on her collar instead of perfume, dirty clothes instead of a fancy dress, Hulga subconsciously expects her personal dream to transform into a Southern quixotic experience (284). Like Enoch, Manley Pointer emerges from behind a bush and then O'Connor shifts the magnolia and moonlight romantic myth to a field with small pink weeds, a hay-loft in a dark barn, pornographic cards, condoms, a flask of whiskey, and impassionate, methodical kisses (284, 286-87, 289). O'Connor's landscape recognizes the unromantic surroundings. The sunlight is skewed revealing dust particles, the sky is "cloudless and cold blue," and the woods loom ominously close by (287).

Hulga's original fantasy of a sexual interlude eventually evolves into a spiritual awakening, definitely not the archetypal romantic vision. O'Connor's self-identified connection with Hulga's disposition and characteristics exposes O'Connor's dependence on spiritual aspects instead of reliance upon physical desires, especially after her diagnosis of lupus and the marriage of Langkjaer.

Romance and moonlight in The Violent Bear It Away represent off-color, sinister images. After the death of his great-uncle Old Tarwater, young Francis Tarwater drinks himself into a stupor, awakens to a black sky and a "pink unsteady moon" dipping and rising behind the flight of a night bird (152). In his drunken state, young Tarwater sees the reflection of the pink moon resembling "pale fire" in the nearby water, scurries through the black woods occasionally lit by a "flare of pink lightning," and arrives at the shack where he left his great-uncle. Under the light of the pink moon, he sets fire to the building that he imagines consuming the light of the moon, and runs away from the eyes of the fire to his Uncle Rayber's house in the city (152). Foreshadowing the baptismal drowning of Bishop, an observant hotel clerk describes Young Tarwater's prophetic eyes as "the color of the lake just before dark when the last daylight has faded and the moon has not risen yet . . . a lost light that came from nowhere and vanished into nothing" (217). When Young Tarwater takes Bishop to the middle of the lake, the sky changes from a bright pink to purple to a "round red moon" and then empties itself of all color (239, 241, 242).

Again, chased by a sensation of fiery, black eyes, Young Tarwater heads back to his burnt homestead but is delayed by a "romantic" encounter with a stranger. Instead of

a female, flowers, and wine, the male stranger courts Young Tarwater with a drugged cigarette and a bottle of whiskey, sexually assaults a naked, unconscious Tarwater, and leaves a lavender handkerchief in exchange for Tarwater's hat (259-61). Rudely awakened by the sun, a justifiably horrified Tarwater sets fire to the ground, flees, sets fire to a tree where the devil again whispers into his ear, and finally arrives at the grave of his great-uncle that had been completed by Buford, a neighboring Negro. In a prophetic vision, the light of the "diamond-bright" moon intermittently leads Tarwater back to the city to preach God's message of warning and follow in his great-uncle's footsteps (267). Once more, O'Connor's fiery landscape parallels ominous sensations, not moonlit romantic adventures. O'Connor's eccentric voice, much like the voices of both Tarwaters, often spotlights gruesome images, forcing sensual descriptions to indicate spiritual desires and sun or moonlight to signify heavenly or hellish messages, creating grotesque, "serio-comic" masks.

"The Lame Shall Enter First" contains conflicting images of the moon. Rufus Johnson's references to the moon include a devilish comment to Norton that if "[y]ou seen the moon once, you seen it" (460), destroying Norton's idyllic vision of a reunion with his mother (461). In Johnson's vocabulary and tone, nothing is remotely romantic about the moon, the symbol of heavenly life after death in the story. In fact, Johnson's eyes and voice reflect the fiery light of hell, not subtle moonlight. With a "narrow gleam in his eyes," Johnson insists that he "ain't going to the moon and get there alive" (461), deviously informing an anxious Norton that death is the only way to his mother (462). While Johnson perversely tempts Norton toward suicide, Sheppard fatherly encourages

both boys to reach for the moon. Even though Sheppard suggests that one day Norton or Johnson might actually go to the moon like other astronauts (461-61), he is really using the moon as an analogy that they should strive for their own personal heights on earth. Sheppard's emphasis is on worldly success, but O'Connor's masked voice, as a devil's advocate, blends with Johnson's, ruthlessly focusing on spiritual matters. Thus, the image of the moon in this story implies ultimate religious surrender, not earthly life nor physical romance.

Southern Belle Myth

One of the elements of the romantic Southern myth was the existence of an ideal Southern belle, a genteel, domestic-minded, upper-class, white, beautiful young lady who focused solely on projecting this expected image. This "feminine ideal," according to Giselle Roberts, "affirmed their gentility and self-worth" as well as elevated the "status of the family unit" (4). While for some authors a Southern belle persona often provides the correct Southern representation for a young lady, O'Connor deviates from this idealized depiction. In contrast, the females in the works containing O'Connor's self-identified characteristics usually depict stubbornness and determination, self-centeredness or perceived educational superiority, and ugliness either in body or spirit or both. Therefore, O'Connor's satirical presentation of this type of character is a mask revealing some of her deep-rooted emotions and struggles.

In 1952, O'Connor painted a self-portrait. When she told Sally and Robert Fitzgerald about her self-portrait, she referred to it as "a cutter," without further explanation (Habit 61). This artistic rendering depicts the way that O'Connor felt about

herself and her purpose in life. During the early months of correspondence with Hester, O'Connor enclosed a copy of the portrait, identifying the object on the right as her "Muse" ("Letters" 962). Explaining the same portrait to Elizabeth and Robert Lowell, O'Connor identified the object as a "friend" and her image as accurate (Habit 252). Even though most people connect O'Connor with peacocks, she did not choose one as her friendly Muse. The object sitting on her shoulder, as she clarified for many people, was a pheasant cock, not a peacock. Describing her self-portrait to Janet McKane, O'Connor made her choice clear. She liked the pheasant cock because he had "horns and a face like the devil" ("Letters" 1187), much like her fiendish attitude, or devilish mask, in many of her stories. O'Connor felt physically unattractive after "a very acute siege of lupus," aggravated by a high fever and the medication cortisone, which had resulted in the "moon-face" and thinning hair of her portrait (1187), yet she preferred her representation to photographs. In the portrait, O'Connor and the cock match in coloring and intensity, their eyes stare ominously straight-forward, and their unity is undisputable. Even though Ted R. Spivey is one who misidentifies the pheasant cock as a peacock, he does correctly recognize that the bird is "a representation of her inner prophetic spirit" (24). Paradoxically, O'Connor loved both pheasant cocks and peacocks, birds that represent devilish and heavenly images. Her self-identified devilish looks and impish voice are often secreted behind her many masks, but her colorful peacock images intentionally symbolize divine associations.

After appearing in a television interview with Harvey Breit in 1955, O'Connor wrote Fred Darsey, "I am sorry you observed my disappointed look. Unfortunately, this

is the look I have been carrying around since birth—born disenchanted. . . . On the TV program I looked like a very tired, very disgusted, very sleepy, very impatient moron” (Emory Collection). This description reinforces her persistent concept of herself, wholly unlike a Southern belle.

Louise Westling notes that the behavior of many of O’Connor’s female characters seems to result from rebellion against the gentility of their mothers (147), the newer generation resisting the ideas of the older. O’Connor personally “refused to play the part of the Southern lady” and “chafed against local expectations that she would produce another Gone With the Wind” (135). Understanding the Southern belle myth and consciously creating characters that balked at fulfilling this role, O’Connor successfully uncovered the discrepancies of the myth itself. Westling insists, “Southern white women carried a distinctive burden as the darlings of their world” in a society “torn by profound contradictions” (8). In her study of Southern women authors of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, O’Connor’s precursors, Jones asserts that “the southern lady is at the core of a region’s self-definition,” yet argues that many of the region’s women authors recognize the characteristics of “fragility and helplessness” as effective disguises for a Southern belle’s strength and power (4, 5). Through the absence of genteel women or through the presence of offensive females, O’Connor highlighted the impact that the Southern belle myth forced upon the generation of the New South. Instead of demure Southern belles, O’Connor fashioned bold Southern rebels no longer following the sociological myth but crafting unique individual sagas. O’Connor’s literary style

identifies her as a bold Southern literary rebel, although wearing a suitable Milledgeville mask.

To readers refusing to amend or to accept changes in the Southern woman, O'Connor drew "large and startling figures" for shock purposes ("Fiction" 34). Insisting that a person's country is "inside as well as outside" (34), O'Connor formulated her artistic creations so that readers could visualize both aspects and increase their understanding not only of an individual, but also of a region. As she contended, "To know oneself is to know one's region. It is also to know the world, and it is also, paradoxically, a form of exile from that world" (35). O'Connor's portrait of new Southern belles exposed brash, intellectually superior, large-figured, and self-centered females instead of demure, naively innocent, petite, coquettish maidens, depicting changes within individuals, the South, and the world.

In Wise Blood, all of the women with whom Haze or Enoch interact possess strong opinions and usually state them openly. None of the women are submissive and compliant, unless they choose to mask themselves in that role to get Haze's money or body. On the train, Haze encounters a talkative and inquisitive Mrs. Wally Bee Hitchcock (5) and three smart-aleck, cigarette-smoking Easterners (6-7), but not one Southern belle. His religiously strict mother dominates his memories, while, in the early manuscripts, his sister Ruby candidly disregards her religious heritage. No female in Haze's family looks like or acts like a typical Southern belle. Upon reaching the city, Haze does not meet any petite, delicate, fashionably dressed young ladies. Instead, he meets a repulsive, professional whore, Mrs. Leora Watts; a young, devious manipulator,

Sabbath Lily Hawks; several preacher-rejecting, female movie goers; and a lonely, but greedy, landlady, Mrs. Flood. Enoch's encounters with the opposite sex also challenge the classic Southern belle image. In Enoch's eyes, the well-meaning welfare woman is a persistent Jesus freak and so ugly that "her hair . . . looked like ham gravy trickling over her skull" (23). Enoch's sun-bathing "beauty" with a "stained, white bathing suit that fit her like a sack" (41) has matted, multi-colored hair (42), pointed teeth jutting out of her mouth (43), and a seductive manner. The women that Enoch harasses in the local restaurants and soda shops are rough-speaking, rude hostesses. Neither Haze nor Enoch encounters a Southern belle along his journey, but it is doubtful that either one would know how to interact with such an insubstantial creature if he did. In fact, Haze would probably ignore or avoid the emblematic Southern belle, while Enoch would most likely be intimidated by one.

All the women in "The Artificial Nigger" portray minor roles, with no Southern belle in close proximity. Nelson's unmarried mother dies when he is just a baby, so, obviously, his unwed mother does not fit the Southern belle criteria. Since Nelson has no experience with women before visiting the city, his first recorded observations of Southern women disclose his awe of and instinctual sexual sensations for a "large colored" woman (261), followed by fear and confusion when he knocks down an elderly woman in his frantic attempt to find his grandfather (264). Imagine Nelson's dismay as the horde of women witnesses surround and verbally attack him. His perception of Southern women would not be of delicate, young, beautiful ladies but of hovering, predatory, dark beasts.

If the young Joy of “Good Country People” had not been injured as a child, she might have fulfilled the traditional role that Jones defines as “Dixie’s Diadem” (3). However, as Hulga, she is the antithesis of a belle. Hulga is brash, overbearing, rude, sloppy, unfashionable, un-domestic, free-thinking, philosophical, and domineering. As a “large hulking” figure (O’Connor, “Good Country” 273), Hulga usually looks at men “as if she could smell their stupidity” instead of trying to attract or to entice them (276). She manipulates and yells at her mother instead of following the southern expectations regarding respect and obedience. She even rejects and mocks the religious norms. Yet, beneath the rough veneer of Hulga, Joy’s responsive soul hides in private agony. Hulga’s outer demeanor may symbolize a rebellion against the ideal Old Southern myth, but, conversely, Joy’s internal self embodies the meaning of her soul and gives her idiosyncratic distinctiveness, not societal similitude. O’Connor conceals her private soul by masking herself through specific characters, especially Joy/Hulga.

Women in The Violent Bear It Away are constantly ridiculed, not revered. Neither Old Tarwater’s sister nor his niece can be considered a Southern belle. Both are whores in Old Tarwater’s estimation because of their promiscuous behavior. When the religiously prophetic Old Tarwater confronts his sister about her errant deeds, she has him captured and placed in an asylum for four years (160). According to Old Tarwater, his sister and his “unmarried and shameless” niece who die in a car wreck deserve their punishment (147). The two Munson women in The Violent Bear It Away certainly cannot be part of the Southern gentility; they are black. Plus, the mother drinks moonshine, and her daughter Luella is a lowly household servant (148, 160). Instead of

meeting a Southern belle, Young Tarwater overhears Meeks, the devil in disguise, making an appointment with a call girl (171), fends off a nosy female hotel clerk's questions that foreshadow doom (216-17), observes female dancers who wear "tight skirts" (235), and abhors a large woman at the gas station who judges his actions (257). At first, young Tarwater's and Rayber's almost hypnotic reaction to a "UNLESS YE BE BORN AGAIN" service conducted by a missionary family (198) might appear to be admiration. Yet, O'Connor compares the woman evangelist's attraction to a magician's conning powers. The missionary's charismatic young daughter, Lucette, transports Rayber on a visionary journey that ultimately ends in his feeling of devastating damnation. Young Tarwater exits the service with "submissive" eyes (205) but quickly adopts a sardonic attitude like Rayber's, not allowing a female to be in control of his thoughts or actions.

In addition, The Violent Bear It Away mocks a well-meaning welfare woman, Bernice Bishop, much like the one whom Enoch frightens in Wise Blood. Ironically, in The Violent Bear It Away, Bernice Bishop's first appearance strikes a humorous balance between a culturally refined Southern belle and a radically feminist Southern advocate. Wearing a "pink flowered hat" and following in the footsteps of her future husband Rayber, Bernice Bishop "ruffle[s] like a peahen upset on the nest," emerging disheveled from the long trek through the corn field (127). Rayber's mission to retrieve his nephew Young Tarwater from the clutches of his great-uncle Old Tarwater is halted when Old Tarwater shoots Rayber in the leg. Comically, Bernice Bishop becomes the dominant partner as she leads a bleeding Rayber back through the field. She and most of the

women in The Violent Bear It Away refuse to accept society's requirements for dramatic roles as Southern belles, even if that results in costumes of pain and derision.

Seemingly out of place, no single female is mentioned in "The Lame Shall Enter First," even though the reader might infer that Norton's mother was a typical Southern belle before marriage. The only females in this story are dead or incarcerated ones.

O'Connor shattered the traditional Southern belle mold and recast her female characters as downright nosy, overtly sexual, materialistically greedy, manipulatively powerful, frighteningly intellectual, or religiously inept. A female's early demise might allow her to remain on a Southern pedestal, but even that image is rare in O'Connor's texts. In her typically Southern grotesque manner, O'Connor uncovers the unreasonable expectations of the romanticized Southern past, exaggerates the villainy of a modern Southern future, and ignores the balance of the more realistic Southern present in regard to Southern women. If Kathryn Lee Seidel is correct to maintain that "[t]he belle's personality traits and the plot or life story an author invents are roughly reflective of the author's attitude toward the South itself" (xiii) is true, then O'Connor's "strange shadows" of the ghostly Southern belle masks O'Connor's vision which she claimed "increases the tendency toward the grotesque in fiction" ("Some" 47).

Southern Lady Hospitality Myth

Anne Firor Scott, in The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics 1830-1930, recognizes that Southern "mythology assured every young woman that she was a belle, endowed with magic powers to attract men and bend them to her will" (23). Yet, marriage altered that idyllic lifestyle. Leaving a carefree, pampered existence, a Southern

belle often discovered a world of hardship or, at least, a world of acquiescence. Scott describes the married lady as “a submissive wife whose reason for being was to love, honor, obey, and occasionally amuse her husband, to bring up his children and manage his household” (4). In addition to these duties, the Southern lady was still expected to retain a hospitable, charming demeanor as hostess of the aristocratic plantation or even the plebeian farm.

Understanding that “[a]n identity is not to be found on the surface . . . but from the hidden and often the most extreme,” O’Connor reconstructs her regional myths in such a way as to develop “a small history in a universal light” (“Regional” 58). Through rose-colored glasses, a young girl experiences a magnolia and moonlight romance, but that fairy-tale existence generally dissipates after a few short years. Marriage, children, household responsibilities, and age itself create a more realistic life. Probably because O’Connor did not personally experience this change of lifestyle, most characters with whom she overtly identified also avoided these situations.

In Wise Blood, the innocent Enoch does not encounter any hospitable individual, let alone a mythic Southern lady. Haze’s mother represents an intense religiously-indoctrinated woman with no gracefulness or kindness. The more mature Haze meets three married Southern women: Mrs. Wally Bee Hitchcock, Mrs. Leora Watts, and Mrs. Flood. While all three of these women are affable to Haze, their motives are not related to conventional Southern hospitality. Mrs. Hitchcock desires someone to listen to her running monologue or to fulfill her insatiable curiosity. Mrs. Watts’ inviting and

accepting manner is a result of her prostitution business. Mrs. Flood's warmth toward Haze stems from the presence of a financial opportunity and a lack of companionship.

In "The Artificial Nigger," Nelson's grandmother, Mrs. Head, dies before Nelson is born and is only mentioned once. On the other hand, circumstantial evidence would suggest that the large black woman Nelson encounters might be a prostitute, since her description is much like that of Wise Blood's Leora Watts. Both are large women with tight-fitting pink clothing, mocking voices, and lazy seductive movements. While in the early manuscripts Haze is fascinated by a triangular pattern of light in Leora Watts' bedroom, Nelson is entranced by a "triangular path" of sweat seductively running down the black woman's neck, chest, and arm ("Artificial" 262). Both Nelson and Haze lose themselves within the intense power of sexual attraction. These women would be considered hospitable Southern prostitutes, not hospitable Southern ladies.

"Good Country People" may represent O'Connor's best example of hypocritical Southern hospitality through the character of Mrs. Hopewell, Joy-Hulga's mother. Mrs. Hopewell's name reveals the optimistic dreams of a Southern lady, one who externally depicts the traditional expectations of her position. Mrs. Hopewell treats her servants almost as family, even though O'Connor reveals Mrs. Hopewell's selfish reasons. Despite the fact that she is coerced, Mrs. Hopewell invites Manley to stay for an evening meal. As a mother, Mrs. Hopewell extends kindness and compassion to her daughter even when she cannot understand Hulga's beliefs or behavior. Part of the Southern lady myth depicted a quiet, intellectual genius, able to sustain the family holdings and

maintain the family unity. While Mrs. Hopewell does not exhibit an educational or an intuitive brilliance, she does fulfill the survival criteria of a Southern lady. In O'Connor's personal life, her mother, Mrs. Regina Cline O'Connor, was a Mrs. Hopewell-type in that she loved to spout clichés, had an educated daughter, supervised farm laborers, and efficiently maintained a family farm and business. This autobiographical semblance remains securely masked within a fictional account, allowing critical speculation but no definitive proclamation.

Marrying Rayber in The Violent Bear It Away, Bernice Bishop temporarily accepts the role of a Southern lady. After the birth of their "dim-witted" child Bishop, however, this once respectful, caring woman deserts both her husband and child, refusing to file for a divorce for fear that the courts would award her custody of Bishop (Violent 229). Instead of any maternal instincts for either young Tarwater or her own son, she flees from the "depth of human perversity" that she senses in their faces (230), worrying only about herself. No full-fledged mythical Southern lady would abandon her own flesh and blood. Rather, she would choose to suffer.

The stereotypical image of the Southern lady exists only through memories of Norton's mother in "The Lame Shall Enter First." Sheppard remembers a special, loving atmosphere created by his wife, such as serving special breakfasts on the lawn just for the family (446). Norton continues to idolize his mother and wishes to join her in the stars, even though Sheppard rejects the possibility of an eternal life and a reunion with dead loved ones. The only living female in this story is Rufus Johnson's mother who is serving time in the state penitentiary (447). Consequently, the illusion of a Southern lady

leads a young child to commit suicide, while the reality of a Southern rebel leads a young son to a life of poverty, cynicism, and crime.

In the traditional Southern woman myths, the Southern belle symbolizes beauty and purity and the Southern lady hospitality, with both representing the South's "sanctuary of values" (Seidel 140). The archetypal Southern woman lives on a plantation or family farm, but O'Connor's Southern woman can also be found on city streets, in rented rooms or bedrooms, dead, or, like Bernice Bishop, in Japan. As a result, O'Connor's Southern women wear multiple masks, depreciating her value expected by the traditional myth.

Southern Gentleman Myth

As part of the attempt to keep their idealized system from collapsing, Southern gentlemen supported the romantic myths regarding Southern maidens and wives, as well as presented themselves as patriarchal authorities whose gentlemanly code included honor and personal pride (Eaton 290-91). Thus, in an effort to maintain "their social order," Southern men stubbornly resisted changes to their system (Franklin 2). Thomas Nelson Page identified the Southern master as a self-confident, powerful, tenacious, grave, proud, and chivalrous man who "believed in God . . . in his wife. . . [and] in his blood," one who read the classics, reflected upon the South's heritage, and fulfilled all gentlemanly duties (157-60). Southern gentleman myths helped "preserve their control and status" and provided "a feeling of solidarity, power, and pride" for the aristocratic males, especially after the South was defeated by the North (Seidel 138). Like Campbell, Southern males recognized that "[t]he material of myth is the material of our life . . . our

body . . . [and] our environment” (Transformations 1). Therefore, in many Southern communities, Southern myths functioned as pedagogical legends about how a human life should be lived. O’Connor, along with other authors of her time, departed from the conventionally assigned Southern roles, ignoring both the romanticized and realistic masks to create her often misunderstood grotesque versions.

For Enoch and Haze, control, status, power, and pride are more individualistic than regional or societal. The rejection by his own father affects Enoch’s evaluation of himself, of other males, and of society. With limited insight regarding male societal conventions, Enoch searches for someone with whom to bond, wanting to fashion his own style of solidarity. Yet, every attempt is thwarted by his inability to comprehend what humans expect of him. For example, trailing Haze through the city streets hoping to make a friend, Enoch admits his loneliness, complaining that his father discarded him (O’Connor, Wise 29). Trying desperately to establish a connection with Haze but sensing another rejection, Enoch resorts to sniveling behavior. With tear-filled eyes and “an evil crooked grin,” Enoch questions Haze’s personal pride, accusing Haze of “hav[ing] nobody nor nothing but Jesus” (30). Claiming a paternal heritage of wise blood, Enoch locates personal power through a mysterious relationship with mummified remains (51). Eventually, Enoch feels compelled by fate to share his blood-felt “new jesus” with Haze (89), yet even this gesture of amity is cast aside. After the loss of his museum relic and his futile attempts to discover camaraderie with mankind, Enoch grasps for a relationship with the gorilla-suited movie star Gongga. However, the surly, ugly-eyed human in the suit humiliates Enoch, leading Enoch to a bestial escape from all

humanity. As O'Connor stated, "it is when the freak can be sensed as a figure for our essential displacement that he attains some depth in literature" ("Some" 45). O'Connor's self-described moronic and comic character, Enoch ("On" 116), is a prime example of a displaced Southern male, not a mythic Southern gentleman.

Hazel Motes' tragic flight from solidarity to solitude reveals his desire to resist the pressures of conformity, controlling his own beliefs and establishing his own powerful, proud identity. As a child, Haze was surrounded by traditional Southern males: a religiously-emphatic grandfather; a tough-speaking, independent father; and at least two brothers. Since they looked almost exactly alike, the grandfather "had a particular disrespect" for Haze, believing that Haze's sinful nature mocked his own evangelistic fervor (Wise 10). Haze's memories of his father and brothers revolved around their deaths, creating an obvious void in on-going family solidarity or pride. At the age of eighteen, Haze was called into military service, a societal status of power and pride, but Wise Blood concentrates mainly on Haze's intense struggle to remove himself from all of the traditional responsibilities and roles that the classic Southern male demands.

After years of mandatory submission, Haze's "gentlemanly code" includes egocentric behaviors resulting in rebellion, bitterness, defiance, self-mutilation, isolation, and death. Instead of a dandy gentleman aura, Haze emits a hostile, rebellious attitude. Haze's honor and pride, crucial elements of a Southern gentleman's code, appear as components of his personal sacrifice. His distorted concept includes rocks in his shoes, barbed wire tightened around his chest, and lime-blinded eyes. O'Connor's depiction of Hazel Motes was not that of a Southern degenerate, but a character "whose presiding

passion was to rid himself of a conviction that Jesus had redeemed him” (“Novelist” 164). In a letter to Ben Griffith, O’Connor praised Haze for his “integrity” (“Letters” 941), his ability to remain true to his own internal mission. Yet, in a letter to Hester, O’Connor recognized that Haze was “full of the poison of the modern world” (Habit 403). Haze and Enoch represent post-war Southern males whose childhoods did not provide for identification with the Southern gentleman code of societal honor and pride. Instead, Haze and Enoch experience a grotesque but “[t]ypical Southern sense of reality,” much like O’Connor’s male swan who fell in love with a bird bath after the loss of his female swan (548).

O’Connor admitted to Fred Darsey in an 11 April 1955 letter that her writing “is extremely hard, plain, unemotional and grotesque” (Emory Collection). This description fits her image of the Southern gentleman in “The Artificial Nigger,” “Good Country People,” The Violent Bear It Away, and “The Lame Shall Enter First.” In “The Artificial Nigger,” Mr. Head, Nelson’s grandfather, shows the lack of refined Southern manners. He condemns the citified surroundings, conjures up fear about its people, and denies his own grandson. The impact of his denial becomes clear to Mr. Head when Nelson stands “with his back to his grandfather,” symbolizing a loss of respect and honor for the aged man (“Artificial” 266-67). Since Mr. Head had described the city’s sewer system as a gateway to hell, he imagines himself dropping down into its pits (267). Only the mysterious reaction to the artificial nigger statue reunites grandfather and grandson “in their common defeat” (269), their realization that individual pride and personal power are more important to them than societal communion or status.

Manley Pointer presents himself as a good country person, an evolving Southern gentleman. Upon entering Mrs. Hopewell's house, he projects the image of a polite young man. He shakes her hand, turns on his charm, calls her a lady, and identifies himself as "just a country boy" to play upon her emotional heartstrings and to appeal to her role as a Southern woman ("Good Country" 278). However, his cultured manners mask an uncouth thief. Spinning a tale of a childhood accident and an incurable heart ailment to mimic Hulga's, Manley gains Mrs. Hopewell's compassion. Eventually, Hulga views Manley's darker side. Underneath that Bible-toting façade, he epitomizes a sexual predator, as well as a psychologically-disturbed criminal. His so-called simplicity actually camouflages a complex Southern marauder, not a Southern gentleman.

Maintaining familial continuity in relation to religious beliefs and ownership of land, Old Mason Tarwater in The Violent Bear It Away might appear to follow part of the accepted criteria for a Southern gentleman. Old Tarwater "had rescued and undertaken to bring up" his nephew by himself, teaching the youngster his "Figures, Reading, Writing, and History" (Violent 125). Spivey insists that Old Tarwater acts out of love, resulting in an absurd but fruitful life (131). Yet, as the narrative progresses, O'Connor portrays the visionary great-uncle's stealing of the nephew from a more refined household as a selfish act with Old Tarwater molding the child into his successor as a fiery prophet. Single-mindedly, Old Tarwater protects his interest in the boy by lying to or shooting at any intruders, even members of his own family. In his conversations with Young Tarwater, Old Tarwater demeans family, city living, and beliefs variant from his own. Old Tarwater's individualistic pride and fundamentalist

power dominate Young Tarwater's ultimate beliefs and actions, which are in opposition to those of a distinguished Southern gentleman.

None of the three major male characters in "The Lame Shall Enter First" are classic Southern gentleman material. Rufus Johnson harbors the voice and the actions of the devil, with all indications suggesting that his life choices have been made, while Norton would be more of an Enoch-type character who childishly seeks comfort and love from those unwilling to reciprocate. Norton's father, Sheppard, differs from the archetypal Southern gentleman in that he seems to care more about outsiders than family, more about recreational counseling for Rufus Johnson than re-creating the comfort and love that Norton needs. Ultimately, Sheppard fails to live up to his name, unwilling to guide his own son and unable to herd the reformatory boys. In one instance, Sheppard, albeit unknowingly, lies to the police about Johnson's whereabouts. Using the pronoun "ours" to connect his life with Johnson's, Sheppard felt that he had sealed "his solidarity" with Johnson (O'Connor, "Lame" 472), yet with his own son Sheppard's voice remains "brittle" and bitter (476). Sheppard's last minute modification of feelings ends dramatically and disastrously without his transformation into a Southern gentleman, just into an anguished father. His status as a counselor must be questioned since his arrogant pride and his powerless control failed to create solidarity with family or foe.

O'Connor's Southern male adult characters may initially mimic a few of the standard polite manners of the Southern gentleman, yet, shortly thereafter, their immature natures or their mysterious, sinister sides emerge. Instead of the traditional Southern

gentleman façade for a Southern formal ball, O'Connor's Southern males preferred a Southern grotesque masquerade.

In the introduction to A Memoir of Mary Ann, the nuns' story about the impact of a mischievous and remarkable cancer-infested girl, O'Connor tells an anecdote about the meaning of grotesque. During a gathering at Andalusia with O'Connor, one of the Sisters inquired as to why O'Connor "wrote about such grotesque characters" (17). Saved from having to answer by a guest who replied, "It's your vocation too" (17), O'Connor says she gained new insight into the Sister's chosen vocation as well as into her own craft:

Most of us have learned to be dispassionate about evil, to look it in the face and find, as often as not, our own grinning reflections with which we do not argue, but good is another matter. Few have stared at that long enough to accept the fact that its face too is grotesque, that in us the good is something under construction. The modes of evil usually receive worthy expression. The modes of good have to be satisfied with a cliché or a smoothing down that will soften their real look. (17-18)

In other words, most individuals try to mask their evil predispositions. For O'Connor, her Southern grotesque fictional characters should coerce readers into surveying both the bad and the good, to find within themselves their own tendency for evil and their own potential for goodness. Betsy Fancher described O'Connor as "uniquely fitted to portray the regional character, with its deep ambiguities, Gothic violence, wry wit, and idiosyncrasies" because O'Connor was "[i]mpious but devout, scathingly honest yet compassionate, deadly serious but relentlessly comic" (112). Paradoxically, O'Connor

expressed frustration over being misquoted by “B. F.” in an Atlanta article. Writing to Hester, O’Connor complained that “She [B. F.] asked . . . if I thought the *race* crisis was going to bring about a renaissance . . . in Southern literature. I said I certainly did not, that I thought that was to romanticize the race business to a ridiculous degree. In the story . . . they changed the word . . . to *social* so that none of it makes much sense” (Habit 537). O’Connor knew the Southern gentleman and black myths, but she also understood the reality of the tensions between races in the South and again relied upon masks to convey her understanding.

Southern Black Myth

In the idealistic Southern myth, slaves were loyal and obedient to the white upper-class individuals, even to the point of personal sacrifice. The black mammy often functioned as the secondary mother-figure to the white babies and youngsters. A slave who served inside the master’s home, according to Page, was often considered an “honored member of the family,” especially the mammy and the butler because of their interaction with the children of the plantation (166). When asked in an October 1960 interview at the College of Saint Teresa why she did not focus on black characters in her stories, O’Connor responded, “I don’t understand them the way I do white people. I don’t feel capable of entering the mind of a Negro. In my stories they’re seen from the outside. The Negro in the South is quite isolated; he has to exist by himself. In the South segregation is segregation” (qtd. in Fugin, Rivard, and Sieh 59). According to an August 1963 Atlanta Magazine article, O’Connor claimed, “The fiction writer is interested in individuals, not races; he knows that good and evil are not apportioned along racial lines

and when he deals with topical matters, if he is any good, he sees the long run through the short run” (qtd. in “Southern” 109). Aware of controversial terminology for Southern blacks, O’Connor chose her wording circumspectly, effectively masking personal preferences. The Southern idiom “nigger” was accepted as ordinary vocabulary and therefore effectual, especially in “The Artificial Nigger.” In Wise Blood, O’Connor revised the overemphasized term for a more well-mannered presentation, made no references to blacks at all in “Good Country People” or “The Lame Shall Enter First,” and actually elevated the status and the influence of a black family in The Violent Bear It Away.

The original manuscripts for Wise Blood spout the Southern idiom more than the published novel. During her lengthy revision and editing process, O’Connor eliminated some of the initial scenes and repetitive labels. For example, the peeler man in the published version tells Enoch to keep his inadequate amount of money because, “This ain’t no cut-rate joint” (O’Connor, Wise 21), but an earlier manuscript reads, “This ain’t no cut-rate nigger joint” (File 78a). In another early manuscript, Enoch added a story about a “nigger. . . [who] raped three ladies” in an effort to match the blind man’s tales (File 148f), but the published novel omits this version.

Deleted manuscript scenes involving Ruby often referred to a “nigger.” For instance, Haze and sister Ruby argue about their mother’s covert tobacco habit. While Ruby denies her mother’s involvement, Haze’s response attempts to justify her actions: “She didn’t keep it in a Buttercup tin like a nigger” (File 148b). In another draft, Ruby recounts that when she had a boil, “[a] nigger told me what to do and I did it and it went

off" (File 148d). Early in the published novel, Haze attempts to converse with the train porter, thinking that the porter is from his home area. When he tries to clarify how he knows the porter, Haze refers to the man as a "Parrum nigger" (Wise 5, 8), using the local vernacular. Otherwise, until ignored, Haze calls the man "Parrum" or "porter" (4, 7, 8).

O'Connor refused to make any changes to the controversial "The Artificial Nigger" title, even ending her contract with an English publisher who changed the title to "The Artificial Nigguh" for sensationalism (Daniel 93). When a Vanderbilt interviewer on 23 April 1959 asked her about the story title, O'Connor recalled the first time that she ever heard the phrase. Her mother was having trouble finding the address of a man who had a cow for sale. When she stopped to ask directions, Mrs. O'Connor was told, "Well, you go into this town and you can't miss it 'cause it's the only house in town with a [sic] artificial nigger in front of it." O'Connor immediately knew that she "would have to find a story to fit that" (qtd. in "Interview" 20-21). The blacks in this story are presented naturally, using the common language of the South. In a mocking reversal, Mr. Head and Nelson are both intimidated and enthralled by their presence. The living "niggers" basically mock the white strangers, while the "artificial nigger" becomes a symbol for familial and spiritual unity.

In The Violent Bear It Away, O'Connor supersedes the Southern black myth by portraying the Negro Buford Munson's loyalty to a friend, not a master, as an introductory panorama as well as an integral part of the final scenes of the novel. Buford's involvement with Old Tarwater initially stems from a selfish interest in Old

Tarwater's moonshine still, yet Buford willingly spends hours burying Old Tarwater "in a decent and Christian way," fulfilling, at least partially, Old Tarwater's requests regarding his death that are ignored by Young Tarwater (Violent 125). The placement of Buford's few appearances within the novel highlights his role as an essential component of the novel's semiotic construction. The narrator always refers to the Munson family either by their first or full names (125, 148, 151, 160-61, 265-67) or by using the words "colored" (148, 255) or "Negro" (151, 255, 265-66). Every "nigger" reference comes from the mouth of Young Tarwater (150, 151), the devilish stranger (150), or the woman at the gas station who reprimands Young Tarwater for his disrespectful actions (257).

As the narrator details the purpose of Buford and his wife's arrival at the Tarwater's home, they are described as "a colored man and woman" with instinctive knowledge (148). When they see the hole that Young Tarwater was digging, Buford automatically says, "Old man passed" as Buford's wife begins the characteristic Southern black mourning wail (148). Requesting an end to the "nigger-mourning," Young Tarwater heads to the still where he hears the devil's voice making fun of "nigger gospel singers" (150). Buford goes "the second mile," checking on a now-drunk Young Tarwater and admonishing him to honor his relative's death by burying him properly. Young Tarwater's drunken response is "Nigger, take your hand off me," which is a request that Buford obeys (151). The narrator refers to Buford as a Negro who has prophetic insight about the trouble Young Tarwater will encounter (151).

Buford's pivotal intervention in the life of both Old and Young Tarwater assists in some of their life-changing decisions. After Old Tarwater's release from the asylum, he

convinces Buford's daughter Luella to become a spy in Tarwater's sister's home, reporting meticulous details about the family's daily activities (160-61). This carefully-crafted and logical plan with Luella's assistance provides Old Tarwater with the knowledge of when and how to kidnap his nephew in order to convert and to baptize the young boy. Even though the retrieval of the nephew by his family alters Old Tarwater's innovative plan, Old Tarwater knows that the seed of salvation has been sown, his part of the prophetic mission that would eventually lead to another prophet, Young Tarwater. When Young Tarwater finally returns to his burned farmstead, "[h]e sensed a strangeness about the place as if there might already be an occupant" (265). This mysterious possessor of the land is a scornful Buford, one who claims three times that he is responsible not only for Old Tarwater's Christian burial, but also for the continuing growth of the crops (266). Sensing a dramatic vision that he wishes to avoid, Buford rides off into the distance, which, ironically, Young Tarwater follows after accepting his fateful call.

While O'Connor's public stance regarding race was politely expressed or civilly veiled in her prose, in her letters she would occasionally report her interest in or irritations with current racial situations. Writing to Hester on 24 August 1962, O'Connor shared a report of a cross-burning by the Ku Klux Klan one night after an attempted Milledgeville black sit-in that was averted. When recording the dialogue of her talkative white neighbor, O'Connor repeated "nigger," yet in her own wording she wrote, "We have a little negro house on a bluff overlooking where they burned it and people tell us that bluff was black with negroes watching" (Emory Collection). When Cecil Dawkins

was considering dramatizing an O'Connor work, O'Connor's restriction was that Dawkins not change "one of [her] colored idiots into a hero" (Habit 547). In a 3 May 64 letter to Maryat Lee, O'Connor revealed ambivalent feelings, "You know, I'm an integrationist by principle & a segregationist by taste anyway. I dont [sic] like negroes. They all give me a pain & the more of them I see, the less I like them. Particularly the new kind" (Letter File). Shortly before her death, O'Connor spent several weeks in the hospital. Upon her return home, she and her mother discovered dirty dishes, dusty furniture, and rotting food. In her 27 June 1964 letter to Hester, O'Connor complained that even though her mother had left instructions for the black help to take care of everything, "They had a month's vacation with pay. I sho [sic] am sick of niggers" (Emory Collection). Before anyone condemns O'Connor for her department, one should remember Southern history and that O'Connor often expressed frustrations with white individuals in much the same tone. O'Connor told Maryat Lee, 21 May 1964, "About the Negroes, the kind I don't like is the philosophizing prophesying pontificating kind, the James Baldwin kind. Very ignorant but never silent. . . . My question is usually would this person be endurable if white" ("Letters" 1208).

O'Connor's humorous or satirical renditions of blacks in her stories most often reflect as poorly on the white counterparts of the stories as the "niggers." When asked by C. Ross Mullins Jr. if the grotesque in her work had anything to do with the racial discrepancy of the South, O'Connor replied,

It requires considerable grace for two races to live together, particularly

. . . when they have our particular history. It can't be done without a code of manners based on mutual charity. . . . The uneducated Southern Negro is not the clown he's made out to be. He's a man of very elaborate manners and great formality which he uses superbly for his own protection and to insure his own privacy. . . . The South has to evolve a way of life in which the two races can live together with mutual forbearance. You don't form a committee to do this or pass a resolution; both races have to work it out the hard way. (103-04)

O'Connor's published works depicted the grotesque, "hard way" of most of her characters, white or black. While the Southern grotesque was O'Connor's admitted talent, her reliance on Southern manners and myths enabled her to mask a multitude of feelings.

Southern Literary Myth Maker: William Faulkner

Many of O'Connor's literary masks seem a response to or a reaction about a prominent Southern literary myth maker of her time, William Faulkner. Writing Hester on 20 March, 1958, O'Connor referred to Faulkner's classic book Light in August, but she told Hester, "I keep clear of Faulkner so my own little boat won't get swamped" (Habit 273). Responding to John Hawkes' gift of books, O'Connor wrote on 27 July 1958, "I braved the Faulkner, without tragic results. Probably the real reason I don't read him is because he makes me feel that with my one-cylinder [sic] syntax I should quit writing and raise chickens altogether" ("Letters" 1075). In 1959, while talking with a wealthy engineer who knew Faulkner as a friend but not an author, O'Connor assured the

engineer that Faulkner “was right good” (Habit 344). O’Connor recognized how she and most Southerners perceived the mythic Faulkner. He was the yacht; she was the small craft. He was six-cylinder; she was one.

In what becomes “Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction,”

O’Connor claimed that in her generation “each writer speaks for himself, even though he may not be sure that his work is important enough to justify his doing so” (37). She admitted that “[t]he presence alone of Faulkner in our [Southern writers’] midst makes a great difference in what the writer can and cannot permit himself to do. Nobody wants his mule and wagon stalled on the same track the Dixie Limited is roaring down” (45). He was a fast-moving train; all others were driving slow-moving wagons. O’Connor did feel pressure from Faulkner’s success, but she also recognized that he was an author who encountered the same critical Southern public that she did. O’Connor recorded a humorous conversational exchange, possibly apocryphal, between Faulkner and a local woman who had just purchased one of his books. Faulkner’s response to the woman’s question of whether she would enjoy the unidentified book was, “Yes, I think you’ll like that book. It’s trash” (“Regional” 55). O’Connor’s responses to local readers were externally polite, but, internally and in her epistolary conversations, she grumbled.

Based upon her own hometown critics, O’Connor probably felt kinship with another sometimes misunderstood and stubborn author, Faulkner, knowing that “[e]very serious writer will put his finger on it [a shared sense of Southern history] at a slightly different spot but in the same region of sensitivity” (58). She understood that both she and Faulkner were presenting their fractured mythical region through the pain-filled lives

of passionate and fanatical Southern characters. In an early undated manuscript about the nature of fiction, O'Connor had written, "Our [Southerners'] sense of tragic history, our still fairly stable body of manners, the tension of racial outlines here, all serve as a jumping-off point for the writer. But if a novel is any good, it transcends its surface material. Faulkner is a great writer [sic] because he writes about the soul, not because he writes about the South" (File 251a). Within her stories and novels, O'Connor expanded Faulkner's historical, familial "soul" by adding emphasis on characters' spiritual soul. Without question, the South inspired both Faulkner's and O'Connor's literary souls.

O'Connor emphasized the power of "literary imagination" in the South (Files 280a, 281a). O'Connor and Faulkner do not hesitate to incorporate their literary imagination through their Southern characters. Faulkner's "idiomatic, idiosyncratic, personal, yet nonetheless verisimilar . . . revitalized exploration [of] the Southern myth . . . opened the way to an authentic Southern literary tradition" for many "iconic figures of the Southern canon," including O'Connor (Dessens 163). O'Connor may have been unwilling to publicly compare her works to Faulkner's, but both authors' psychological delving into the Southern mind and Southern eccentric behavior leave American literature with memorable characters, such as Faulkner's Joe Christmas in Light in August and Thomas Sutpen in Absalom, Absalom! or O'Connor's Enoch Emory and Hazel Motes in Wise Blood. Christmas and Emory represent lonely, displaced Southerners, while Sutpen and Motes embody egocentric Southerners willing to destroy anyone who gets in their way. These characters represent Southerners unmasked from

the mythical legends of the Old South and forced to face the realities of a brand new world.

Southern literature will always have its historical foundation of idealistic myths and realistic failures. In her typical pre-arranged format, O'Connor answered a question for Betsy Lochridge about the importance of Southern contributions to fiction by writing, "You can't cut a character off from his society and say much about him as an individual" (File 284a, qtd. in Lochridge 40). In the introduction for the New American Library's edition of Faulkner's Sanctuary, Allen Tate defines Southern myth as "a dramatic projection of heroic action, or of the tragic failure of heroic action, upon the reality of the common life of a society, so that the myth *is* reality" (qtd. in Tate 151). Faulkner and O'Connor realized the impact of Southern myths and Southern failures upon their generations. With a variable "degree of self-consciousness" regarding Southern myths (151), both deleted from or added to the standard myths to create their own Southern literature and to mask their personal preferences. Tate reminds readers that in Faulkner's Sanctuary much of the "action is anti-heroic" or absent (153). This statement also characterizes many of O'Connor's heroes. Her literary characters, like Faulkner's, often act in an anti-heroic manner as a self-imposed strategy for security or for survival.

O'Connor's New Southern Grotesque Myths

Security and survival tactics of the Old Southern myths influenced O'Connor's personal and literary masks which, in turn, allowed her to recreate new Southern myths. From the romanticized legends of Southern belles, ladies, gentlemen, blacks, and William Faulkner, O'Connor formulated her specialized stories of Southern grotesques, characters

most often combining their Southern heritage and their religious inheritance.

O'Connor's inventive, bizarre masks and myths challenge readers to look behind their own masks to investigate their own myths of historical, social, religious, and personal traditions, much like she evaluated the validity or invalidity of Southern myths upon her own life. This Southern grotesque style that earned O'Connor the title of "an eccentric" in a review by William Jay Smith gave her "a certain feeling of liberation" and a comfortable feeling of seclusion (qtd. in Habit 413).

As O'Connor expressed in a manuscript for her third talk at GCSU, "[Modern grotesque characters] seem to carry an invisible burden and to fix us with eyes that remind us that we all bear some heavy responsibility whose nature we have forgotten. For the writer who uses it with serious intention, the grotesque can only be a means of going more quickly and surely to his true subject" (File 245a). She also acknowledged that she graciously accepted the grotesque label and that the label "forced" her to evaluate her focus and her subject "in this extreme way" (File 245d). As O'Connor stated,

An identity is not to be found on the surface; it is not accessible to the poll-taker; it is not something that *can* become a cliché. It is not made from the mean average or the typical, but from the hidden and often the most extreme. It is not made from what passes, but from those qualities that endure, regardless of what passes, because they are related to truth. It lies very deep. In its entirety, it is known only to God, but of those who look for it, none gets so close as the artist. ("Regional" 58)

O'Connor identified "the extreme situation" as the one "that best reveals what we are essentially" when she justified her grotesquely violent narrative tone ("On" 113). Her stories were inspirations "watered and fed by Dogma," which she defined as "a gateway to contemplation and . . . an instrument of freedom . . . [that] preserves mystery for the human mind" ("Letters" 930, 943). She asserted that Christian dogma "frees the storyteller to observe. . . . not a set of rules which fixes what he sees in the world. . . . [but] guarantees[s] his respect for mystery" ("Fiction" 31). She admitted to Fannie Cheney that "While I am writing my mind is always on the lowest common denominator, calculating the vulgar possibility" (qtd. in Stephens 18). Relying upon her assessment of Southern life and tales, O'Connor clearly established herself as a Southern grotesque author, including her reactions to Southern myths and Southern religious feelings, which established many of her literary masks. Contemplation about the realities and the mysteries of life helped O'Connor discover her literary philosophy and formulate her enduring masks.

Chapter VI

O'CONNOR'S MENTORING MASKS

O'Connor critics have studied various authors such as Edgar Allan Poe, Joseph Conrad, or Henry James whose style they assume O'Connor emulated, while others have written about the influence of Caroline Gordon's advice for and her editing of O'Connor's works. These conclusions are justified based on O'Connor's own acknowledgements of some of her influences or mentors. O'Connor said that she "admired Conrad" and had "read almost all of Henry James" but that the "largest thing that loom[ed] up is The Humerous [sic] Tales of Edgar Allan Poe" ("Letters" 951). In "The Nature and Aim of Fiction," O'Connor identified with Conrad's goal of "render[ing] the highest possible justice to the visible universe" (80). Her explanation of that aspiration centered upon respecting "the limitations that reality imposed" but realizing that reality "suggested an invisible" universe as well (80), thereby combining her emphasis on manners and mystery. In her admiration of James' ability to balance "the elements of traditional realism and romance" within his novels, O'Connor indicated that her novels would probably not please the general reading public and would certainly tax her skills ("Some" 49-50), because her style combined unusual, but serious, components.

O'Connor respected the mysteriousness of Poe, his exploration of "walled-in monsters," and his short story philosophy ("Letters" 911), yet developed her own unique approach. While mentoring Alfred Corn regarding both religion and literature, O'Connor posited that "Mystery isn't something that is gradually evaporating. It grows along with

knowledge" (1174). O'Connor's style that highlighted mystery, like Poe's, usually culminated in the study of human psychology. Characters by Poe and by O'Connor encounter not only the evils of their day but also the evils within their minds. Poe's protagonist in "The Black Cat" confronts the problem of alcoholism and his misguided anger, while The Misfit in O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" confronts his struggle for acceptance. One distinction is that O'Connor's characters face the opportunity of grace, while Poe's characters do not. In addition, Poe usually reveals pertinent insight through a character's thoughts or a narrator's point of view whereas O'Connor often renders relevant information through a character's own speech. Poe's narrator in "The Black Cat," sitting in a jail cell the night before his expected death, recalls his meek childhood disposition and his love of animals to convince readers of his sanity (297). In contrast, O'Connor's The Misfit declares to the Grandmother, "Nome, I ain't a good man, but I ain't the worst in the world either. My daddy said I was a different breed of dog from my brothers and sisters" (148). Both short stories narrate a murderer's tale complete with psychological fiends, but the reader's comprehension is channeled through contradictory techniques. Comparable to Poe's theory that readers need to read a story in one sitting to understand the dominant impression of the text, O'Connor told Dawkins "the reason I am a short story writer is so my mother can read my work in one sitting" ("Letters" 1100). Short story length, analogous themes, and examination of the mysteriousness of human psychological reasoning connect Poe and O'Connor.

Caroline Gordon was O'Connor's major mentor, instructing her specifically regarding characters' language and tone (947, 950). O'Connor told Hester that Gordon took "great pains" and was "generous with her criticism . . . highly energetic and violently enthusiastic" (991). As O'Connor matured as a writer, she recognized that Gordon's advice usually dealt with "matters of style" which is sometimes only the trivial minutiae but that which Gordon saw as "invaluable" (1094), and that which aided O'Connor's own craftsmanship as she developed her own style and voice. Just a few weeks before her own death on 25 July 1964, O'Connor wrote Hester that "[Caroline] thinks every story must be built according to the pattern of the Roman arch and she would enlarge the beginning and the end, but I'm letting it lay" (1218). Therefore, O'Connor "preserve[d] more or less a respectful silence" when she disagreed with Gordon's suggestions or forceful ways (1146), especially after O'Connor had established herself as a published and recognized author.

O'Connor also freely recognized St. Thomas Aquinas as a source for her "philosophical notions" (897), Nathaniel Hawthorne as an inspiration for writing romances (1131, 1156-57), François Mauriac as one of her "admiration" (Habit 356), and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin as "stimulating to the imagination" (68). These identified authors (and many more noted throughout her epistolary communications and lectures) contributed to O'Connor's knowledge and revelations about life and about writing. Yet little has been written about O'Connor's own mentoring and what her comments to other writers reveal about her personal writing technique and philosophy.

Loxley Nicols claims that “even in the most personal of the letters, O’Connor is herself oddly distant, removed” (15), and that “her use of the first person pronoun ‘I’ or ‘we’ is a persona or mask,” which creates “a mask of comic ‘otherness’” (19). Nichols emphasizes her epistolary “Regina mask” as one of O’Connor’s most prevalent comic successes (25), a “highly skilled ventriloquist” blending “comedian and dummy” voices of a mother and daughter so effectively that the reader would have difficulty distinguishing truth from absurdity (24). With some of her correspondence, this precarious stance exists, fulfilling the mask’s role of concealment. On the other hand, references about her mother most often combined humor and frustration, a common response for an only child haunted by a seemingly ubiquitous parent.

In most of O’Connor’s mentoring correspondence, the “I” is truly O’Connor and reveals a great deal about how she defined herself as a writer and a witness, both in a literary and a religious sense. Responding to an article written by student Shirley Abbott that analyzed O’Connor’s work, O’Connor’s “I” is emphatically her own. After commending Abbott for her sophisticated critique, O’Connor ardently insisted,

I believe that the writer’s moral sense must coincide with his dramatic sense and this means that moral judgment has to be implicit in the act of vision. Let me make no bones about it: I write from the standpoint of Christian orthodoxy. Nothing is more repulsive to me than the idea of myself setting up a little universe of my own choosing and propounding a little immoralistic message. . . . For the fiction writer, to believe nothing is to see nothing. I don’t write to bring anybody a message, as you know

yourself that this is not the purpose of the novelist; but the message I find in the life I see is a moral message. (Habit 147)

O'Connor clearly stated her purpose in this letter, whether using the terms "I," "writer," "fiction writer," or "novelist."

Upon occasion, O'Connor would carefully, and almost reluctantly, offer advice about the writing process to a casual acquaintance. O'Connor shared with John Lynch, a Notre Dame professor, that she had "no critical sense," writing and criticizing "by smell" (Habit 138). As O'Connor confessed to Hester, "I have it born in on me that my business is to write fiction and not talk about it" ("Letters" 946-47). Nevertheless, after Ben Griffith, a professor at Bessie Tift College, wrote to O'Connor about his reactions to Wise Blood in 1954, she wrote a thank-you letter that spawned years of correspondence (917-19). When Griffith dissected symbols from O'Connor's work, she casually chastised his attempts and then added, "but I am a novelist not a critic and I can excuse myself from explication de texts on that ground. The real reason of course is laziness" (924). In 1955, O'Connor read one of Griffith's stories but before making her comments recommended that he read Understanding Fiction by Brooks and Warren to help him revise his work (938). Cautioning Griffith that a "pathetic situation" must "speak entirely for itself," O'Connor continued, "I mean you have to present it and leave it alone. You have to let the things in the story do the talking. . . . You have got to learn to paint with words" (938). O'Connor drew upon her own artistry, both literally and visually, to call attention to this recommendation.

For O'Connor, artistic representation must permit individual interpretation.

Yet, O'Connor expected readers to gain a universal meaning from the local settings in her stories, and she had the same expectation for other writers and their works, including Griffith. If asked to comment on symbolic meaning within her works, O'Connor often recoiled, reiterating the need for a literal meaning. At one point, O'Connor wrote Hester complaining that "Griffith is a nice little man but he has his head full of myth and symbol" (1010). Allowing her characters to voice a naturalistic language was crucial to the realistic presentation of O'Connor's works. In essence, through her mentoring mask, O'Connor identified herself as a literal, artistic author who visualized her characters, their dialogue, and their position within society, not as an enigmatic architect constructing symbolic implications.

When Fred Darsey, a friend who left the confines of Milledgeville and Central State Hospital for New York, sent O'Connor some of his work to critique in 1956, she replied,

I certainly think that you have a definite descriptive talent. In this story it is descriptive rather than dramatic talent that is exhibited, which leads me to believe you would do better at the novel than the short story. For a short story, this one is entirely too long. In order to be this long—34 pages—it would have to have much more dramatic tension in it than it has. . . . In order to get any kind of dramatic tension in a story everything, every action, every description, has to lead in the direction of some central

point, some central realization on the part of the reader or some central realization on the part of the chief character. (Emory Collection)

She advised Darsey to connect specific actions to a “more profound nature,” increasing the overall meaning of the action and to add “drastic measures” that are required of short stories, echoing Gordon’s advice to O’Connor. Another admonition was to “show the action . . . not report it,” again reiterating her mentoring guidance to Griffith. Giving Darsey a specific example of his showing and rendering, she instructed him how to shorten the narrative. Admitting that at this point no publisher would accept this story, she encouraged him by saying, “If this is your first story it is a great deal better than most first stories, I can tell you that, and I would advise you to write others and try to realize some central meaning in them.” As a typical ending, O’Connor almost apologized that she could not be “more cheerful” but then added that his talent was still “in an undeveloped stage.” Her final words of advice included, “Just keep at it. Do you know the book called UNDERSTANDING FICTION by Cleanth Brooks and R. P. Warren? If not, you should get your two hands on it and proceed to enlighten yourself” (Emory Collection). Since she had gained valuable assistance from this book, it continued to be her initial recommendation for new writers. The emphasis on dramatic tension and implicit meaning that she mentioned to Darsey also permeates O’Connor’s fiction, while persistence and revision are two key aspects of her writing philosophy.

O’Connor was even less enthusiastic about judging literary contests than providing literary guidance. In 1958, as a judge for the first University of Scranton’s short story contest sponsored by their literary magazine Esprit, O’Connor sent her

responses to Mr. John J. Murray and Father J. J. Quinn. O'Connor's decision was to choose the one that was "least bad" since she felt all four freshman writers needed more practice and understanding of writing (Scranton Collection). O'Connor stated that "[f]iction writing requires more than just a way with words and I don't believe that most people of eighteen and nineteen and twenty have the maturity to cope with it" (Scranton Collection). In this letter, O'Connor even recommended buying Understanding Fiction instead of awarding a monetary prize, indicating that the purchase of this book for all four boys would be more beneficial than awarding cash for one. Nevertheless, O'Connor followed the progressive development of student work in Esprit, often encouraging Father Quinn and Scranton's literary opportunities. More often, O'Connor declined to judge literary contests, even admitting to Cecil Dawkins that she hated to be asked to judge such "things like that" ("Letters" 1069). When Gordon Lish, editor of Genesis West, asked O'Connor to judge a fiction writing contest in 1963, O'Connor had refined her refusal. Donning her Southern polite mask, she thanked him for his invitation but responded, "I'm no good at such and right now I am just too pushed to be able to read them or think about them" (U of Texas, Austin Collection). In a letter to Maryat Lee, O'Connor shared one reason: "I don't like to criticize the work of people who are strangers to me. You never know when something you may say might make them go jump in the lake" (Habit 396).

As early as 25 November 1956, O'Connor wrote about her hesitation regarding critiquing someone else's writing:

I suppose I am not very severe criticizing other people's manuscripts for several reasons, the first being that I don't concern myself overly with meaning. This may be odd as I certainly believe a story has to have meaning, but the meaning in a story can't be paraphrased and if it's there it's there, almost more as a physical than an intellectual fact. The person who teaches writing is not much more than a midwife. After you help deliver the enfant [sic], it is ungracious to say, Madame, your child has two heads and is black and will never grow up. The procedure I follow is, after its [sic] here, to announce only if it is alive or dead. Another reason . . . is that I remember my own early stories—if anybody had told me actually how bad they were, I wouldn't have written any more. Also, what is on the other side of the story is flesh and blood and you temper the wind to the lamb. (Emory Collection)

Three years later in a letter to Hester, discussing her short story "The Comforts of Home" and the need to allow Thomas "to reveal himself more," O'Connor commented, "A story has to have muscle as well as meaning, and the meaning has to be in the muscle" (Habit 362). This quirky blend of unrealized strength and truth, or possible physical and spiritual prowess, was a vital structure within O'Connor's writings.

O'Connor felt that her characters must reveal themselves in a natural way while any symbolic meaning must develop within the reader's mind and continue to expand with logical reflection. Always encouraging people to read an entire work and to contemplate its meaning themselves, O'Connor rarely analyzed her own work and often

resented questions that would pigeon-hole a character or a story's potential. To O'Connor, that type of narrowing could destroy the life of the work. As an author, O'Connor allowed her characters to speak, to act, and to reveal dramatic events and thoughts of everyday life and of eternal relationships. As a mentor, O'Connor recommended these same techniques.

When Maryat Lee asked O'Connor to read a friend's novel, O'Connor answered, "I would rather not read the novel of anyone I don't know though because there is too much danger of hurting the person. I don't mean hurting his feelings, I mean hurting his writing. I never keep my mouth shut enough about things that temperamentally aren't to my taste" (398).

O'Connor recognized that giving guidance for someone else's writing was a difficult endeavor not to be taken lightly or accepted carelessly. She also understood that beginning writers could possibly misunderstand her corrective instruction and lose their zeal for creativity. Instead of ignoring these requests, however, O'Connor always replied with a book recommendation or a polite refusal related to her own obligations. From personal experience, O'Connor told Dawkins that "It is awful disconcerting to read critical articles about what you've done—you find yourself writing like those people *think* you write. I listen to a few people I trust but not many" (233). Therefore, O'Connor did not want the responsibility of misdirecting another writer. She considered herself a story teller, not an editor or a manuscript critic. This self-definition was clear in one of her preparatory manuscripts for a talk in Savannah: "The first thing that is required of the story teller is that he rid himself of pretensions and be content to be what he is—

not a guide to men or a reformer or a social servant, but only a story teller. . . . Fiction offers no answers and solves no questions” (File 237a.5). Her explanation of story-telling contentment usually freed her to focus on her life’s vocation: writing her own story versions. Yet her story-telling had both meaning and muscle hidden in the painted word pictures. As she wrote, “[The novelist’s] concern is to render mystery that is lived and if he is going to do this, he must show what he sees and not what he thinks he ought to see” (File 237a.7). Her own literary vision was to tell thought-provoking tales, not share doctrinal treatises, illustrating her ability to mask pious religious implications.

For a very few close friends, O’Connor read and responded to their manuscripts on a more consistent basis. After reading two stories written by William Sessions in November 1956, O’Connor encouraged him to seek publishers, praising his “texture” and “prose [that] is relaxed and yet controlled” (Habit 180). While recognizing that his style and tone are not at all like hers, she still insisted that Sessions “have a little more dramatic unity” (181). With that in mind she wrote, “The trouble with being a writer and taking on the activity of critic is that you tend to think everybody else’s work should be like your own. You tend to a kind of diffusion which is pretty foreign to my way of writing a story, but after all you have to work out the unity of your way of doing things” (181). Since Sessions was also Betty Hester’s friend, O’Connor often discussed Sessions in her letters to Hester. O’Connor wrote to Hester about these same unidentified stories by Sessions, commenting that she had “probably now inflated Billy’s ego out of all proportion” but that “he has a natural gift for presenting a scene without strain” because of his ability to talk about trivia and “to mimic the social scene” (Emory Collection, 22

Nov. 1956 letter). Sessions' style was the polar opposite of hers, yet O'Connor attempted to corral his enthusiasm, correct his awkward syntax, and emphasize his future possibilities.

O'Connor would also express her opinion when she disliked Sessions' work. Critiquing a revision of one of his plays, O'Connor wrote, "While I think you have made your intellectual intentions clearer than in the other version, I think you have weakened the play dramatically. It is awful talky." Comparing this attempt to a previous version, O'Connor remarked, "Very frequently in this [revised] version, I don't hear the characters at all—I hear you." Finally, O'Connor suggested that Sessions "get more distance on the whole thing" (Emory Collection, 23 July 1960 letter). In a letter to Hester about Sessions' play, O'Connor removed her polite mentoring mask to complain: "You hear him talking through all these people. A play with 4 characters—all Billy" (Emory Collection, Sat aft. July letter). O'Connor's belief in allowing characters to have their own natural voice definitely influenced her analysis of Sessions' play. The comments that O'Connor made about Sessions' work reveal her faithfulness to how characters would speak and respond to their proposed situations. Her disgust with inconsequential or artificial dialogue reinforces her stance that characters' language has a distinct purpose and must be accurately rendered.

In December 1956, a friendship began between O'Connor and Maryat Lee, sister of the president of Georgia State College for Women in Milledgeville (Fitzgerald, "Notes" 193). In the first letter O'Connor ever wrote to Lee, she said, "I suppose you come to know yourself as much by what you throw away as what you keep and at times it

is appalling” (Habit 195). Therefore, the occasional clean-up and storage of O’Connor’s unfilled, numerous manuscripts and essay or speech drafts by her mother, housed in Georgia College & State University Library, as well as the unpublished letters now available in various university libraries, offer insight into the multiple masks of O’Connor that she obviously never expected to surface. O’Connor’s natural inclination was to destroy initial manuscripts after completing her revised, improved editions.

Through her correspondence with Lee, O’Connor contemplated her own writing philosophy. Having been asked by Lee and students at Emory University how or where she got her ideas, O’Connor answered, “I draw the line at any kind of research and even object to looking up words in the dictionary. I think you probably collect most of your experience as a child—when you really had nothing else to do—and then transfer it to other situations when you write” (204). O’Connor’s childhood imagination and encounters formed a creative basis for her later stories. Compared to what Lee referred to as her distinct “Voices,” O’Connor disclosed suffering from “a continuing muttering snarl like cats courting under the house” (204). O’Connor’s inspiration did not come from childishly sweet and innocent experiences but from her own contrived imagination and her self-admitted surly attitude.

After reading any of Lee’s plays, O’Connor usually encouraged her without proposing many suggestions. For example, O’Connor wrote, “Well, I was fascinated by the little play—a real morality play if I ever saw one and altogether powerful in spite of it” (200). In another letter, O’Connor simply said, “The play is fascinating and I presume will have to be seen to be believed” (Letter File, 1 Mar. 1958). O’Connor did share one

word of advice focusing on characters' speech when she instructed Lee to "make their emotions come through their language and not yours" (Habit 269), one of O'Connor's constant reminders. According to O'Connor, this instruction was valuable for any writing genre, especially her own.

When Lee considered composing short stories, O'Connor recommended her customary Brooks and Warren's Understanding Fiction: "It sounds elementary but it has its virtues in that it has a variety of stories in the book and you get some idea of the range of what can be done" (283). Another critical element of the book is the discussion section following each story in the first four chapters that asks pertinent critical-thinking questions about technique and content. Interestingly, in the second edition of Brooks and Warren's book (1959), "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" by O'Connor is added to the repertoire of examined stories, suggesting that O'Connor followed her own advice regarding the writing instruction and techniques within the book.

Later, reading Lee's stories, O'Connor must have felt more comfortable offering specific observations, as evidenced by Lee's response to O'Connor's comments about her Marionette story:

I'm still preening myself over your letter, as I had not expected it to get by so much—even though I thought it was pretty damn good in my innocence. After I fix up the passage you mentioned, and do something more about the father—who does figure interestingly though I seem to shy away from dealing with the implications I set it—I'll send it in to New

World as you kindly charmingly suggest. . . . And I thank you for your pertinent, exact, and encouraging remarks. (Letter File, 25 May 1958)

O'Connor's main objection was that Lee's "prose is sometimes quite mannered and detracts from what is going on" (Letter File, 3 Mar. 1959).

In 1960, Lee began work on a play that she laughingly called her TARCHAMBER (Letter File, 9 Mar. 1960). Shortly after Lee's April 1960 visit to Milledgeville and a discussion of that work, O'Connor cautioned Lee that "A word stands for something else and is used for a purpose and if you play around with them irrespective of what they are supposed to do, your writing will become literary in the worst sense. On the other hand you do need to think much more than you do about how you use words" (Habit 393). In other words, O'Connor instructed Lee to find a balance of denotative and connotative diction. When Lee thanked O'Connor for her assistance, O'Connor did not accept the credit: "My 'helping' your writing was largely a matter of your pulling what you wanted out of my head while I sat there. Also a matter of there is a kinship between us, in spite of all the differences there are" (398). In a humorous vein, O'Connor wrote Lee, using Lee's tone and style to begin the letter and signing it as "Your obt servant, Tarfaulkner" (406).

While O'Connor's correspondence with Lee was often whimsical and fanciful, subtle mentoring by O'Connor revealed basic tenets about her own writing: Consider language carefully, including a word's denotation and its connotations. Pay attention to the sound of the chosen language. Keep characters true to themselves. Rely on one's

own background and knowledge when creating situations, applying known basic principles to unknown experiences.

Caroline Gordon, Brainard Cheney's "literary godmother" (Stephens xiii), helped orchestrate the epistolary introduction between Cheney and O'Connor after Cheney wrote what O'Connor considered an enlightened review of Wise Blood (ix), thus beginning an eleven year familial-style relationship between the Cheneys and O'Connor. C. Ralph Stephens recognized the affiliation as "a kind of foxhole camaraderie, in which they respected, praised, and encouraged each other's efforts" (xxi). In 1986, Stephens was one of the first to understand the worth of "such detailed examples of O'Connor's critical principles being applied" (xxiii) when he published the O'Connor-Cheney correspondence.

In her critique of Cheney's novel This Is Adam, O'Connor reinforced the same principles that both she and Cheney had been taught by Gordon. O'Connor had previously questioned his intent regarding the beginning of the novel before Cheney wrote O'Connor on 3 December 1956 to thank her for her input:

Originally I had begun it with action (ie, dialog) but perceiving that I wanted the accent to be not on the subject matter of the meeting but on the ritual, this steps attitude became a sign. And I fell into the error of trying to substitute attitude for action, without even realizing it! Until you pointed it out. And I think you entirely right in suggesting, that I begin with the preliminary action of Adam, bringing him to the foot of the steps. Thanks no end! (qtd. in Stephens 46-47)

Cheney reorganized Adam [Atwell's] movement and posture, following O'Connor's advice. The first chapter of the published novel This Is Adam begins with "the good-sized Negro man" gracefully unloading firewood for the southern mistress of the house (Cheney 1). When Adam completes this task, he walks to the bottom of the front steps, taps on the step, and yells to announce his presence. Quickly, the mistress and her son appear on the top of the steps to converse with Adam and to receive his gift of a fish for their supper (1-2). With this seemingly casual representation, Cheney established the subservient-master pose, reaffirming the appropriate role designation of the times, which he need not explain in any other detail throughout the novel except through the mention of the steps. As Cheney reports to O'Connor 13 January 1957, he planned "the ritual at the steps . . . as a rhythm of sorts throughout the book, ending with it . . . for a total significance" (qtd. in Stephens 49), which he accomplished effectively. In a letter dated 16 January 57, O'Connor praises the more "natural sounding" second and third chapters while still concerned that the first chapter focuses too much on "thematic preoccupation" (qtd. in Stephens 50). Just as in her own work, O'Connor prefers an author to disappear into the characters, allowing their natural actions and speech to express any theme or dominant impression of the work. She defines herself as the proprietor of the pen (or typewriter keys) through which characters reveal themselves and the world surrounding them.

After reading ten chapters of his novel, O'Connor sent encouraging comments to Cheney on 9 July 57, especially regarding his portrayal of "the relationship between Adam and Mrs. Hightower [the widowed mistress] . . . in a concrete way, without stating

it, and that's what you want to do" (qtd. in Stephens 57). After the praise, O'Connor made four suggestions. First, she cautioned him to prepare crucial scenes carefully so the reader would understand their significance. Second, she reminded him to watch the shift in the omniscient narrator's voice: "Caroline [Gordon] is always telling me that when the om. nar. talks like anyone of the characters or uses colloquialisms that you lower the tone." Third, O'Connor advised him to remove any image that "sticks out and becomes too noticeable," thus "operat[ing], according to Dr. O'Connor." Fourth, she approved of his title change (57-58). Each of these proposals echoes her own tendencies. O'Connor preferred concrete images over abstract ones, was always careful of precise character dialogue, often eliminated or revised images to create a smooth transition of ideas, and fussed over titles. When Cheney's This Is Adam was selected for the Georgia Writers Association 1958 Award, he again thanked O'Connor for her "indirect efforts" in his success (100). O'Connor never expected praise for her critical input but considered her reciprocal communication with Cheney as friendly writers' conversation.

O'Connor continued to evaluate Cheney's manuscripts for proposed sequels to This Is Adam, which were never published (Stephens 75). On 12 August 59, O'Connor wrote two letters in response to Cheney's first attempt at a sequel. The first letter detailed twelve specific notations, focusing upon the necessity for clear character development and natural wording or images, plus cautioning Cheney not to lower tone nor be too sentimental (qtd. in Stephens 95-96). After receiving Cheney's summary, in the second letter, O'Connor repeated her previous advice about theme, cautioning Cheney not to overemphasis the racial issues but to "sink" them in the actions and

attitudes of the protagonist. In this letter, like many others, she tells Cheney to eliminate some of the political jargon and to “take the curse off the topicality” of racial problems (97-98). Even though her works include the Southern dilemmas of race and of religion, O’Connor diplomatically engages her readers to contemplate these issues. When she gave Cheney this writing instruction, O’Connor probably recalled the words of her former Iowa teacher Andrew Lytle. In a letter to Hester on 28 January 57, O’Connor wrote, “I used to have a very good writing teacher named Andrew Lytle who always said: ‘Sink the theme.’ Clobber the reader but never let him know what’s clobbered him; if he knows what’s clobbered him then you can’t clobber him again. . . . I think it is much better to clobber them two days later” (Emory Collection). O’Connor absorbed key elements that enhanced her own writing from mentors such as Gordon and Lytle and shared these during her own mentoring. Sinking the theme, not lowering the tone, and allowing characters to develop in a natural manner are three fundamentals that direct not only her personal work but also her peer advising, illustrating how her personal literary mask and her mentoring mask complement and echo each other.

Cheney’s quick response to O’Connor’s two letters indicate that he had needed her insight and that he could now “go ahead and do what ought to be done to—as you say—lift it out of topicality” and feel more comfortable constructing the protagonist’s voice (qtd. in Stephens 98). Six months later, O’Connor read Cheney’s additional chapters and complimented him for making the story flow smoother. Her “only serious objection” was the sudden way that the protagonist discussed his intent of eating “the body of the Lord,” instead of having the character “think to himself in his own head what

he is hungry for” (108). According to O’Connor, such a serious subject should provoke a solemn emotion, not lend itself to laughter. The very next day, 27 February 1960, O’Connor sent “minor notes” regarding Cheney’s book, mostly dealing with the idea of allowing the reader to “draw his own conclusions” and of eliminating those overdone images or clichés (109), two of her constant reminders to Cheney which she also followed in her own composition.

In February 1962, O’Connor wrote one of her longer letters to Cheney, expounding on five “strictures” that concerned her in his manuscript entitled The Tiger Returns. She encouraged him to take out the “rough edges” by (1) dramatizing a relationship between two of the main characters that is lacking, (2) changing to an objective tone and avoiding overdone images, (3) incorporating more dramatization and less reportage, (4) eliminating the “Roman Catholic” title, and (5) clarifying pronouns and omitting colloquialisms and slang (146-49). All in all, this letter reveals O’Connor’s insistence on dramatization, objectivity, concrete images, evading sentimentality, avoiding explicit Catholic pressure, and careful word choices and structure. She essentially defines herself as a meticulous crafter of language as she mentors other writers, especially Cheney.

O’Connor’s relationship with Betty Hester included occasional, mutual mentoring about their stories and novels. Nonetheless, O’Connor remained cautious with her advice and her language when commenting on Hester’s work ethic or manuscripts. For example, O’Connor wrote, “I am very handy with my advice and then when anybody appears to be following it, I get frantic. Anyway, the thought of your writing

something—anything—as a kind of exercise has got me down. . . . Don't do anything that you are not interested in and that don't have a promise of being whole" ("Letters" 1013). O'Connor also reminded Hester that allowing characters to work through their own situations was better than forcing a meaning upon them. Before she totally changed topics, O'Connor suggested that Hester reread the rough sketch and respond accordingly (1013). O'Connor followed these steps in her own revising and editing process.

Most often with Hester, O'Connor cushioned any corrective criticism or curative analysis between paragraphs of casual conversation or informal gossip. In a 6 April 1956 letter, O'Connor, almost defensively, remarked,

Now I am sure that I didn't call your story a "study of pride." A story is never a study if it is any good and I took that one [unidentified] to be good. But any story can be looked at in the light of any quality and pride being the most fundamental to human nature, I generally look at characters in the light of it. Further to judge the character is not to judge the story. You think too much of interpreting and analyzing and all that. Learn to write a story and then learn some more from the story you have written.
(1029)

This mixture of offering commendation, of suggesting alterations, and of sharing personal practice is typical of O'Connor's mentoring mask with Hester throughout the years. Natural character development was one of O'Connor's top priorities in constructing her stories, letting the characters talk, act, and discover the meaning of life in an ordinary manner. This advice continually appeared with each mentee.

In a 28 January 57 letter, O'Connor discussed Hester's characters named Sutfoots and Janelle. O'Connor advised Hester to add more mystery to Sutfoots and to avoid creating a pious Janelle to represent the Church instead of representing herself. O'Connor often recommended that Hester write novels instead of short stories: "One thing you will have to learn is that a story is a small thing and you can't do too many things in it. If you manage to make one decent point, you've done something and don't try to make ten others" (Emory Collection). As she supplied details that might strengthen the story line, O'Connor suggested leaving the reader guessing as to which character embodied good and which epitomized evil. With that idea, Sutfoots would be more mystifying and Janelle less sanctimonious. O'Connor always endorsed mystery but avoided pious speech.

After another reading of the same work, on 9 February 57, O'Connor assured Hester that the story "is much improved," yet O'Connor delineated several minor improvements:

You don't have to say a thing but once. When you repeat it you weaken it.
. . . You are too heavy-handed in your use of dialect. . . . The fewer
apostrophes you have in dialect the better. . . . don't have the word
Catholic anywhere. Also don't refer to Georgia in this because it ain't
necessary. . . . [don't] use Oak and Main because they are soap-opera
streets. (Emory Collection)

O'Connor also suggested that when Hester became tired with revision she should move on to another intriguing idea and then return to this work at another time. Applying this

advice to O'Connor's own writing, one realizes that she practiced what she preached regarding literary composition and work habits. Rarely did O'Connor fall into the repetition trap. She carefully considered each character's speaking voice and tone. She did not worry about exact English punctuation rules but focused on the natural rhythm and flow. She conscientiously shunned limiting her stories to a Catholic audience, to the Catholic religion, or even to one specific locale but expanded her ideas to include all readers. O'Connor did not follow anyone's precise pattern for story-telling but incorporated her love for the mysterious and the mannered as well as those affected by both concepts.

Always leery about sharing literary advice with Hester, O'Connor noted, "I am becoming convinced that anybody who gives anybody else any advice ought to spend forty days in the desert both before and after. Anyway, when I told you to write what was easy for you, what I should have said was what was possible for you. Now none of it is easy, none of it really comes easy except in a few rare cases on a few rare occasions" (Habit 240-41). Yet, through their correspondence, O'Connor willingly shared observations about her own work or argued about literary techniques in general, including this key reflection:

I think you are wrong that heros [sic] have to be stable. If they were stable there wouldn't be any story. It seems to me that all good stories are about conversion, about a character's changing. . . . Therefore in a story all you can do with grace is to show that it is changing the character. . . . All my stories are about the action of grace on a character who is not very

willing to support it, but most people think of these stories as hard, hopeless, brutal, etc. (“Letters” 1067)

O’Connor understood her audience’s perception of her work yet refused to lower her standards or to change her techniques in order to gain a more popular assessment. Responding to one of Hester’s essays, O’Connor disagreed with Hester’s terminology regarding Catholic fiction: “I know what you mean here but you haven’t said what you mean” (Habit 290) and her theology: “[I]t is going to take a lot longer to get it right” (290). Reminding Hester that she must make her audience trust in “the reality of grace” (290), O’Connor reinforced the idea that with time and more thought that the article could be effective. Believing that “[f]iction is the most impure and the most modest and the most human of the arts. . . closest to man in his sin and his suffering and his hope” (“Catholic Novelist” 192), O’Connor acknowledged “a moment in every great story in which the presence of grace can be felt as it waits to be accepted or rejected, even though the reader may not recognize” its reality (“On” 118). Therefore, ironically, the devil is an “unwilling instrument of grace” (118), as O’Connor masks the freedom of spiritual mercy through devilish voices and actions in her own works. For O’Connor, masking grace through a devilish mask was more effective than using a self-righteous character like Hester was sketching.

For the most part, O’Connor encouraged Hester’s expansion of short stories into novels, allowing extension of ideas and “room to relax” (Habit 324). Characteristically, O’Connor suggested that Hester rework her first chapter [of an unidentified work] by enlarging a conversation that “should foreshadow the whole novel” (323). O’Connor

strongly believed the construction of the first chapter of any novel was a crucial element of its success. O'Connor also resisted having any characters actually "discuss religion" and told Hester in a 5 September 1959 letter to avoid the same, giving Hester a backhanded compliment: "If you were stupider you would write better fiction because you wouldn't conceptualize things so much" (Emory Collection). Later in the same letter, O'Connor questioned the validity of a young girl's excuses regarding a decision to leave the Catholic Church. The girl's complaint of encounters with "stupid mechanical Catholics" may help clarify O'Connor's previous comment to Hester. Hester was not a "stupid mechanical Catholic." O'Connor felt that Hester's blatant characterizations of doctrinal or religious conversations would be overwhelming to the average reader who was not of the same intellectual and philosophical mind as Hester. Maintaining that "[i]t takes readers as well as writer to make literature," O'Connor recognized that "[t]he general intelligent reader . . . is not a believer" ("Catholic Novelists" 181). Instead, O'Connor recommended masking these concepts in a more "O'Connoresque" manner with no pious language, yet retaining "a certain grain of stupidity" essential for fiction writers ("Nature" 77), who must capture the attention of readers by using larger-than-life masks, as O'Connor did.

Throughout the years of correspondence, O'Connor became more profuse in her praise of Hester's writing, complimenting Hester's work as "well paced, dramatic, and [having] a fine control throughout of the language," specifically praising Hester's depiction of a "mountain man riding by in the wagon at break of day" (Emory Collection, 7 Mar. 1960). After hearing from Hester that the novel had been rejected, O'Connor

wrote, “That is strange to me that they wouldn’t handle that novel. . . . It is well written and to me it was not offensive; I sometimes think I must be pretty callus [sic] to what is offensive to other people” (Emory Collection, 28 May 1960). This same sentiment resurfaced in a 13 June 1960 letter when O’Connor stated, “Nothing worse than ignorant folks telling you what they think of your books. That is why I am all against writer’s clubs where they read their works to eachother [sic]—ignorance, malice, and flattery” (Emory Collection). Without the publication of Hester’s novels, critics cannot fully evaluate Hester’s responses to O’Connor’s selective comments. For O’Connor, public opinion was not as crucial as personal judgment regarding her stories or those of her friends. To avoid personal friction in their relationship, O’Connor walked a literary tightrope while advising Hester. Yet through this cautious mentoring mask, O’Connor still revealed her own work ethic and literary preferences.

The author mentored by O’Connor whose short stories were most like hers was Cecil Dawkins. Sally Fitzgerald identifies Dawkins as “an Alabaman, two years younger than Flannery” who taught at Stephens College in Missouri when she first wrote O’Connor to present her students’ questions about literature in general and O’Connor’s stories specifically. This letter began an active correspondence with O’Connor (Habit 220). O’Connor’s initial letter, 19 May 1957, to Dawkins admitted that “writing about people who disgust you” is valuable, that “any permanent quality” in her stories is based on church dogmas, and that her writing is an art as defined by Jacques Maritain’s Art and Scholasticism (221). This statement justified her writing style, one that incorporated a grotesque violence that was “strangely capable of returning [her] characters to reality and

preparing them to accept their moment of grace” (“On” 112). One Maritain definition of art insists that art is “before all intellectual and its activity consists in impressing an idea upon a matter” (8). O’Connor’s writing philosophy followed Maritain’s basic outline that art was intellectual, beautiful, structured, pure, and moral. Condensing this perspective, O’Connor defined art as “writing something that is valuable in itself and that works in itself” with the foundation of truth (“Nature” 65). O’Connor was not discouraged by rereading her own stories and questioning their validity or construction. Instead, she told Dawkins, “Learning to write proceeds by such shocks and jolts and it’s the people who don’t have them who will never do anything. Elizabeth Hardwick told me once that all her first drafts sounded as if a chicken had written them. So do mine for the most part” (Habit 254). Even though O’Connor had a penchant for fowl, rarely did she write a story quickly, without numerous revisions.

O’Connor insisted that few people could write effectively without established writing habits and encouraged Dawkins to secure a time when she could write with a “fresh mind” (243). O’Connor’s own habit of early morning writing would not work for a professor like Dawkins, but O’Connor vowed that a pattern of consistent scheduling could enhance creative powers. Yet, when Dawkins considered taking a year’s sabbatical from teaching to focus only on writing, O’Connor cautioned, “Too much time is as bad as too little” (254). Finding a balance of activities and responsibilities was an important component in O’Connor’s literary preparation. Observing one’s surroundings; contemplating one’s own thoughts; reading theology, philosophy, and literature; writing reviews; corresponding with friends; participating in requisite lectures, interviews, and

social functions; painting and drawing cartoons; and spending time with family, members of the local community, and the farm menagerie were all essential ingredients in O'Connor's personal and literary growth.

Analyzing O'Connor's critical reactions regarding Dawkins' works highlight O'Connor's own fictional patterns. As early as June 1957, O'Connor commended Dawkins' "very good ear" pertaining to her own stories (Habit 286), which implies that O'Connor paid careful attention to the tone and flow of her own works. By September 1958, O'Connor offered more detailed authorial instruction after reading Dawkins' "Hummers in the Larkspur." Admitting that Dawkins' story was better than many published stories that she had read, O'Connor cautioned Dawkins to know more about how Southern Negroes would actually react, to adhere to Southern vocabulary without necessarily emphasizing its peculiarities, to eliminate an episode that seemed unnecessary, and to avoid colloquial language from the omniscient narrator (295-96). In case she offended Dawkins, O'Connor clarified her stance by writing, "I am a pretty insensitive soul for subtleties and so forth but then one never writes for a subtle reader. Or if you do, you shouldn't" (296). O'Connor tended to present stark reality or embellish actuality in her own tales based on her "very low opinion of what is called the average reader" whom she must "keep awake," and her determination "to provide the intelligent reader with the deeper experience" that he expects ("Writing" 95). She also confessed that both types of readers were "aspects of the writer's own personality," creating a dual mask enabling her "to yield entertainment" and "to yield meaning" at the same time (95).

In a 9 October 1958 letter, O'Connor discussed Dawkins' "Eminent Domain" as a "wonderfully imaginative" story. Praising Dawkins' creativity by making the old woman protagonist believe that Jethro, a black man posing as her son, was the devil incarnate, O'Connor then commented that Jethro's speech contained inappropriate phrases for a Negro. Reminding Dawkins that the character must not have the author's vocabulary and vision, O'Connor suggested omitting Jethro's monologue about his real mother because it revealed too much about Dawkins' racial sympathies. After a second reading of the story, O'Connor added her advice about not placing the Negroes in the Georgia or North Carolina mountains since that was more of a natural habitat for Whites. After questioning the pensiveness of the story's ending, O'Connor stated, "Also as usual I don't like the title. It sounds too clever" (Tulsa Collection). Most of the changes suggested by O'Connor were adopted by Dawkins with the possible exception of a title change. The revealing monologue disappeared, the Negroes only traveled through the mountains, and the story's conclusion was tightened. In a 28 October 1958 letter to Dawkins, O'Connor remarked that a farm narrative was best rendered as a parody and that the farm characters' diction must come spontaneously (Habit 301). O'Connor's observations support her emphasis on concrete images, authentic dialogue, and realistic situations while refusing to force racial matters or allowing her authorial voice to dominate, masking any personal biased views but instead revealing typical attitudes.

O'Connor's precision regarding word choice is evident in her analysis of Dawkins' short story "The Mourner." Exclaiming the richness and effectiveness of the

story, O'Connor criticized the word "cowering" that Dawkins chose to describe the priest's action before the altar:

The boy of course is prejudiced and would like to think that the priest cowers; however he is also an artist and for him to see the priest as cowering casts suspicion on the integrity of his eye. One cowers in fear and this is not the tone at all of any of the priest's motions on the altar. When you make the boy see the priest as cowering you make him succumb to his own prejudice, which makes him less of a sympathetic character than he ought to be. (Habit 302)

Dawkins did not use the word "cowering" in the published version. Instead, the priest is presented as a religiously authoritative voice. O'Connor's concentration on the significance of an individual word must have been one reason that most of her stories and especially her novels took so long to compose.

O'Connor made few trifling comments on the next two stories that Dawkins sent, mainly warning Dawkins that the speed of two paragraphs in "A Simple Case" was "too fast" in summarizing the character's feelings (Tulsa Collection, 13 Dec. 1958; 29 Jan. 1959). O'Connor preferred to leave readers pondering a story's ending instead of stating only one feasible conclusion because, for O'Connor, reflection was a key component of deeper literary understanding and/or spiritual insight. As O'Connor reminded her mentees, the true impact of a story should emerge several days after the initial reading.

Dawkins, like O'Connor, listened selectively to what her mentors recommended. Analyzing Dawkins' "Benny Ricco's Search for Truth," O'Connor had reservations

about the repetitive, “sibilant” quality of the librarian’s speech (Habit 333). Yet, in the published short story, Dawkins’s librarian hisses once in almost every response to Benny, suggesting that in the original manuscript almost every word from the librarian slithered or that Dawkins felt the repetition necessary. Either way, O’Connor obviously limited the peculiarities of her own characters’ speech, leaving each reader freedom to speculate about each character and not forced to accept unrealistic stereotyping.

O’Connor probed the accuracy of Benny’s explanation of the meaning of the soul as “a part of the spirit of God which accounts for man’s likeness to him” (333). Subtly questioning the true catechism’s definition, O’Connor suggested that Dawkins could make Benny confused or maybe follow the catechism’s wording. The published story shows that Benny “reverted to his catechism” with a clearer message of “[t]he soul is a spirit and immortal” (Dawkins, “Benny” 161). O’Connor was cautiously correct when writing about a character’s theology, or she carefully clarified that a character was confused by religious terminology and tenets. O’Connor reminded Dawkins that Benny must remain true to his own character and that giving clues earlier in the story that Benny could fall apart in the end would strengthen that possibility. Recalling Gordon’s constant advice, O’Connor cautioned against using colloquial, tone-lowering phrases, such as “right on praying.” Nevertheless, Dawkins ignored that suggestion, leaving that phrase in the story’s final sentence (176). In her own work, O’Connor preserved a character’s consistency, gave indication for any changes, and chose characters’ colloquial expressions in a circumspect manner.

In a 7 June 1959 letter, O'Connor encouraged Dawkins to consider expanding a story into a novel, leaving "room in each character for him to discover himself and for you to discover him" (Tulsa Collection). Commiserating about slow novel writing, O'Connor noted, "I don't have a novel to write and you can't write a novel until you've got something expandable in you." However, O'Connor said that she "wouldn't give anything for pursuing these two novels [Wise Blood and The Violent Bear It Away] through to the end" (Tulsa Collection, 7 Oct. 1959), finding personal satisfaction in their completion yet hating to read the critical reviews that followed. Ever present is O'Connor's desire for each character to develop almost as a separate entity from the author, yet through the author's artistic ability. Commending Dawkins for her success and seemingly questioning her own mentoring ability, O'Connor wrote on 16 September 1959, "It is a big relief to know that at least one person I know writing is succeeding. I write to four or five strugglers and they never get anywhere and it is depressing" (Tulsa Collection).

Rather than tear up prose "that really does not fit its particular nature" (Habit 376), O'Connor proposed relying on a writer's instincts. This sentiment was especially true when anyone thought her work was blasphemous. As O'Connor told Dawkins, "Your mother's reaction to 'The Buffalo Ranch' is right in line with what is to be expected. All my aunts think mine are sacrilegious. Pay it no mind and go about your bidnis" (397). Dawkins' "The Buffalo Farm" includes a man claiming to be the Christ, preaching to the crowd of people who have gathered to watch an atomic bomb detonation (49-52). A materialistic Burt the Trader seizes the opportunity to capture this madman as

a new enticement for his tourist business (54). In a similar manner, O'Connor's "Good Country People" includes a man claiming to be a Bible salesman, spreading God's word to the country folk. Yet, in O'Connor's story, this sexually obsessed "madman" seizes the opportunity to capture a wooden leg as the newest object for his fetishistic collection. As always, O'Connor personally recoiled from the use of pious language or sanctimonious style. On 11 January 60, after reading one of Dawkins' early story attempts, O'Connor stated, "I am real glad you have quit writing in the Judas vein. . . . I have never found a writer who could make Christ talk" (Habit 369). O'Connor and Dawkins recognized their satirical tendencies that offended close family members but steadfastly refused to succumb to family pressures to change their tactics.

When Dawkins complained about reaching a stagnant period in her writing, O'Connor remarked, "It is my considered opinion that one reason you are not writing is that you are allowing yourself to read in the time set aside to write" (417). Yet again, O'Connor impressed upon Dawkins and others that she mentored that time must be allocated for thinking, writing, and inspiration to occur, equivalent to O'Connor's morning contemplation hours with no other activities permitted during this scheduled time.

After restoration of Dawkins' creative abilities, O'Connor empathized with her about their common temptations to write essays when they became frustrated with their current short stories (460). O'Connor also identified with the tendency "to be too omniscient and not let things come enough through the characters" (460). Behind this

mentoring mask, O'Connor refined and identified her own writing styles, preferences, and purpose.

Approximately nine months before O'Connor's death, Dawkins' proposal to adapt several O'Connor stories into a play met with O'Connor's guarded approval. At the time, O'Connor was thinking about expanding "The Enduring Chill" and was not sure that Dawkins should use "the boy" [Asbury] in the play (546). O'Connor also preferred that a Southerner direct Dawkins' play so a Yankee would not be tempted to make "one of [her] colored idiots into a hero" (547). Dawkins' compilation of four of O'Connor's stories, plus casual references to other O'Connor works, resulted in a play entitled The Displaced Person. Dawkins blends names, settings, storylines, and character traits not only from O'Connor's "The Displaced Person," but also from "Good Country People," "The Enduring Chill," and "Greenleaf," always remaining true to the essence of O'Connor's themes and voice. In a 9 November 1963 letter to Hester, O'Connor wrote, "[Cecil] seems to be seriously bit by the theatre bug and she says she wants to do an adaptation" of my work and "I have told her she can do it," continuing that "Cecil is plenty clever . . . so maybe something will [come of it]" (547). On 19 May 1964, O'Connor asked about Dawkins' progress (579), but the planned June meeting to discuss the play together did not occur because Dawkins had not yet completed the project.

Having O'Connor's permission, Dawkins incorporates exact dialogue in the blended scenarios from O'Connor's stories. For example, in the Dawkins' rendition, Joy/Hulga Hopewell and her brother named Wesley humorously satirize their mother's clichés and adages. Joy/Hulga from O'Connor's "Good Country People" now has a

brother based on the character Asbury from "The Enduring Chill" with a name belonging to one of Mrs. May's sons from "Greenleaf." Mrs. Hopewell from "Good Country People" merges with Mrs. McIntyre from "The Displaced Person." Multiple examples of this amalgamation are evident throughout the play, the conclusion of which devolves into a mysterious jumble of characters' key comments and questions about humanity, divinity, and the relationship between the two. The seemingly omnipresent "Who will remain whole?" echoes a persistent religious O'Connor question (Dawkins, Displaced 66). At O'Connor's death, Dawkins delayed any other work on the play until contacted by a New York producer, Wynn Handman of The American Place. After Dawkins completed the play, it was performed in 1966 (Habit 545), reemphasizing O'Connor's impact upon Dawkins' career as well as on American literature. This honest and open correspondence reveals a friendship based upon a confident literary and religious sisterhood and reaches a comfort zone unsurpassed with her other mentees, unmasking many of O'Connor's self-defining features.

Her one-on-one mentoring through private letters allowed O'Connor to share her detailed work habits, her frustrations with those who did not understand her work, her deepest religious thoughts, her adherence to truth in artistic creativity, and her own writing techniques and theories. To correspondents who attempted to analyze her, her works, or her Catholicism using a more business-minded approach, O'Connor tailored a more distanced tone. For example, O'Connor's correspondence with Ted Spivey, an English professor at Georgia State University, would fit this classification. Even through years of communication, O'Connor's voice still remained more detached than her

personal revelations of her mentee letters. Maintaining this more professional mask, O'Connor wrote to Spivey about theological and philosophical books or topics in most of their correspondence.

In fact, O'Connor often adopted a defensive mask when responding to Spivey. Upon one occasion, Spivey's critical interpretation of her story "The Enduring Chill" resulted in her comment that she "couldn't have written the story at all without the undulant fever" that he was questioning (299). Another time, O'Connor satirized literature teachers for their foolish questions, like "Why was the Misfit's hat *black*?" (334). Other letters to Spivey contained phrases such as "I do not know from what you say," "I suppose you mean" (360), "I don't know whether I agree with you or not" (361), and "If you mean" (387), formulating an evasive mask. In a 27 January 1963 correspondence, O'Connor commenced and concluded a letter complimenting Spivey's review of "The Lame Shall Enter First" that he had asked her to read, yet much of the letter pointed out his inaccuracies or imprecision (506-07), blending praise and correction. When Spivey analyzed her character as one "afraid of the Spirit" (385), or interpreted his dreams about her and "her spiritual progress" (478), O'Connor retained her courteous mask for Spivey. However, that mask was removed before Hester with O'Connor's reference about "entertaining an air plant" (481). O'Connor's Spivey masks alternate, but they all retain a reserved deportment distinguishable from her mentee approach.

Letters to fellow female authors whom O'Connor had never met or with whom she had limited contact, such as Elizabeth Bishop or Katherine Anne Porter, reveal

another category of O'Connor's epistolary masks, one of remote literary camaraderie.

Like Bishop and Porter, O'Connor worked diligently on artistic creations, more concerned with quality than quantity. Both Bishop and Porter wrote congratulatory notes to O'Connor, Bishop responding after A Good Man Is Hard to Find and Porter after The Violent Bear It Away. Of course, O'Connor donned her hospitality persona when replying to Bishop, especially since they had mutual friends, Robert (Cal) Lowell and the Fitzgeralds. O'Connor told Bishop that she had "great respect for [her] own work" and invited her to visit Andalusia (198). Bishop sent O'Connor a gift made by Brazilian natives which appealed to O'Connor's grotesque sense of Southern humor and sense of "taste": a bottle encasing a rooster perched on top of a cross plus "instruments of the crucifixion [sic]" above the Bible, chalice, and candles on the altar (519). Because of her hospitalization, however, O'Connor was unable to send a special gift of peafowl feathers to Bishop when Ashley Brown went to Brazil (584). The connection between Bishop and O'Connor, while becoming more comfortable, never culminated in more than a "cordial pleasant" (248), complimentary relationship.

O'Connor's brief notes and references to Porter were more refined and cultured. Sending an appreciatory response to Porter's "kind note," O'Connor briefly mentioned Porter's visit to the farm ("Letters" 1120). Telling Hester about that luncheon, O'Connor referred to Porter as "pleasant" but as one with "a terrible need" to know about life after death (Habit 275). While letters to and about Bishop were all complimentary, some comments about Porter revealed O'Connor's conflicting responses. To both Dawkins and Brown, O'Connor repeated the "pleasant and agreeable" compliment regarding

Porter (276-77). In a later letter to Dawkins, O'Connor praised Porter's "talent for winning friends and influencing people" and her "social grace" (416), yet with a more critical tone, O'Connor told Hester that Porter's twenty-seven years of spending time on a novel that "won't run" gave her nightmares (279-80). Again, to Hester, O'Connor's satirical mask is evident when she wrote, "Miss Katherine Anne, having had 7 husbands, is considered something of an authority on sex and I don't doubt it for a minute. Anyway, it's refreshing to see her take off on Lady Chatterley" (Emory Collection, 16 April 1960). On another occasion, O'Connor wrote Hester that Porter "has a shallow mind but draws very often from the right sources" (Emory Collection, 30 April 1960). Or, in a letter to Lee, O'Connor confessed that most of Porter's early stories were "coy" (Habit 485). Yet, while Porter and O'Connor were on a Wesleyan College panel discussion about Southern Fiction in October 1960, they agreed that the origin of their religious symbolism came naturally and unconsciously ("Recent" 72-73). This panel discussion, including several others, also highlighted the more talkative Porter and more reticent O'Connor. Relating directly to or with Porter, O'Connor maintained Southern decorum but at times donned a gossipy, petty mask in letters to Hester or Lee about Porter.

While her mentoring through the more public arena of essays or lectures is less of an open "I" than the mentee letters, as Mystery and Manners attests, O'Connor's terminology "fiction writer," "Southern writer," "Christian writer," "the novelist with Christian concerns," "Catholic writer," or a combination of these concepts also define her own personal preferences. Her essay "The Fiction Writer & His Country" emphasizes

O'Connor's strong Christian convictions regarding her story-telling vocation (27), her anguish over Southern historical events (28-29), her moral and dramatic sense and judgments, her observation of and "respect for mystery" (31), her insight based on "Christian orthodoxy" (32), and her perception "for the grotesque, for the perverse, and for the unacceptable" (33). "The Grotesque in Southern Fiction" focuses on her techniques of including "ordinary aspects of daily life" (37), "the modern romance tradition" with individual uniqueness (39), expanded vision through the grotesque (43, 47), freakish realism (44), the writer's internal balance (49), and realistic distortion (50). "The Regional Writer" challenges others and herself to look within the region, within one's self, and within the realm of mystery to find one's authorial inspiration. The remaining essays and lectures reinforce these basic O'Connor beliefs, even though the connotative "I" may be couched in variant terminology, with many of these self-defining foundations developing into models for O'Connor's epistolary mentoring.

CONCLUSION

O'Connor's self-indulgent, imaginative juvenile masks evolved into refined, artistic mature masks. The movement from O'Connor's childish attempts to conceal her awkward feelings to her creative literary achievements subtly, yet unmistakably, reveals her deepest spirit and self-identity. Like all youngsters, Mary Flannery O'Connor inevitably struggled to discover her place in society, working through immature, simplistic issues before confronting more grown-up, complex ones. Learning how to deal with her natural desire for isolation from the mannered behavior of a Southern Catholic student or a Southern socially-accepted family led O'Connor to her penchant for unusual peafowl, her comical and often satirical drawings or caricatures, and eventually her Southern grotesque prose style.

Along this quest for identity, O'Connor always seemed to feel a lack of grace, both as a child who could not dance and as an adult whose limbs were weakened by lupus medications. Maybe this sensitivity was a catalyst for her focus on heavenly grace. She relied more on her self-imposed training than on structured education from the schools and universities, consistently reading literary classics, philosophy, and theology. She continued to prefer seclusion as a vital part of her creative process, while never neglecting friendships or communication with a variety of individuals and groups. For example, when Olive Bell Davis asked O'Connor's permission to submit an article to the Journal-Constitution (Atlanta History Center), O'Connor quickly responded,

I am highly obliged to you for writing this piece on me but it is one of my peculiarities to be allergic to publicity. I don't mind anything being

written about my stories if I am left out of it; but when anything is written about me, my blood pressure goes up, my hair turns grey, and my latent hives come out. (Atlanta History Center)

Initially, she silently rebelled against lupus and its invasion of her body. With the passage of time, as best she could, she managed to convey a positive attitude toward her illness, focusing on the precious time that she was able to devote to her art of composition and bristling at any comments that the disease would hinder her artistic pursuits. These situations and choices helped mold O'Connor into the person she became.

Her surly disposition, her Southern heritage, and her Catholic beliefs led to the expansion of her literary vision and voice, as well as the development of her literary masks. Her ingrained temperament led to the maturity of her personal, literary, social, and spiritual vision which led to her ability and aspiration to share these opinions and perceptions. As she gained confidence in herself and her writing, she voiced her deepest insights in a unique, eccentric tone, more concerned about faithfulness to her own disposition, vision, and voice than in pleasing a popular public audience. Therefore, she had no intense desire to remove her comfortable masks, allowing her intuitive desires to develop into inspired stories.

O'Connor revised her first published story "The Geranium" (1946) three times, producing "An Exile in the East" (1954), "Getting Home" (1964), and "Judgement Day" (1964), the last version reworked shortly before her death. Several critics have analyzed these stories to show O'Connor's growth. Karl-Heinz Westarp's variorum edition of all

four manuscripts focuses on O'Connor's authorial progress. He attests that O'Connor's revisions signify how she "deepened her vision and grew as an artist," not as "a lack of imagination" or useless repetition of an idea (XXXI). Without ignoring O'Connor's religious implications, Westarp highlights O'Connor's "structural conciseness" throughout the revision process (XXXI), carefully detailing each word choice and change made by O'Connor to emphasize her "multi-layered meaning" within this story's numerous revisions (XXXII).

Instead of a structural analysis, John Lawrence Daretta examines the spiritual expansion between the versions, contending that O'Connor's first story "dramatizes personal alienation" while the final revision has a deeper "eschatological" meaning centering upon "retribution" (1, 5). For example, Daretta explores O'Connor's title change from "The Geranium" to "Judgement Day" and maintains that O'Connor's focal point of "her character's moral life or human conduct" in "The Geranium" "approached a prophetic vision" in "Judgement Day" (5, 7). According to Daretta, guilt controls the outcomes faced by each of O'Connor's characters. In contrast, Richard Giannone interprets O'Connor's revision sequence as God's mysterious love leading her protagonist "home," both geographically and spiritually (248). Giannone challenges readers to "look within her imaginative grasp of reality . . . for the parturition of the moral craftswoman . . . [to] see that technique and dramatic hardness hid O'Connor's inner growth of the deepest tenderness" (249). Instead of the harsh realities of life, Giannone focuses upon the sanguine possibilities, O'Connor's moments of offered grace. From another perspective, Doreen Fowler investigates the modifications of racial identity,

arguing that cultural stereotypes and discriminatory language affect the “fluid and transformative” symbolic meanings within O’Connor’s revisions (36). Fowler maintains that in all of O’Connor’s versions of “Judgement Day” the African American and the Southern white are parallel spirits, finding identity based on the other one’s position and perception.

Each of these critics, without intention, evaluates O’Connor’s disposition, vision, and voice. Whether the attention is on composition, theological concepts, or racial issues, all the critics acknowledge O’Connor’s growth as an author, as one able to intricately craft her content to include manifold layers of enigmatic messages. Fowler’s assessment of strained relationships and the pain of misunderstanding and conflict between individuals is a reminder of Joy-Hulga’s harsh, yet malleable, disposition, like O’Connor’s. Daretta’s and Giannone’s observations juxtapose the duality of O’Connor’s vision, two extremes essential for religious fulfillment as illustrated by Hazel Motes, O’Connor’s insightful seer. Westarp’s linguistic study emphasizes the variations of literal, yet often prophetic, suppositions that formulated O’Connor’s voice, much like those of Old Tarwater and Rufus Johnson.

Another important dimension of O’Connor’s maturation is that of her cultivation of personal and literary masks that embody her sense of self, convey her vision, and amplify her voice. These paradoxical assessments exemplify O’Connor’s self-definition as a surly visionary willing to share her genius regarding her intuitive and inspirational knowledge about life in a way that should capture awareness from the most foolish reader to the most skilled scholar.

Although almost everyone improves with practice and the passage of time, O'Connor's self-defined disposition, vision, and voice are evident from her very first published story. Her fundamental disposition of the erudite daughter which resonates in the unnamed daughter of "The Geranium" intensifies in each revision, but each characterization reiterates the disposition of Joy-Hulga, an O'Connor self-identified shadow or mask. Each daughter's disposition emerges through her facial expressions, her blunt questions or statements, her more subtle sounds and movements, and her parent's perceptions. Each one reveals her innermost feelings with gruff, discontented expressions. While initially verbalizing direct, ruthless comments or questions in the stories' exposition, each daughter unmask her sympathetic, sensitive manner near the stories' denouement. This switch in conduct reveals both the tension and concern involved in the parent-daughter relationship. With the addition of any blasphemous religious element in the daughter's speech, her brusque temperament is intensified. A Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde reversible mask appears, depicting the duality of human emotions that occur between parents and children. Other times, more subtle sounds and movements unveil the daughter's attitudes, confirming the old adage that actions speak louder than words. In all instances, the intellectually superior, dutiful stance of each daughter remains a vital part of both O'Connor's personal and literary disposition.

O'Connor's vision deepens as she contemplates life's purposes through the displaced older character, whose changing names include Old Dudley, F. T. Fairlee, T. C. Tanner, and various adaptations, in "The Geranium" through its eventual evolution into "Judgement Day," resembling the vision of her fellow journeyman Hazel Motes.

Misunderstandings in the parent's perception of each daughter create fear and misunderstanding, especially for the parents. The vision of Old Tanner in "The Geranium" supplies the fundamental foundation for the multifaceted visualizations of Haze in Wise Blood and Tanner in "Judgement Day." All three protagonists focus on memories of past experiences, dreams of death or endings, internal promptings, and the diligent search for a place of acceptance and belonging. Unfortunately, while searching for a permanent HOME, they all encounter human failures during their earthly or even their spiritual quests. Their visions and dreams show their realization of displacement and emptiness yet an inner compulsion that leads to their conscientious exploration for "home," whether physical or spiritual. The phrases "home," "at home," "back home," "going home" permeate all three men's vocabulary and vision. Their vision exemplifies O'Connor's visionary mask, one that began as a simple journey away from entrapment but broadened into religiously-implicit references of humanity's "failing vision" ("Judgement" 531) regarding an eternal home.

Her voice expands as she discovers her talents and uncovers her satirical side throughout the various versions of "Judgement Day," comparable to the voices of Old Tarwater and Rufus Johnson, her ascribed prophetic and devilish articulations. The various voices in "The Geranium," The Violent Bear It Away, "The Lame Shall Enter First," and "Judgement Day" that articulate confrontational messages for O'Connor include a sullen son-in-law, a cantankerous neighbor, an aging prophet, a devilish boy, an irate son-in-law, and an incensed Northern Negro. These characters encompass a wide range of voices, from placid to belligerent and from secular to sacred. These distinctive

voices, often masked as fiendish activists, epitomize O'Connor's literary mission, forcing individuals to face pertinent life decisions. By the time O'Connor revised her first published story into one of her last, "Judgement Day," all strange voices were satirically aggressive and ironically doubtful. In Haze-like denial, doubts surfaced through both internal and external voices in O'Connor prophetic assertions. Writing to Alfred Corn, 30 May 1962, O'Connor attributed doubting as part of a faith experience and admitted that "I have got, over the years, a sense of the immense sweep of creation, of the evolutionary process in everything, of how incomprehensible God must necessarily be to be the God of heaven and earth" ("Letters" 1164). As O'Connor developed her visionary voice throughout her literary career, the resulting consequences of denial and/or acceptance became more violent and more candid, ending only with her own death.

In a 30 March 1963 letter to Hester, O'Connor had admitted that even after "writing for nearly twenty years" she still had an "overwhelming sense" of her "own inarticulateness" (Habit 511). That awareness is why she consistently preferred her social mask of preparedness instead of any impromptu verbalization, but, at least in this letter, she even seemed to question her own capacity to project her intended messages in her stories and novels.

According to O'Connor, one reason that an author should disappear into her characters and her work was her belief that "[t]he less self-conscious you are about what you are about, the better in a way, that is to say technically. You have to get it in the blood, not in the head" (418). This sentiment would explain her connection to Enoch and his wise-blooded disposition. Understanding with one's head is quite different than

understanding with one's blood, and explaining one's disposition, vision, and voice for O'Connor was easier through her self-defining character masks.

O'Connor made an enlightening comment about her character Ruby Turpin in "Revelation": "You got to be a very big woman to shout at the Lord across a hogpen. She's a country female Jacob. And that vision is purgatorial" (577). This proclamation serves as a reminder of another O'Connor comment from her lecture and essay about Catholic novelists, herself included. O'Connor maintained that "Vocation is a limiting factor, and the conscientious novelist works at the limits of his power and within what his imagination can apprehend. He does not decide what would be good for the Christian body and proceed to deliver it. Like a very doubtful Jacob, he confronts what stands in his path and wonders if he will come out of the struggle at all" ("Catholic Novelists" 183).

According to O'Connor, the "vital strength of Southern literature" came "from the Scriptures and from her [the South's] own history of defeat and violation," including "a distrust of the abstract, a sense of human dependence on the grace of God, and a knowledge that evil is not simply a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be endured" ("Catholic Novelist" 209). Permit this writer to adjust O'Connor's assessment of Ruby Turpin and Catholic novelists into an assessment of O'Connor herself. O'Connor cultivated one of her predominant masks reflected in the title of this study. O'Connor was a very courageous woman to shout at God across the chicken yard. She was truly a country female Jacob with a purgatorial vision, one who stood firm in her own literary commitment even when subjected to close critical scrutiny.

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