

Spirit of the Psyche: Carl Jung's and Victor White's Influence on Flannery O'Connor's Fiction

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THE SPIRIT OF THE PSYCHE: CARL JUNG'S
AND VICTOR WHITE'S INFLUENCE
ON FLANNERY O'CONNOR'S
IMAGINATION

by

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ABSTRACT
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Flannery O'Connor's interest in depth psychology, especially as it was presented by Carl Jung and Victor White, a Dominican priest and a "founding member of the C. G. Jung Institute," plays a greater role in her fiction than has been previously noted. O'Connor found parallels with Jung's theory of the unconscious and Catholic dogma, but ultimately found White's Catholicized presentation of the unconscious, which equated the unconscious psyche with the soul, more amenable to her faith.

This research first highlights the attention O'Connor gave to Jung's and White's theories of the unconscious as found in her public lectures, her personal letters and in her book reviews. In these, she expresses great doubts about the conscious, rational mind's ability to understand Reality and argues instead that it is ultimately Mysterious. Her letters also reveal her shared concern with both Jung and White that the Church has become too influenced by the modern temper and has abandoned its respect for Mystery and for the individual's personal religious instincts. This research then examines how her understanding of the unconscious is manifest in her first novel, *Wise Blood*, and four of her most popular short stories: "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," "Good Country People," "The Displaced Person," and her very last story "Judgment Day." In the novel and the stories we find her protagonists, whom she once labeled as "Christ-haunted," driven by an unconscious and seemingly irrational force that longs for and leads them toward their eternal Home.

This research concludes that O'Connor, as a result of the influence of both Jung and White, saw the unconscious as a creative force that influences the imagination to connect the physical world with the eternal world and to nurture a vision that is ultimately prophetic.

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Introduction/Overview

Flannery O'Connor's interest in depth psychology, especially as it was presented by Victor White, a Dominican priest and the person whom Carl Jung had hoped would be his successor after Jung had appointed him as a "founding member of the C. G. Jung Institute in Zurich" (Weldon 1), plays a greater role in her fiction than has been given previous attention. White's Catholicized Jungian approach to depth psychology appealed to O'Connor, as both of them saw the unconscious working as a force in constant pursuit of salvation. An examination of her works reveals that her characters are generally conflicted, as their conscious personas, pursuing practical and reasonable ends, struggle against a Christ-haunted component deep within their psyches that influences their memories, their dreams, and their impulses with the goal of leading them to the experience of divine grace.

O'Connor once said that everything she wrote was "thoroughly Catholic," but her graduate school work reveals an early secular focus, reflecting the influence of the social science degree she received as an undergraduate at Georgia State College for Women. Her Catholic vision appears to have been influenced by her reading Jacques Maritain's *Art and Scholasticism*¹ while working on *Wise Blood*, soon after graduating from Iowa. Maritain's Thomism resonated with her and she would eventually read Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* every night before going to bed (*Habit* 93) and call herself a Thomist. Soon after reading Maritain, O'Connor was introduced to the works of William Lynch, a Jesuit Catholic priest who emphasized the role of the imagination in one's Christian faith.

¹ In fact, Maritain *Art and Scholasticism* also influenced her artistic vision, for O'Connor claims to have "cut her aesthetic teeth" on this work.

While these two thinkers perhaps played the most significant role in developing her Catholic sensibility, O'Connor's intellectual curiosity did not stop with Catholic thinkers.

Although O'Connor's Catholicism and Thomism have received a great deal of attention from other critics, it seems they have overlooked some tendencies in O'Connor's thought that diverged from the orthodox Catholicism of the early and mid twentieth century. O'Connor was obviously a creative thinker, and this creativity went beyond her storytelling abilities: she was also a creative intellectual. She recognized the truth in the ideas of non-Catholics as well. One of the most important non-Catholics for O'Connor was Carl Jung, for he highlighted the mysterious power of the unconscious that carried potential to help explain O'Connor's notion of the "Christ-haunted²" Southerner.

O'Connor's interest in Jung is not surprising given their many shared perceptions of reality that differed from the modern world's. Like O'Connor, Jung believed that the modern intellectual overestimated our rational ability to grasp reality. Both believed that the Reformation perverted man's perceptions about faith and knowledge (*Modern* 173), especially as it affected a loss in the valuation of symbols. Jung's belief that the most compelling literature offered a "visionary" quality that could assist in a person's individuation echoes O'Connor's belief that the writer's vision had a transcendent quality. Most importantly, though, his theory of the unconscious offered more potential to O'Connor's Catholic imagination than did Sigmund Freud's. Jung believed religion played an important, if not essential, role in the health of the psyche. Jung also believed that the personal religious experience is crucial if one is to have a sincere faith. In other words, he did not believe that an intellectual assent, alone, was enough to sustain

² O'Connor once said that while the South is certainly not "Christ-centered," it was "Christ-haunted" (*Mystery* 44).

religious faith. While this stance was at best controversial to the early twentieth-century Catholic, it appears to coincide with O'Connor's stance as presented in her fiction.

O'Connor could not completely accept Jung, though, especially after his works in the 1950s, *Answer to Job* and *The Undiscovered Self*, in which Jung became increasingly unorthodox in his religious views; so she looked to Jungian Catholic priests³ who were also experts in depth psychology. While she read the works of Josef Goldbrunner and Raymond Hostie, she was most taken with Victor White. White was Jung's close friend for a number of years before they had a dispute that echoed the breakup Jung had had with Freud many years before. This time Jung was the master not the apprentice. White attempted to assimilate Jung's theories with Catholic dogma and worked to convince Jung that the two were compatible, but after some initial enthusiastic cooperation, the two parted bitterly – at about the same time that O'Connor began to see Jung as “dangerous.” Still, White's attempt to show that Aquinas valued the affective experience of faith and his belief that a person's psyche functions at least in part to encourage the person toward God appears to resonate with O'Connor as her fiction portrays this same phenomenon.

³ As she did with Lynch, O'Connor had a habit of looking to priests to keep her creative imagination from straying too far from orthodox Catholicism. Not only did she look to the literature of Catholic priests like Lynch, White, Hostie, and Goldbrunner, but her letter correspondences with Father John McCown, a priest who had expressed admiration for her stories, often asked for direction about how she might respond to a metaphysical question without stepping out of the Church's boundaries.

O'Connor's Developing Catholic Aesthetic

To examine the difference between O'Connor's early aesthetic and her mature one, perhaps the most revealing and helpful approach would be a comparison between two of her stories, "The Geranium" and "The Train," which comprised a portion of her Master's thesis, and their reworked versions. "The Geranium" became the provocatively retitled "Judgment Day," written in the final days of her life while in the hospital. "The Train" went through important revisions to become the first chapter of her first novel, *Wise Blood*.

In both "The Geranium" and "Judgment Day," an older man with failing health, having moved from Georgia to New York City to live with his duty-bound daughter and her husband, longs to return home. A religious element colors "Judgment Day" that is missing in the first version. In the early version, the uprooted old man, "Old Dudley," identifies with a sickly geranium that a neighbor displays in his window every day. The geranium, unsuited for the environment, symbolically falls to the ground and dies in the story's final scene. The early version of the story focuses on black/white relationships and changing cultural codes. The primary metaphor of the uprooted geranium that cannot survive in the New York climate in the first story is replaced in "Judgment Day" by the old man's deep-rooted desire to go "home" for his final rest. In the revised story, the old man, his name changed to Tanner, while remaining the racist hypocrite that Dudley was in the first version, is obviously much more "Christ-haunted," as his dreams center on death and resurrection. In "Judgment Day," Tanner makes plans to go home, a clear metaphor for heaven, even though he knows that he will die in the process. In the first version, Old Dudley, much more healthy and therefore more capable of going home,

wishes he had never left the South but makes no plans for taking the trip. While both Ralph Wood and Karl-Heinz Westarp have covered the differences in greater detail⁴, neither emphasizes the significant new religious dimensions in the revised story, which I will examine in the final chapter of this work.

Similar differences occur between “The Train” and the first chapter of *Wise Blood*. Brad Gooch’s biography of O’Connor mentions that her former college writing teacher, Andrew Lytle, “did not appreciate the severe religious turn the novel had taken” after she left Iowa (211). Frederick Asals notes that while the plot of a young boy named Hazel returning from the army and about to visit a large city occurs in both versions, some telling differences exist. In the short story, Asals points out that its protagonist Hazel Wickers is “shy, confused,” while the novel’s Hazel Motes possesses a “sharp and surly aggressiveness” (18). Also, he provides examples to show that “The Train” is “thin in physical substance” while *Wise Blood* is an “intensely visual book” (19-20). This hints at her developing sacramental vision, as she will repeatedly insist that fiction be grounded in the concrete in her later lectures. In O’Connor’s prospectus for *Wise Blood*, written in 1948 (within a year of having written “The Train,” the final story in her thesis), the role of a Christ-haunted unconscious, is made plain that was completely absent in “The Train,” as O’Connor says his “sense of sin is the only key he has to finding a sanctuary and he begins unconsciously to search for God through sin” (Getz 21). The prospectus also emphasizes that going home for Hazel reflected an unconscious desire for a

⁴ Ralph Wood highlights the simplistic characterization and imagery in “The Geranium” versus their complexity in “Judgment Day” in *Flannery O’Connor and the Christ-Haunted South* and Karl-Heinz Westarp traces the changes from the first story, to the intermediate version, “Exile in the East,” to the last two drafts of “Judgment Day,” and argues that O’Connor’s last revision of the story somehow escaped publication and that this version is stylistically superior to the one published.

“sanctuary in the modern world.” While Asals attributes the changes in these two stories to the influence of Nathaniel West, I would contend that after leaving the academic climate, O’Connor began reading Catholic thinkers who would immediately and intensely change her approach to writing fiction. O’Connor’s Catholic vision, which would owe much to St. Thomas, further influenced O’Connor to harmonize the secular and the divine. The revision of this story, unlike the revision of “The Geranium” to “Judgment Day,” happens in the course of a couple years. It is in those two years that O’Connor’s aesthetic begins to reveal a Catholic flavor, and it is those years on which I will focus.

Two years after receiving her MFA at Iowa, O’Connor began reading Maritain’s *Art and Scholasticism*, a book that would affect her writing for the rest of her life. Maritain, a Thomist, spearheaded her appreciation of the saint, and from that point on she regularly cited both Maritain and Aquinas as influences for her vision. In *Art and Scholasticism*, Maritain tells the artist not “to disassociate in yourself the artist and the Christian” and that “the entire soul of the artist reaches and rules his work, but it must reach it and rule it only through the artistic habitus”(69). Maritain described the artist’s “habitus” as an “activity of the spirit” and, while it is a gift, it is also a virtue that must be nurtured (14-15). O’Connor would later describe the “habit of art” as something “rooted in the whole personality [which she makes clear includes “the conscious as well as the unconscious mind”] and it “is a way of looking at the created world and of using the senses so as to make them find as much meaning as possible in things” (*Mystery* 101). Later, O’Connor would read *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* in which Maritain argued that reason should not be perceived as only logical because “intuitive reason,” a

more primal capacity of the intellect, also exists (*Creative Intuition* 55). Reason's primary capacity is not articulation or inference; rather it "sees" (55), and it is the reason utilized in all poetry, which for Maritain means "that intercommunication between the inner being of things and the inner being of the human Self which is a kind of divination" (3). Additionally, intuitive reason "exercises itself in vital connection with imagination and emotion" (55). Poetic sense, then, is different from "common sense," which Maritain called "the greatest obstacle to poetry" (62). O'Connor also reviewed Maritain's *The Range of Reason*, in which she highlighted his point that the modern notion of reason has become restricted to the point that it does not allow for revelation. Maritain's expanding the definition of reason to include an imaginative, creative element and to allow for revelation were key in her eventual belief that the artist was also a prophet. Perhaps equally important is Maritain's ability to incorporate his Thomism in directions, like art, that had not previously been approached. This appears to have influenced O'Connor as her Thomism was much more creative than that of most scholastics, as will be shown later.

Equally important in O'Connor's aesthetic development are the works of William Lynch, who was not only an academic but also a Jesuit priest. Lynch argues that art nurtures an analogical sensibility that enables true faith, for we can have no direct knowledge of the divine, but we can, through analogy (or being able to recognize the similarities in differences), know God. O'Connor's library contained a copy of Lynch's essay, "Theology and the Imagination," from the journal *Thought*, of which Lynch was also the editor. From that essay, likely the one that introduced her to Lynch, Lynch's

influence becomes apparent as she highlights the following sentiments, which she often repeats in her lectures and letters:

...the analogical is that habit of perception which sees that different levels of being are also somehow one and can therefore be *associated in the same image*, in the same and single act of perception. We may lump together under the word ‘manichean’ all those habits of perception which instinctively *dissociate*. (66)

This idea of finding various associations and connections in one image becomes an important part of her Catholic sacramental vision clearly revealed in her fiction and expressed in her lectures. In a 1955 letter she not only recommends this essay to her friend Betty Hester, but also calls Lynch “one of the most learned priests in this country” (*Habit* 119). She reviews three of his books, *The Image Industries*, *Christ and Apollo*, and *The Integrated Mind*⁵. In her review of *Christ and Apollo* she borrows Lynch’s metaphor for the way that the imagination must work with the finite world, that “the true nature of the literary imagination” is “founded on a *penetration* [italics mine] of the finite and the limited.” She would continue to stress the idea that artistic and prophetic vision comes from a “penetration of the concrete” or a “penetration of the finite” in her later lectures “The Novelist and the Believer” (157, 168) and “Catholics and their Readers” (178). Lynch argued that an analogical, or Christic, imagination “illuminates” as it discovers connections between things while the Manichean imagination, which separates the soul (or mind) from the body, “dissociates” and creates “hostilities” and a sense of “otherness” between things (“Theology and Imagination” 61). In a footnote to these

⁵ In her review of *The Integrated Mind*, she suggestively begins by speculating that if the Church ever created a “Reverse Index,” or a list of required readings, that it should be included.

points, Lynch stresses that “poetry” can “reorientate [sic] our relation to the limited image, to the finite and the human, and nothing short of a true Christology can give us the secure courage or theological energy necessary for this giant task.” This remark is important because, while some, like Matthew Arnold and Wallace Stevens, had the desire to make poetry a new religion, Lynch is saying that poetry can provide a habit of seeing that encourages the type of imagination necessary for faith, an imagination that can recognize the reality of an infinite God while being confined to a finite world. His influence on O’Connor can be observed in her letter to Alfred Corn, a poet and struggling Christian, who had written to O’Connor about his loss of faith. In her reply, she assures him that “God has given us reason to use and that it can lead us toward a knowledge of him, through analogy” (479).

O’Connor’s Catholic Imagination

As noted earlier, with the influence of Maritain and Lynch, O’Connor believed her sensibility was “thoroughly Catholic” (*Habit* 148). She came to see herself as a “hillbilly Thomist” (81) and like a good Thomist believed that a modern synthesis was possible between secular science and sacred theology. Yet, O’Connor’s thought is not easily classified, even if she believed it to be. In fact, prior to Sally Fitzgerald’s publication in 1969 of *Mystery and Manners*, a collection of O’Connor’s lectures and essays, and the publication of her letters ten years later in *The Habit of Being*, O’Connor’s readers did not know what to make of her. When O’Connor claimed that she wished to be considered a “hillbilly Thomist,” she said it to counter the belief critics of *Wise Blood* held that she was a “hillbilly nihilist” (*Habit* 81). Even she recognized that her identifying herself as an orthodox Catholic would “shock her ardent admirers” (147-

48). The reason for the confusion is that O'Connor's Catholicism had an edge to it that was other than orthodox.

The root of the difference between O'Connor's sensibility and the Church's is ultimately found in their respective understandings of scholasticism and its relationship to the modern world. O'Connor not only spoke of her fervent faith, but also of her contempt for the arrogance of modern secular culture, a contempt shared by the Church, but O'Connor responded to it differently. Having a great respect for mystery and a humble view of what can be known, she complains, "Since the eighteenth century, the popular spirit of each succeeding age has tended more and more to the view that the ills and mysteries of life will eventually fall before the scientific advances of man" (*Mystery* 41). She recognized the negative and overwhelming influences of modern philosophy, once stating that to live in the modern world was to "breathe in nihilism" (*Habit* 97). Like the Catholic Church, O'Connor was fighting against many of the beliefs of the modern temper, against a culture whose faith was more and more founded on science and rationalism. Pope Pius X created the terms "Modernism" and "Modernists" to describe the movement opposing the Church and its followers, and made strong claims about what can be known, using neo-scholasticism as the Church's weapon. For instance, in response to ideas such as the evolution of dogmas or fideism, the Church began to emphasize what can be known rationally. O'Connor, however, was more likely to humbly respect that Reality and Truth were Mysteries⁶ that evaded intellectual reasoning and direct comprehension. For her, the imagination and the intellect were constantly and creatively

⁶ O'Connor claimed that as a serious writer of fiction (which for her also meant a prophet), she was "interested in what we don't understand rather than in what we do" and more "interested in possibility rather than probability" (42).

working together to investigate Reality and Truth, a process she called, borrowing from St. Thomas, “reason in the making.”

The Church’s fight against Modernism differed, then, from O’Connor’s. During much of O’Connor’s lifetime, to be a “thinking” Catholic practically required that one had to be aligned with conservative neo-scholasticism because the Church demanded it. In 1907, to preserve traditional Thomist thought, Pope Pius X insisted that Aquinas’s theses were “to be considered as the foundations upon which the whole science of natural and divine things is based” (*Doctoris Angelici*), and to prevent Catholics thinkers from getting too liberal or progressive, he later ordered that all clerics, priests, and Catholic theologians teaching at universities take an oath against the many “errors” of modern thought, or the Oath Against Modernism. Basic tenets of Modernism that unsettled the Church included its emphasis of immanence over transcendence and its insistence that faith was inspired by an inner religious sense springing from the unconscious.

In light of this climate, it would seem that O’Connor could not be completely and accurately called a “conservative” Catholic, for many of the thinkers who most attracted O’Connor were either considered Modernists or were under suspicion of having Modernist sympathies. Also, since Church dogma emphasized the Church’s crucial role in the soul’s salvation, O’Connor’s tendency to have her characters experience grace as a result of an innate or instinctive desire for God within the human soul indicates her liberal Catholicism. The thinkers who tended to draw O’Connor’s interest were those who could harmonize her faith with modern thought and science. When she claimed to be a “hillbilly Thomist,” she did not apparently mean that she wanted to preserve Thomist thought (like the neo-scholastics) so much as she wanted to copy Aquinas’s approach of

synthesizing the current scientific and philosophical thought with her Catholic faith. In fact, she once admitted in a letter, “What St. Thomas did for the new learning of the 13th century we are in bad need of someone to do for the 20th”⁷ (*Habit* 306). Two of the books she chose to review focused on this very subject.⁸ She once summed up her frustration with Catholic theology as she bemoaned the lack of compelling contemporary Catholic scholarship and praised the Protestant “crisis theologians” in a letter to Betty Hester, with whom O’Connor intimately expressed her faith:

They are the greatest of the Protestant theologians writing today and it is to our misfortune that they are much more alert and creative than their Catholic counterparts. We have very few thinkers to equal Barth and Tillich, perhaps none. This is not an age of great Catholic theology. We are living on our capital and it is past time for a new synthesis. (*Habit* 306)

Barth and Tillich, as Protestants, were not restricted by Catholic Anti-Modernism and could creatively express themselves. About two years after expressing her concern about the lack of compelling Catholic thinkers, O’Connor would discover and admire the works of a Jesuit priest, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who creatively attempted to integrate Christianity and evolutionary theory. Many of his writings, however, were too controversial for the Church and it forbade their publication during his lifetime. Other

⁷ This statement mirrors a statement of Victor White’s in his essay “Scholasticism”: “It is the aim of the modern Thomist to integrate all modern discoveries and scientific achievements, all that is truly valuable and permanent in post medieval thought, into the Thomistic synthesis, for the good of man and the glory of God: in short to do for our own age what St. Thomas did for his, building on the foundation he laid.”

⁸ *The Christian Message and Myth* by L. Malvez, S. J. and *Modern Catholic Thinkers*, ed. by A. R. Caponigri.

thinkers she admired, like Maritain (who argued for the existence of a spiritual preconscious) and Lynch (who emphasized the connection between faith and imagination) also had tendencies toward Modernism. About the controversial Baron Von Hugel, O'Connor said he was "the most congenial spirit I have found in English Catholic letters, with more to say to me anyway, than Newman" (*Habit* 165). These thinkers, many of them Thomists themselves, found St. Thomas as O'Connor found him, more "flexible" (*Habit* 97) than he was presented by the neo-scholastics.

O'Connor, it appears, did not always realize how the Catholic Church was operating during her lifetime. When Betty Hester, upon discovering that O'Connor was a Catholic, accused all Catholics of being fascist, O'Connor responded that the Church did not believe "in the use of force" (*Habit* 99). Of course, she was saying this while the Church was threatening and even excommunicating Modernists for expressing themselves in ways that did not conform with the Church's version of Thomism. About a year later, O'Connor would acknowledge that she was "getting all this Modernist business more or less straight for the first time" (166).

O'Connor's fiction resonates with Modernist thought because her characters are driven by an instinctive desire for Christ, rather than their being led or instructed by the Church. Even in her first novel, Hazel Motes's "wise blood" haunts him and will not allow him any peace until he accepts the reality of God. Consciously, he rejects Christianity, but he has "Jesus mov[ing] from tree to tree in the back of his mind" (22) and could not escape its influence. One component of "The Oath Against Modernism," expressed that faith was not inspired by an inner religious sense⁹ but was rather the

⁹ The section of "The Oath" regarding the religious sense reads as follows: "Fifthly, I hold with certainty and sincerely confess that faith is not a blind sentiment of religion

product of an intellectual assent that came from an external source, implying the Church or scripture. The Church, however, rarely makes an appearance in O'Connor's fiction. She once explained this absence saying, "Writers like myself who don't use Catholic settings or characters, good or bad, are trying to make it plain that *personal* [italics mine] loyalty to the person of Christ is imperative, is the structure of man's nature, his necessary direction, etc." (290). Here, the Protestant South's influence on O'Connor's faith becomes apparent, as this statement, made in a private letter, reveals a direct Modernist characteristic, one that the Church was actively fighting against, for the Church did not trust the subjective *personal* experience, but rather emphasized a transcendent and rational faith.¹⁰ This lack of trust of the personal experience of faith appears a logical but overly defensive response to the Reformation and Luther's call for every man to be his own priest. A couple of months after stressing the importance of the Christian's "personal loyalty to Christ, she states that one problem with people today is that the "religious sense seems to be bred out of them"¹¹ (299). This complaint echoes a concern of Jung's, and he believed the culprit for this was organized religion. Organized

welling up from the depths of the subconscious under the impulse of the heart and the motion of a will trained to morality; but faith is a genuine assent of the intellect to truth received by hearing from an external source. By this assent, because of the authority of the supremely truthful God, we believe to be true that which has been revealed and attested to by a personal God, our creator and lord."

¹⁰ Part of the justification for the Church stressing the importance of faith coming from an external rather than an internal influence comes from Romans 10:17 where the author states that "faith comes by hearing." This meant, at least from the Church's point of view, that faith comes from listening to an external and authoritative source, which the Church believes itself to be.

¹¹ For O'Connor, the primary culprit for the loss of a "religious sense" is Descartes, and the consequences of his "method of doubt" are discussed in a later section of the dissertation that examines the differences between the Catholic and the scientific approach to knowledge.

religion encourages a faith based on dogma which acts as “a substitute for inner experience” and results in a constantly wavering faith (*The Undiscovered Self* 21).

O’Connor and the Depth Psychologists

Not surprisingly, given her belief that man had an instinctive desire for God, one particular modern scientific field especially intrigued O’Connor: the study of the psyche, especially of the unconscious. In a 1960 letter to her friend Dr. Ted Spivey, she admitted to having been interested in the subject of depth psychology “for some time” (*Habit* 382). In fact, O’Connor’s library, book reviews, and letters regularly reveal her strong interest in depth psychology, or the study of the unconscious. Her library included not only some of Freud’s and Jung’s writings, but also commentaries, especially by Catholics priests, on the connection between the unconscious and religion.¹² She reviewed Gregory Zilboorg’s *Freud and Religion* and Victor White’s *Soul and Psyche*, and recommended White’s *God and the Unconscious* and Raymond Hostie’s *Religion and the Psychology of Jung* to an English professor at Georgia State University.

Although O’Connor was influenced by and claimed to have “uses” for Freud (*Habit* 110), she seems more persuaded by, more compelled by, and found greater use for, the interpretations of the psyche as presented by Freud’s disciple, Carl Jung. Jung,

¹² Her library included *The Origins of Consciousness* (foreword by Jung) by Erich Neumann, *Religion and the Psychology of Jung* by Raymond Hostie, S. J., *The Third Revolution: A Study of Psychiatry and Religion* by Karl Stern, *God and the Unconscious* (two copies) and *Soul and Psyche: An Enquiry into the Relationship of Psychotherapy and Religion* by Victor White S. J., *Freud and Religion: A Restatement of an Old Controversy* by Gregory Zilboorg F. A. P. A., *Holiness is Wholeness: A Theologian and Psychologist Applies the Finding of Depth Psychology to the Religious Life* by Josef Goldbrunner. Hostie, White, and Goldbrunner were Catholic priests and Karl Stern a Catholic layman.

like Teilhard, accommodated O'Connor's progressive thinking: She once called the parallels between them "striking" as both of them had "the evolutionary view" (383). Jung's depth psychology was much more compatible with her Catholicism than was Freud's. In fact, whereas Freud saw religion as an illusion, Jung believed that the absence of religion in a person's life was a most likely cause for a neurosis. While discussing Jung in a letter, O'Connor once acknowledged that she found much of Jung compatible with her faith: "All of what Jung says about penance and accepting the world's sins as your own, and emphasizing evil and admitting the shadow, I can accept, because it is what I've always been taught by another source" (*Habit* 382). O'Connor's source is the Catholic Church, the source that guided her sacramental worldview which she described as "penetrat[ing] the concrete world in order to find at its depths the image of its source" (*Mystery* 157), and Jung's psychology certainly opened the door for a spirit-filled reality after Freud's psychology had tried to shut it.

A few critics have pointed to Jung's influence on O'Connor. Suzanne Morrow Paulson devotes a chapter of her study of O'Connor on male-female conflicts and their relationship to Jung's dividing of the psyche into the masculine and the feminine. She concludes that a pervasive "dominance of masculine characteristics" in several of O'Connor's characters results "in an attack on the mother, a fragmented family, and a failure to continue the ongoing chain of human development" (45). Her study is of interest in that Jung believed that a "union of opposites" must exist in harmony for individuation to take place. This idea of the "union of opposites" can be traced to traditional Catholic thought, especially in the work of Nicolas of Cusa, and it resonates

with Lynch's emphasis on analogical vision and of finding "sameness in difference."¹³ Rebecca Rowley's essay, "Individuation and Religious Experience: A Jungian Approach to O'Connor's 'Revelation'" asserts that O'Connor was influenced by Jung "more than she acknowledged" (92). Rowley insists that the influence of Jung's *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* and *The Undiscovered Self* permeate many of O'Connor's works, including one of her last stories, "Revelation," in which Ruby Turpin must come to reject her conscious and limited image of herself, her "splendid persona" (94) and accept her shadow¹⁴. She underscores the "deeper, transpersonal layer" that exists in Jung's version of the unconscious as an important component of Ruby Turpin's psyche as it forces her to recognize that she can also be considered the "wart hog from Hell" that Mary Grace accuses her of being. Rowley presents Turpin's saving revelation at the story's conclusion as a "manifestation of the individuation process" (100) as presented by Jung and concludes that Jung's and O'Connor's "compatibility" comes "from a mutual appreciation and celebration of the power of the numinous to transform and raise consciousness" (101). Rowley makes an argument that O'Connor (and Maritain) was sympathetic to Jung's complaint that the Church's version of evil as simply a diminishment of good stunted the psyche's development (96). While Paulson and Rowley are among the few critics who seriously examined Jung's influence on O'Connor, neither

¹³ The idea of the union of opposites or the coincidence of opposites can also be traced to Teilhard, as David Tracy notes in his work *The Analogical Imagination* that both Teilhard and Bonaventure advocated such vision (413).

¹⁴ Rowley also cites the Catholic priest and Jungian Josef Goldbrunner in her analysis of Turpin's psyche: "Anyone who identifies himself with a splendid Persona, indeed, anyone who even attempts to do so, always causes unconscious reactions, moods, passions, fears, hallucinations, weaknesses and vices." I will later argue that O'Connor comes to rely on the three Catholic priests already mentioned, including Goldbrunner, in her attempt to assimilate Jungian psychology with Catholic thought.

delves beyond an article or a chapter into that influence; Marion Montgomery, however, provides a more in-depth analysis of O'Connor's attraction to Jung's works.

Montgomery, who more than most O'Connor critics acknowledges and accepts O'Connor's admiration of Jung, introduces Jung in *Why Flannery Stayed Home* by emphasizing Jung's similarities to two other thinkers O'Connor also admired, Eric Voegelin and Teilhard. Montgomery notes that these three "cast a light on a darkening of community spirit" that had begun with the Renaissance and that they present "the defects of modernism" in a fashion that agrees with her own and "encourage[s] her confidence in the metaphysics of St. Thomas" (308). Montgomery stresses their attempt to show that man has an innate desire for myth that requires a "surrender of the intellect" (304) and a desire to recover the individual man "as an older inhabitant of time than the dates of his birth and death will measure" (317) as primary reasons for O'Connor's attraction to them. These two observations are significant not only to a general understanding of Jung's influence on O'Connor but also to O'Connor's presentation of the psyche as a divine force.

One problem with Montgomery's understanding of O'Connor's attraction to Jung's thought is that he bases it primarily on Jung's *The Undiscovered Self*. In this text, written late in his career (1957), Jung's main point is that the individual psyche has been overwhelmed by the collective psyche, represented by Church and State institutions. Jung is concerned that the Church and the State have created dogmas that have essentially brainwashed the individual and encouraged an intellectual assent to a worldview at the

expense of the individual psyche's desire for experience and individuation¹⁵.

Montgomery highlights a statement O'Connor marks in her copy of the book that refers to "original sin" as "Adam's relatively innocent slip-up" to show Jung's lack of respect for and understanding of Church dogma¹⁶. Montgomery admits that Jung is "partly valuable to O'Connor because he approaches the mystical truth of prevenient grace to which she is committed. And because he does so, he helps open new possibilities in old symbols and images" (325). He adds a footnote referencing a point Mircea Eliade made concerning Jung's "greatest merit," that Jung had "gone further than Freudian psychoanalysis" and "has thus restored the spiritual significance of Image" (307).

Montgomery, however, emphasizes O'Connor's "sense of danger" when encountering Jung because of his "using wisdom of the blood to practical ends¹⁷" (323), and for this reason he cites Raymond Hostie's book *Religion and the Psychology of Jung* as a "safeguard to one's misreading of the Jungian element in Miss O'Connor's fiction"

¹⁵ While O'Connor, as a Catholic, cannot accept this, her respect for Simone Weil, who also rejected institutional faith in order to follow her individual conscience, suggests that O'Connor could theoretically, at least, understand it. It should be noted that none of her protagonists who experience saving Grace are influenced by the Church, but rather by their individual experiences as a result of a strong psychic desire. While not applying her remark to the importance of resisting the social influences in order to experience individuation, Paulson observes that in several of O'Connor's stories, her characters "feel themselves to be insignificant repetitions in the long procession of human life. They are overwhelmed by an identity crisis because they cannot maintain 'difference' established by achieving a secure place in the social hierarchy," and due to their "[l]acking a sure sense of self" they will at times "deny their social identities" (47).

¹⁶ O'Connor herself commented on that passage as an indicator of Jung's ignorance of "what the Church teaches (*Habit* 382). This is an example of Jung's thinking, however, that turned O'Connor's interest in depth psychology away from Jung and toward Catholic priests like White and Goldbrunner.

¹⁷ Montgomery alludes to John Crowe Ransom and Donald Davidson who theorized that, in Montgomery's words, myth is "constituted of images fed by the blood" and "Myth is the bubbling out of the depths of the blood, an emergence of a sense of reality from deep images of reality" (304).

(326). Part of Montgomery's hesitation in giving Jung too much credit for influencing O'Connor is his translating her strong Catholic faith into meaning that it was also a rigid one. At one point, he emphasizes that O'Connor was completely comfortable with traditional Thomism, saying that she, unlike Voegelin, did not desire a new Saint Thomas to replace neo-Thomism (322), but, as previously mentioned, O'Connor did express a desire for a Saint Thomas of the 20th century to integrate modern thought with her faith (*Habit* 206). If one wants to truly examine Jung's influence on O'Connor, his earlier text, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (1931) would be more appropriate.

When Montgomery attempts to show that O'Connor differs from Jung because her "reasonable use of the unreasonable" would be foreign to Jung's understanding, he would be more accurate to be citing this as a similarity between the two. Montgomery says

Miss O'Connor's Thomistic use of *unreasonable* as that which is beyond the powers of reason finds companion usage in the 'unconscious' when it is made to mean 'Beyond the powers of the conscious reason.' For her, the unconscious may touch on the mystery of being. Not *without* but beyond, not *separated from* but *larger than*. The distinction is of some importance in relation to Miss O'Connor's fictional uses of Jung. It helped her see, no doubt, that a conscious knowledge of myth or symbol is dangerous to art when intellectually acquired since it may tempt the artist to apply myth or symbol as a method of imposing order rather than discovering existing order in the 'unreasonable.' (Montgomery 323-324)

Jung, in *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* says that "expression[s] of psychic experience" symbolize "forces that are beyond logical justification and sanction: they are always

stronger than man and his brain” (42). Montgomery’s point that a symbol is discovered rather than created by the artist echoes Jung’s distinguishing between a *psychological* novel and a *visionary* one. Jung says the psychological novel is plotted by the artist’s conscious decisions and is of no interest to the psychologist, but the visionary novel is “a strange something that derives its existence from the hinterland of man’s mind – that suggests the abyss of time separating us from pre-human ages, or evokes a super-human world of contrasting light and darkness” (156). In this type of novel, Jung says the artist’s “vision [...] is true symbolic expression – that is, the expression of something existent in its own right, but imperfectly known” (162).

Montgomery interprets Jung to have a “certain hesitation” in finding the unconscious as “a medium of our being which connects us to the larger Cause of all being” (323), but in *Modern Man* Jung makes strong remarks that indicate otherwise. Jung says that a person’s unconscious must live in “harmony” with the primordial symbols “ingrained in him” and that it is “only possible to live life to the fullest when we are in harmony with these symbols” (113). He also insists that if man’s “picture of God” is “atrophied” his “psychic metabolism is out of gear” (113).

Jung’s psychology complemented O’Connor’s sacramental worldview in large part because of their similar understanding of the role of symbols. O’Connor’s sacramental theology and Jung’s psychology both connected the symbol with the transcendent. Freud, on the other hand, used the “symbol” to refer to a thing that stood for another specific thing, and while a cigar was sometimes just a cigar, when it was not, it was a phallic symbol. Jung, who accused Freud of confusing the symbol and the sign, insisted that a symbol always leads toward mystery and that a symbol could not be

consciously created. Real symbols, he argued, were a “natural” product of the unconscious that always “prove to be meaningful” (*Man and his Symbols* 93). O’Connor insisted that the prophet (which for her included the serious writer of fiction) was always more interested in what cannot be understood than in what could be understood (42), so her fiction is filled with symbols that lead to multiple meanings. O’Connor’s own take on the symbol is compatible with Jung’s:

The truer the symbol, the deeper it leads you, the more meaning it opens up. To take an example from my own book, *Wise Blood*, the hero’s rat-colored automobile is his pulpit and his coffin as well as something he thinks of as a means of escape. He is mistaken, of course, and does not really escape his predicament until the car is destroyed by the patrolman. The car is a kind of death-in-life symbol. The fact that these meanings are there makes the book significant. The reader may not see them but they have their effect on him nonetheless. (*Mystery* 72)¹⁸

From here, O’Connor immediately begins to discuss the necessity of a writer having anagogical vision. This vision, she says, enables one “to see different levels of reality in one image or one situation” and has “to do with the Divine life and our participating in it.” She continues that, although anagogical vision is generally associated with “biblical exegesis, it was also an attitude toward all of creation, and a way of reading nature which included most possibilities” (72-73). Thus, O’Connor felt that her vision needed to

¹⁸ O’Connor makes a similar statement about Hulga’s wooden leg having an effect on the reader whether the reader realizes it or not (*Mystery* 99).

represent the created world in a symbolic manner that hinted at or suggested the Divine Reality.

A key shared belief between Jung and O'Connor was the importance of religious feeling. Jung claimed it as "fact that man has, everywhere and always, spontaneously developed religious forms of expression" and that the psyche "from time immemorial has been shot through with religious feelings and ideas" (*Modern* 122). Jung believed that the psyche included a collective unconscious that produced religious images which required acceptance and response or a neurosis would result. He famously claimed that his patients who were "in the second half of life" all benefitted from a "religious outlook" (*Modern* 229). In other words, their mental health required a response to an inner religious feeling. Of course, this describes all of O'Connor's protagonists as they attempt to ignore their religious callings or yearnings until they eventually are forced, through grace, to deal with them.

Another telling connection between Jung and O'Connor is their shared beliefs about the artist as a type of prophet. O'Connor referred to the writer of fiction as a "realist of distance," a "prophet" who is able to see "near things with their extensions of meanings." (*Mystery* 44 and 179). Directly connecting art and faith, she said the "virtues" of both "are such that they reach beyond the limitations of the intellect" (*Mystery* 158). In order to write significant fiction, O'Connor insisted that the writer must apply his "whole personality," including "the unconscious as well as the conscious mind" (101 and 144), relatedly, O'Connor insisted that the writer must have a God-given "gift" (83). Likewise, Jung's concept of visionary novels indicates a creation of content that transcends the writer's personal experience (160), and he even suggestively states that the

writer's vision "offers no words or images for it is a vision seen 'as in a glass, darkly' (164). He connects "great art" with myth and insists that it requires from the writer an "unconscious process" that communicates content shared deep within the psyches of all people (*Undiscovered* 59). The implication here is that both O'Connor and Jung find a power within the psyche that delivers meaningful content beyond the capacity of the conscious mind.

Another important shared notion between O'Connor and Jung is that they both insist that an artist must become "self-forgetful" in the process of creating. O'Connor claims, "No art is sunk in the self, but rather, in art the self becomes self-forgetful in order to meet the demands of the thing seen and the thing being made" (*Mystery* 82). While this echoes Maritain, who calls "egoism the natural enemy of creative activity" (*Creative* 107), Jung has similar notions about artistic creation. Jung says it is "essential" for the artist to "rise far above the realm of personal life and speak from the spirit and heart of the poet as man to the spirit and heart of mankind. The personal aspect is a limitation – and even a sin – in the realm of art" (*Modern* 168). He says the artist becomes an "instrument" as he is driven by something "innate" within and must put aside any "moods" and "personal aims" and speak instead as a "'man' in a higher sense" as "collective man" (169).

Perhaps the most significant indicator of O'Connor's connection with Jung can be found in her first letter to Betty Hester in which she quotes Jung's description of the rare enlightened person to describe herself. Hester had written a perceptive letter to O'Connor about the spiritual nature of her stories, and in O'Connor's response she describes herself as a "Catholic peculiarly possessed of the modern consciousness, that

thing Jung describes as unhistorical, solitary, and guilty. To possess this *within* the Church is to bear a burden, the necessary burden for the conscious Catholic. It's to feel the contemporary situation at the ultimate level" (*Habit* 90). Jung was describing the rare person who is "conscious to a superlative degree" with a "minimum of unconsciousness" (197). The rare person in tune with his or her psyche, which Jung associates with the notion of "spirit" (180) and "soul" (181), had access to "higher and even divine knowledge," an understanding, Jung emphasizes, that the primitive man instinctively knew but the educated man of the 20th century too quickly rejects (184-5). Earlier in the text, Jung stated his belief that the unconscious presented primordial images (or archetypes) to the conscious psyche and only the prophets, the poets, and the artists and the enlighteners are in touch with its contents (163). A higher level of consciousness separates the "man of the present" from "the mass of men" participating in a "common unconscious" and "who live entirely within the bounds of tradition" (197). This "modern consciousness" O'Connor claims to have is what assures her that she is a prophet.¹⁹

Despite this attraction to Jung's psychology, Montgomery and others were right, even if they overstressed it, that O'Connor also had concerns regarding it. Three times in her letters she stated that Jung was "dangerous" (*Habit* 152, 362, 491). This danger, based on O'Connor's remarks, stemmed primarily from Jung's seeming belief that the religious sense was no more than a psychic reality. Her 1956 review of Gregory Zilboorg's *Freud and Religion* highlights a minor point Zilboorg makes that Jung was

¹⁹ This will be made more clear when I examine Victor White's "Revelation and the Unconscious."

more dangerous to religion than was Freud.²⁰ In a letter to Father John McCown, a priest with whom she often discussed particulars of the Catholic faith, O'Connor mentions a Protestant friend (Dr. T. R. Spivey) who had "gone over the deep end on the subject of Jung" and adds that while "Jung had something to offer religion," he was also "very dangerous for it²¹" because Jung had argued, for instance, that "Christ did not rise from the dead literally but we must realize that we need this symbol" (362). A few months later she wrote to Spivey²² and after first admitting that she "admire[d]" Jung, she also pointed out Jung's faults: Jung only offers a belief in "psychic realities" as opposed to true religion and Jung "knows nothing about what the Church teaches" (382).

The root of the problem is that the traditional Catholic understanding of what can be known considers faith as a tool for knowledge while the modern scientific approach to knowledge is purely rational.

²⁰ In O'Connor's short review she describes the book as a "successful attempt" at showing among other things that "Freud's teachings are in fact less dangerous to religion than Jung's theories, which use belief in the practical service of psychotherapy" even though Zilboorg only made a casual statement about Jung, and his only defense for the statement was a short point that Jung had an "attitude of a sort of utilitarian, pragmatic exploitation, in the service of psychotherapy, of man's belief in God" (5).

²¹ It is important to recognize, though, that O'Connor also said that all great thinkers are "dangerous" including Pierre Teilhard Chardin (*Habit* 571).

²² In *Flannery O'Connor: the Woman, the Thinker, the Visionary*, Spivey reveals that in his personal conversations with O'Connor he had encouraged her to "plunge" into her "psychic dreams" and to consider "Jung's life and work, particularly as we find it presented in his *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections*, but he states that she resisted this in part due to her Catholic orthodoxy (164-165).

Knowledge and Mystery: The Catholic Versus the Secular Approach to Knowledge

“It is not said that she has never had any faith but it is implied that her fine education has got rid of it for her, that purity has been overridden by pride of intellect through her fine education.”

Flannery O’Connor, speaking of Hulga from her story “Good Country People

(Habit of Being 170)

O’Connor’s epistemology, which was rooted in Catholic tradition and emphasized a respect for Mystery, differed radically from the secular world’s, and that helps explain why she could not completely accept Freud’s and Jung’s theories of the unconscious.

O’Connor believed that the modern notion of knowledge and reason were too narrow. She regularly stated that reason and imagination were designed to work together, and as far as logic was concerned, she said, “We too much enjoy indulging ourselves in a logic that kills, in making categories smaller and smaller, in prescribing attitudes and proscribing subjects. For the Catholic, one result of the Counter-Reformation was a practical overemphasis on the legal and logical and a consequent neglect of the Church’s broader traditions” (*Mystery 205*). One of these traditions was that of affective knowledge. O’Connor’s claim that she, like Pascal, believed in “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” and not the God of “the philosophers and scholars” (*Mystery 161*) gets right to the heart of the conflict she had with much of the modern temper. At another time she makes a related statement, noting that our “response to life is different if we have been taught only a definition of faith than if we have trembled with Abraham as he held the knife over Isaac,” and adds that while “both of these kinds of knowledge are necessary,” modern Catholics have “overemphasized the abstract and consequently impoverished their imaginations and their capacity for prophetic insight” (*Mystery 202-*

203). The implication here is that affective knowledge, for O'Connor, is equal to, if not superior, to intellectual knowledge. The prophets were not intellectuals who abstractly argued for or against the existence of God or about the finer points of free will and determinism; instead, they experienced Grace and gained knowledge from revelation and affective experience. She would have been sympathetic to Thomas à Kempis, who, in *The Imitation of Christ*, makes the point that he "would rather feel contrition than know the definition thereof" (3). The saints and the modern prophets were respectful to revelation as it was presented by the Church, but at the same time they valued their personal revelations. This point hints at O'Connor's frustration with the modern Church, which fought against Modernists directly because it demanded its followers disregard subjective, emotional, and imaginative experience in regard to faith.

As we have seen, O'Connor also appreciated an analogical way of knowing over a strictly scientific way of knowing. She believed that strict logic never accomplishes its desire to grasp reality completely, but analogical vision, which never claims to see completely, does hint at a reality beyond reason's grasp: It recognizes our limitations, that we "see through a glass darkly," while still stressing that we do, in fact, gain some notion of the Truth and at the same time recognize that Mystery remains. This is why she insisted on the importance of narratives, for they, unlike arguments, are suggestive rather than definitive. They communicate with symbols rather than with facts. The novelist with "prophetic vision" is capable – as we have seen -- of "seeing near things with their extensions of meaning and thus seeing far things close up" (*Mystery* 44). In her lectures

she frequently shows her irritation for those who write “trash²³”: in one lecture she criticizes writers who “want to write about problems, not people; or about abstract issues, not concrete situations” or “who want to give their wisdom to the world in a simple-enough way for the world to be able to absorb it” (*Mystery* 91). In another lecture she points out that the problem with those types of stories is that they are not really stories at all. She says too often writers “find themselves writing a sketch with an essay woven through it, or an editorial with a character in it, or a case history with a moral, or some other mongrel thing” (66). The result of this simplistic story-telling is that no analogical thinking is required, and analogical thinking needs to be nourished in a culture overly focused on just one type of thinking.

O’Connor was especially concerned with the effect of an academic education that had practically rid itself of any kind of faith. She warns the college student who wrote to her about his weakened faith that academia is hard on faith because it results in a “shrinking” of the “imaginative life” (476). She encourages him to read a text sympathetic to Christian faith for every book he reads that opposes it. Her advice resonates with the experience of Charles Darwin, who found late in life that his mind had become a “machine for grinding out general laws out of large collections of facts,” and he regretted his lost imagination and his ability to find “great pleasure” in Shakespeare and poetry, which now he found “so intolerably dull that it nauseated [him].” Darwin concluded,

²³ The importance of analogical thinking for O’Connor can be inferred from her once summing up one of her lectures to a woman’s club: She said that the general point of the lecture was that if they did not stop reading “trash,” they would all “burn in hell” (*Complete* 922). Real literature, for O’Connor, was always prophetic, always asking the reader to read analogically and anagogically. Those who did not nurture those habits were risking their souls.

If I had to live my life over again, I would have made it a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once a week; for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied would thus have been kept alive through use. The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character, by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature. (158)

Darwin's inability to reap the rewards of an active imagination after years of disuse is telling. If a certain kind of thinking dominates one's approach to viewing reality, then one can lose the capacity to utilize other kinds. Culturally, the Western intellect has overvalued one kind of thinking, and O'Connor's words about a "logic that kills" seem especially appropriate when applied to Darwin's experience. Instead of interpreting the world using a single approach, O'Connor encouraged a medieval approach to encountering both scripture and reality.

Related to analogical thinking, O'Connor highlights that medieval exegesis approached interpretation allegorically, tropologically (or morally), and – as we have seen -- anagogically, and adds that this approach was also an "attitude toward all of creation" (72-73). While the literal is necessary as it grounds the story in the concrete and affords the potential for symbolic thinking, it also provides the frame for the other readings, or the "different levels of being." In order to see these "levels of being," one has to engage the imagination. And although he was not a Catholic, Aristotle, whom Aquinas practically adopted into the Church, claimed that "to spot the similar in the dissimilar is the mark of poetic genius." As the poet and the prophet were often

synonymous terms in the ancient world, it is not too much of a stretch to relate Aristotle's point to the prophet as well as the poet.

Ultimately, then, O'Connor believes that the Christian's knowledge always recognizes and respects the Mystery that eludes our rational knowledge. Her theory of knowledge resonates with many Catholics. The under-appreciated Nicolas of Cusa, a Cardinal of the Catholic Church in the mid to late 1400s, insisted that a finite mind cannot completely grasp infinite reality because it knows all things by relation only. However, he stresses that the more we investigate the concrete world, the more the likenesses inform us of not only relationships between concrete things but also of the relationships between the finite and the infinite. This type of thinking has been proposed by many other sacramental Catholic thinkers as well, including Saint Bonaventure and Gerard Manley Hopkins. William Lynch's emphasis on the analogical imagination also stressed the importance of looking for the similar within the different. More recently, David Tracy, whose text *The Analogical Imagination* argues that a similarity-in-difference vision is the key for recognizing an ordered relationship of the whole of reality, also made a similar case.

While O'Connor pointed to the effects of the Counter-Reformation for the overly logical philosophical approach, she also recognized Descartes as a culprit²⁴. Christina Beiber Lake notes that O'Connor's library is "full of volumes by philosophers who explain the turn Descartes took as the turn that narrowed the definition of reason to

²⁴ Even as an undergraduate, O'Connor scorned Descartes' influence. In Brad Gooch biography of O'Connor, he quotes O'Connor's professor of the class "Introduction to Modern Philosophy," and who credited Descartes as the hero of modern philosophy, as summing up O'Connor's response to the class as, "It was philosophical *modernism* that has blinded the Western mind" (114). He also remembers O'Connor as having a strong grasp on Aquinas and early philosophy.

exclude revelation and thereby destroyed access to genuine Christian faith” (16)²⁵.

Descartes’ method of doubt, which rested on the premise that he would “reject as absolutely false everything in which [he] could imagine the least doubt,” appealed much more to the scientific culture of the time than did the “Learned Ignorance” that Nicolas of Cusa had proposed just 100 years earlier. The Cartesian method set a standard for a rationalism that left no room for faith. Eventually, other thinkers using his method showed that what could be doubted went beyond what Descartes had presented, and, ironically, later thinkers came to see all things could be doubted and were beyond reason’s reach: Kant would say that we could not know the outside world as it truly is, and Freud would show that even self-knowledge was not possible as the deepest elements of our own personality were hidden from us. Thus, it seems, we could doubt just about anything.

Jacques Maritain cites Aristotle and then Aquinas to explain how the intellect could be seen in a more hopeful light, as it was prior to Descartes. He notes that before Descartes had rid the psyche of the soul, “the human soul was considered a substantial reality” (*Creative Intuition* 70). Maritain says that Aristotle, who had argued that nothing in the intellect exists outside of what it receives from the senses, had to explain the existence of spiritual and abstract concepts, and thus posited “the existence of a merely active and perpetually active intellectual energy” (70). This “Illuminating Intellect,” as Maritain terms it, “permeates the images with its pure and purely activating spiritual light and actuates or awakens the potential intelligibility which is contained in them” (70-71).

²⁵ In fact, many of the thinkers, including Maritain, Gilson, and Allen Tate, who influenced O’Connor, point to Descartes as the primary culprit for Western culture’s loss of respect for revelation and mystery.

Because this capacity of the intellect was “superior in nature to everything in man,” says Maritain, Aristotle placed it as something separate from man, but Aquinas argued instead that the Illuminating Intellect must be a part of every person’s soul (71). The implication is that human knowledge is aided by a divine illuminating force that allows real knowledge of things outside of ourselves, including God.

Thus the spiritual content of faith is not necessarily opposed to knowledge, but rather it can be understood as a type of knowledge. While faith is now generally perceived as an irrational approach to understanding or interpreting, it might rather be considered a supra-rational way of knowing. Maritain, one of Descartes’ harshest critics, argued that “intuitive reason” (*Creative Intuition* 55) and “creative intuition” (66) were once accepted forms of knowledge and still should be. He calls “creative intuition,” a renaming of Plato’s Muse, and calls for a unification of the intellect and the imagination “where inspiration from above the soul becomes inspiration from above conceptual reason, that is, poetic experience” (66).

If O’Connor did not believe in the God of the philosophers, it is not surprising that she found little to like from the godless psychology of Freud. O’Connor once admitted to having “respect for Freud” when he was not “made into a philosopher” (*Habit* 491), but Freud, like Jung, often discussed his philosophy of religion. Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* (1913), *The Future of an Illusion* (1926), and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) give considerable attention to the subject. For Freud, God was a projection of a father who could meet all of our needs and desires and protect us from our greatest fears. O’Connor could not, however, accept Freud’s position on what constituted our greatest desires and fears for an obvious reason. If the most powerful and significant portion of

the psyche primarily functioned to drive us to sinful and selfish desires, then its design would counter a Catholic belief that all God made was good. While O'Connor recognized that Freud "brought to light many truths," she also insisted that "his psychology is not an adequate instrument for understanding the religious encounter" (*Mystery* 165). Catholics such as Augustine and Bonaventure had presented the primary role of the psyche as an ally rather than an adversary to the believer's salvation. Augustine said, "You made us for yourself Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you," with our "heart" being an obvious metaphor for our "soul" or "psyche." These two clauses argue that *since* God has made us for the specific purpose of an eventual union with Him, our psyches are designed to desire Him. Bonaventure's *The Soul's Journey into God* (sometimes translated *The Mind's Journey into God*) similarly implies that the purpose of the psyche is to recognize the divine within the created world. Freud's godless universe could see no truth in such a depiction of the psyche.

O'Connor, in fact, made a few overt statements against Freud's theories. She once claimed to be "against [Freud] tooth and toenail," but immediately admitted that she was "crafty" and had "certain uses for him" (*Habit* 110). Of Freud's psychological determinism, O'Connor said that it had limited usefulness to the writer of fiction (*Mystery* 165), and another time implied that any presentation of the psyche as operating as if our thoughts were predetermined held only a "comic interest" for her (115). As long as Freud's theory of the unconscious, which basically described it as full of repressed, socially unacceptable desires, especially repressed sexual desire, reflects a scientific analysis of a specific tendency of psychic operation, and not a complete

description of how the psyche works, then she could credit him for his insight: however, he applies his theory often beyond the scope of psychology.

Evidence of O'Connor's "crafty" use of Freud is apparent throughout her fiction. Her fictional characters are inflicted with various compulsive disorders. For example, with Tanner in "Judgment Day," O'Connor plays with Freud's theory of the death instinct as he has an irrational compulsion to go back to Georgia knowing that doing so will kill him. Similarly, the Grandmother in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" shows an obsession with death throughout the story as she unconsciously directs herself (and her unfortunate family) to their murderer, the Misfit. The Misfit himself, however, is perhaps the character whom O'Connor uses most comically to poke fun at Freud. The Misfit claims "a head-doctor at the penitentiary said what I done was kill my daddy but I know that for a lie"; and of course, a "head-doctor" is actually diagnosing him with an Oedipal Complex, but The Misfit's understanding of the diagnosis confuses him to the point that he thinks he has been wrongly accused of patricide, for he knows his father "died of the epidemic flu" (*Complete* 130). Significantly, in every case as her characters pursue their compulsions (which were almost never sexual), manifestations of Grace follow close behind.

O'Connor claimed that strict Freudian interpretations cause a complete misreading of her fiction. She once said that anyone who performed a strict Freudian reading of her novel *The Violent Bear It Away* would believe that "the author shares Rayber's point of view and praise the book on account of it" (*Letters* 343) when, in fact, she was condemning it. A helpful example of her attitude toward a Freudian reading of her fiction can be found in a letter to her friend William Sessions after he had offered an

interpretation of *The Violent Bear It Away*. As noted earlier, she once claimed, citing Conrad, that she wanted her fiction to render the “highest possible justice to the visible universe,” which she said always “suggested an invisible one” (*Mystery* 80), so she had no patience for Sessions’ seeing “everything in terms of sex symbols.” She says applying Freud to situations as Sessions had done leads to “ridiculous results” (*Habit* 407). O’Connor’s response indicates that Sessions had especially focused his Freudian interpretation on the protagonist’s grandfather, Old Tarwater. She claimed that his criticism was “too far from the spirit of the book” for her to respond to elaborately. Instead of being driven by sexual desire, she says, he is “inspired by the Holy Ghost” (407). O’Connor’s characters, then, rather than being driven by their psyches for a human desire to reproduce, which would be a human instinct to preserve the human race, are driven instead by a spiritual desire for the soul’s salvation.

Freud’s theory of the unconscious, in the end, was too simplistic, too shallow, for O’Connor’s analogical imagination. She, who expressed a desire to use “a reasonable use of the unreasonable” in her fiction, could not tolerate Freud’s reductive, packaged reasoning, which could not contain the contraries that the imagination can fathom. Freud’s reductive view of images as signs rather than symbols cheats reality of its richness when compared to O’Connor’s analogical vision. Her imagination could hold contraries such as human free will and divine foreknowledge, or the existence of three Persons in one God, of Jesus’ being both Man and God, and of death and resurrection.

As we’ve seen, in contrast to Freud’s epistemology, Jung’s appears more agreeable to O’Connor’s. Jung’s openness to true symbolic thinking offered more to Catholicism than did Freud’s reductive signs. Jung believed religion offered answers for

his suffering patients while Freud saw religion as a problem for his patients. Jung, appearing less influenced by Descartes' method of doubt, scoffed at modern skepticism: "Under the influence of scientific materialism, everything that could not be seen with the eyes or touched with the hands was held in doubt; such things were even laughed at because of their supposed affinity with metaphysic" (*Modern* 173). Additionally, he denounced the modern tendency to only count as real that which could be "perceived by the senses or traced back to material causes" (173). He even called the Reformation a "spiritual catastrophe" because "belief in the substantiality of the spirit yielded more and more to the obtrusive conviction that material things alone have substance, till at last, thinkers and investigators came to regard the mind as wholly dependent on matter and material causation" (173-174). Finally, Jung insisted that he was an empiricist, which would seem to make his epistemology compatible with Aquinas and Aristotle.

Jung's epistemology, however, was much more complex than it appears on the surface, and he is impossible to categorize because of the disparate tendencies of his thoughts and interests. For Jung, psychic reality *was* reality, and he argues that we know things through our psychic experience more than we do through our material experience, making his epistemology more akin to Plato's than to Aristotle's. In fact, Jung's epistemology at times seems to have more in common with Hume's, Descartes', and Kant's, practical enemies of the Catholic mind, than it did with Aquinas's, whom he believed over-intellectualized the Christian faith. These three all denied that the senses provided reliable data to the mind for understanding reality. Like Descartes, Jung only trusted what occurred in his mind, the difference being Descartes trusted only logic (which Jung did not), while Jung trusted only psychic experience (which Descartes did

not). More than any other philosopher, though, Kant influenced Jung's epistemology. The complexity and perhaps the inconsistency of his thought can be found in "Religion and Modern Thinking" where Martin Buber argued that Jung's view of the Self and of the God-within made his thought "Gnostic" (119), and yet Jung's thought might just as easily be called Agnostic as the similarities between him and Kant suggest.

Jung's insistence that no one could make any statements of fact regarding God or any other metaphysical reality would also have resonated with O'Connor. O'Connor's fictional works do not make straightforward statements about the existence of God or the transcendent, but the concrete images she presents in her stories imaginatively suggest God's existence and immanence. She insisted that "the beginning of human knowledge is through the senses, and the fiction writer begins where human perception begins" (*Mystery* 67), but the effect of the work on the mind is meant to "have its sense of mystery deepened by contact with reality, and its sense of reality deepened by contact with mystery" (79). In other words, O'Connor did not make grand metaphysical statements in her fiction, but simply presented the natural world in a way that suggested the supernatural.

Similarly, Jung was influenced by the distinctions Kant had made between the phenomenal world and the noumenal world and believed we could only comment on phenomena²⁶. He felt that he could make statements about psychic realities, such as dreams and other mental images, because they were the most immediate experiences of mental activity, unfiltered through the senses as material reality was. Thus, although

²⁶ Although Jung claimed to be an empiricist, he was more accurately a phenomenologist. It is somewhat ironic that Jung is often connected with Gnosticism when the philosopher he most identifies with, Kant, is generally considered an agnostic.

making statements about God was impossible, he did feel one could make statements about the God image that occurs within the psyche (*Psychology and Religion* 2). It is likely due to this reasoning that he felt he could answer the question about his belief in God in a 1959 BBC interview: “I *know*. I don’t need to believe. I know.” Jung could not be speaking of a transcendent God if he were speaking about knowledge and he insisted we could not know anything outside of our psychic reality, so he was speaking of a God within. This “God within” does not appear to be the same God of the Christian faith, for Jung connects his God as the self (*God and Religion* 334).

For O’Connor, likely influenced by Maritain and his notion of “angelism²⁷,” the sacramental world offered the mind a physical reality that suggested God’s existence and even His nature. Remember that for O’Connor, the prophet, or the one who experiences God, must “penetrate the concrete world” if he or she is to experience “the image of ultimate reality” (*Mystery* 157). What bothered O’Connor was that many people attempted to speak of God in abstractions, without the mediation of the physical world, and that habit has hindered or even eliminated their capacity for prophetic insight (*Mystery* 203).

Victor White: O’Connor’s “Lucky Find”

O’Connor admits that she admires Jung, but his psychology as he presented it was not amenable to her faith. As we’ve seen, however, O’Connor, read the works of three Catholic priests, the most significant being the Dominican priest Victor White, and the other two being Goldbrunner and Hostie, who also examined Jung’s psychology in light

²⁷ Maritain argued that angels could know things by ideas infused in them while human knowledge is restricted to ideas gained from experience from the physical world.

of their Catholicism. White, a Thomist and a Jungian, repackaged Jung's and Freud's theories of the psyche, a term that he argued was synonymous with the "soul," to present his theory of the psyche as a spiritual compass. O'Connor's fiction reveals that she was sympathetic to White's psychology.

White, whom Jung had said was the only theologian to understand him, argued that the separation of the soul and the psyche was untenable. White believed, like a good Thomist (and as O'Connor did), that science, philosophy, and theology were ultimately harmonious; so he found Jung's affinity for religion much more attractive than Freud's rejection of it. In a book that O'Connor recommended to her "Jungian friend" Dr. Spivey, *God and the Unconscious* (for which Jung wrote the Foreword), White argues that when we rid ourselves of the gods or of God, that our psychic energy, which demands a religious component, "become[s] unconscious and affect[s] our thought and behaviour none the less" (41). He then quotes Jung's insistence that "*whenever* the Spirit of God is excluded from human consideration, an unconscious substitute takes its place" (42). In fact, in his other book, *Soul and Psyche*, White calls "[r]eligion" the "ego's expression of subjection to, and dependence upon, superhuman power" (193). This argument reflects Jung's contention that modern psychology, which he felt "reduce[d] psychic happenings to a kind of activity of the glands" and "thoughts" as "secretions of the brain," overlooked the spirit's influence, could be accurately called "the psyche-without-the psyche" (*Modern* 178). This concern makes sense from an Augustinian perspective, for if one believes that God designed humans to love and worship him, then a human who neglects this purpose would suffer as a result. In fact, C. S. Lewis makes an applicable analogy: He compares the man who invented an engine to God creating humans. The

man made the engine to run on gasoline and if anything other than gasoline is substituted then the engine will fail. God made humans to run on Him, and if the human attempts to substitute something in the place of God that human will suffer (39). Jung and White simply believe that the suffering manifests itself in the psyche.

White makes the argument that before Freud, the unconscious was believed to carry content that transcended individual experience. In his chapter “The Unconscious and God,” he cites Carl Gustav Carus whose *Psyche* (1848) argued that while the conscious was ego-centered, the unconscious was “supra-individual” (54); he adds that Carus begins his book calling the unconscious “the creative activity of the Divine” and ends it making the unconscious “hardly distinguishable from God himself” (55). White argues that Jung reconnected the unconscious with a supra-individual component.

White notes that Jung’s significant move away from Freud occurred when Jung contested Freud’s assertion that the libido was an energy source solely of sexual desire, for Jung had found that “he was constantly presented by his patients with symbols which comparative religion showed to be universal symbols among mankind for the creative and undifferentiated Divinity” (72). White then adds that Jung soon concluded, despite his aversion to religion in general, that “his [theory of the] libido is actually realized only in God, or that in its manifold manifestations it indicates an innate aspiration – *a naturale desiderium* – for God” (72). This epiphany, says White, helped Jung conclude that while Freud saw religion as a symptom of psychological neurosis, “for Jung the *absence* of religion is at the root of all adult psychological disease” (69). He then recounts Jung’s claim that all of his adult patients’ problems were most helped by nurturing a “religious outlook on life” (69). White refers to another and earlier source to support the soul’s (or

the psyche's) instinctive longing for God, Tertullian. He reminds his readers that Tertullian claimed that the soul is "naturally Christian" and that Tertullian argued that the believer and the unbeliever could find common ground by examining, not scripture (for the unbeliever would not find it credible) but their respective souls where they will "find all that with which Christ's salvation, and the Christian Scriptures and Church, have to do" (62). White also notes that Tertullian explained that slips-of-the-tongue often testify to the soul's longing for God, an occurrence that regularly happens in O'Connor's fiction, as we will later see.

Since O'Connor saw herself as a "hillbilly Thomist," White's being both a Thomist and a Jungian would have made him especially appealing to her. On Christmas day in 1959, she wrote to Betty Hester of a "lucky find" regarding St. Thomas' thoughts on prophecy (*Habit* 367), and then explains that she is actually getting this information from White's commentary on St. Thomas's *De Veritate*, admitting that she has never read an English translation of it herself and must depend on White's presentation. Critics have previously emphasized that O'Connor researched the nature of the biblical prophetic tradition, and they generally emphasize the influence of Eric Voeglin, Martin Buber, and, of course, St. Thomas Aquinas²⁸, but a portion of her understanding of Aquinas's thoughts on the reception and proclamation of prophecy as well as the importance of the imagination in prophecy appears to have been filtered through White's presentation of Aquinas.²⁹ In that letter to Hester, O'Connor wrote, "St. T. says that prophetic vision is

²⁸ Kathleen Feeley's *Voice of the Peacock*, Karl Martin's "Flannery O'Connor's Prophetic Imagination," and Susan Srigley's *Flannery O'Connor's Sacramental Art* all examine these writers' influence on O'Connor.

²⁹ A couple of days before she wrote Hester about the importance of the imagination, she had also written Cecil Dawkins, again stressing its importance using much of the version

dependent on the *imagination* of the prophet, not his moral life; and that there is a distinction that must be made between having prophetic vision and the proclamation of the same” (367). This “lucky find” appears to be from White’s chapter in *God and the Unconscious* titled “Revelation and the Unconscious”³⁰ where he, among other things, distinguishes between the prophets’ “passive” reception of prophecy and their proclaiming it, which is done “under their own power” (133). This distinction is significant because it means that prophecies proclaimed are not infallible³¹. White highlights that the proclamation may not accurately reflect the prophecy received because the prophets “will choose their own words, their own images and language” which typically are “in accordance with their own character and experience” (133-4). White continues to argue that St. Thomas was making a distinction between the “psychological processes” involved in the reception versus the proclamation of revelation. This argument flies in the face of the Church’s stance that prophecy and dogma are fixed and unerring. O’Connor, herself, contradicted the notion of the inerrancy when she said, “Ideal Christianity doesn’t exist, because anything the human being touches, even Christian

of St. Thomas she acquired from White’s argument. This time, however, she does not bother to mention that her understanding of Thomas comes through White.

³⁰ This chapter also introduced O’Connor to Aquinas’s description of the prophet’s vision and knowledge: First White explains, “The distinguishing mark of prophetic sight lies in the remoteness, the distance of what is seen from normal vision,” and then he interprets Aquinas’s Latin: “Prophets know those things which are far removed from the knowledge of men They saw things which the rest did not see” (132). From this description, O’Connor likely coined the prophetic writer as a “Realist of Distances” in a lecture she delivered soon after she wrote this letter. Her presentation of this notion implied that she herself was a prophet and many critics have since assigned this title to her.

³¹ This point has great implications and would not likely be well received by the Church. For one, it implies that the Biblical writers, while divinely inspired, were still human agents proclaiming their visions and insights, but those insights are not necessarily infallible.

truth, he deforms slightly in his own image. Even the saints do this” (*Habit* 516).

O’Connor once said that the more she read St. Thomas, the more “flexible” he appeared to her (*Habit* 97). No doubt, Victor White’s influence introduced her to some of this flexibility.

The other important element of O’Connor’s statement to Hester about St. Thomas was her emphasis on the importance of the imagination in Thomist thought. O’Connor has made some significant statements about the imagination’s role in faith, which are in direct contrast to the Church’s stance.³² Despite the Church’s insistence that human reason was the source of human understanding and of recognition of God, and of Pope XII’s 1950 encyclical *Humani Generis* pronouncing the imagination as a source of error, O’Connor argued that the imagination played a key role in one’s “religious life” (*Mystery* 197). She felt that one of the modern temper’s faults was that it had separated imagination from reason (82). As we have already seen, she said that the modern affinity for abstractions, even among Catholics, has “impoverished [our] imaginations and [our] capacity for prophetic insight” (203). Much of this influence came from Lynch’s works, but O’Connor was obviously influenced by White’s presentation of St. Thomas’s *De Veritate* as well. In a different letter, O’Connor argues for the importance of the

³² Ironically, in her work *Flannery O’Connor: The Obedient Imagination*, Caroline Gordon argued that “O’Connor’s very success as a fiction writer depends on the tension in her work between her powerful imagination and her ultimate obedience to the Catholic Church” and concluded, “O’Connor’s sense of obedience was formed chiefly by the Roman Catholic Church.” She added that the influence of such thinkers as William Lynch “helped to create in her a habit of art that was strong, disciplined, and obedient” (246). I would agree with Gordon that there was tension in O’Connor’s obedience to the Church and her imagination, but Gordon’s title is troubling, for I would argue that O’Connor’s imagination is almost exactly the opposite of one that is obedient to Catholic orthodoxy.

imagination when encountering dogma, obviously using the same information she read from White's "Revelation and the Unconscious" that she referred to as her "lucky find":

Dogma is the guardian of mystery. The doctrines are spiritually significant in ways that we cannot fathom. According to St. Thomas, prophetic vision is not a matter of seeing clearly, but of seeing what is distant, hidden. The Church's vision is prophetic vision; it is always widening the view. The ordinary person does not have prophetic vision but he can accept it on faith. St. Thomas also says that prophetic vision is a quality of the imagination, that it does not have anything to do with the moral life of the prophet. It is the imaginative vision itself that endorses the morality. (365)

O'Connor saw the concrete world as revealing a Mystery that transcended human understanding, but the neo-Thomists, who were fighting against Kant and agnosticism, stressed that reason was a tool to penetrate Mystery. While the two views are not necessarily completely contradictory, the Church in the early and mid 20th century was not comfortable with any theory that emphasized Mystery in such a way that it might look like agnosticism, as both are concerned with what cannot be completely known. This helps explain why the Church dismissed the role of imagination in regard to faith. The imagination is unwieldy, unpredictable. Discursive reason was much more manageable.

Related to the Church's dismissing the importance of the imagination is, as we have seen, its also dismissing the importance of subjective experience, perhaps the most significant component of White's version of St. Thomas and of the unconscious in influencing O'Connor. In his essay, "Thomism and Affective Knowledge," (which

carries much the same arguments as his chapter “Revelation and the Unconscious”) White highlighted what the neo-Thomists ignored, St. Thomas’s argument that we could know God not only through cognition, but also through inclination and an affective dimension. The rest of White’s works, including “Revelation and the Unconscious,” continue to imply this argument.

White’s association with Jung and his deviating from accepted neo-Thomist thought put him at odds with his superiors. Clodagh Weldon’s biography of White, *Fr. Victor White, O.P.: The Story of Jung’s White Raven*, reveals that the Church’s anti-modernism battle was still going strong in the 1950s. Weldon says that White was “particularly disturbed” by the Church’s insistence that he take the “anti-modernist oath” (20) because he disagreed with the [quoting White] “proposition that faith is in no way what it [the modernist oath] calls an *eruption subconscientia*” (20). Weldon regularly refers to White’s (and Jung’s) concern that Catholicism had overstressed God’s transcendence in countering the modernists’ insistence on God’s immanence. Weldon also mentions that White was “under the suspicions of the Order and of Rome” for his incorporating Jung’s psychology into Catholicism and for his emphasizing experience as an important component of faith (83-84). Weldon refers to Charles Burns’ review of White’s 1952 book *God and the Unconscious* in which Burns insinuated that White had practically revealed himself to be a modernist (127). In December of 1957, the Church sent White a letter requesting information on his teachings and publications. Soon after, he received a letter “ordering the suspension of *God and the Unconscious*” and he was given a non-teaching position (196).

O'Connor's understanding of St. Thomas, then, was influenced by White's presentation of his works, and was, to some degree, at odds with the Church's neo-Thomism. In fact, as we have seen, O'Connor's identifying the prophet (and herself) as a "Realist of Distances" likely comes from her reading White's "Revelation and the Unconscious" in which he says, "The distinguishing mark of prophetic sight lies in the remoteness, the distance of what is seen from normal vision and cognition." He then quotes Aquinas, "Prophets know those things which are far removed from the knowledge of men.... They saw things which the rest did not see." White then connects revelation to the unconscious, arguing, "We might render this by saying that the prophet is conscious of that of which other men are unconscious: he sees 'as it were, from afar' what is remote or opaque to average consciousness" (132). This sight is not necessarily a sight received by one of the senses, but it can be produced, says White according to St. Thomas, from the "imagination or *phantasia*." as "heavenly bodies and angels" are "capable, albeit indirectly, of producing images in human consciousness" (137). White then explains how the imagination is connected to prophecy:

This [the imagination] can and does produce images, visual or other, of what is "absent" or "distant" from the external senses, of what to *them* is past, future, remote or wholly non-existent. Though fed, so to speak, by sense-impressions, the imagination "forms" them in its own way, selecting, combining, separating shapes, colours, sounds, rhythms, even tastes, smells and tactile sensations, and makes them into patterns in a space and time which is itself imaginary, and not of that "outer world" in the "here and now" of sensation. It is therefore of the nature

of the imagination that it may be a receptacle for the forms of what is “remote” in space or time. (137)

For White and O’Connor (and St. Thomas), the imagination and the unconscious play a role in prophetic vision. Every one of her short-stories and both of her novels substantiate this claim. In fact, her first important publication after graduating from Iowa, *Wise Blood*, specifically has Jesus affecting the vision of her Protestant prophet, Hazel Motes, for Jesus operates as a “ragged figure who moves from tree to tree in the back of his mind” (*Wise Blood* 22).

Wise Blood: The Saint as “Sanctified Crazy

“If Jesus had been indicted in a modern court, he would have been examined by two doctors, found to be obsessed by a delusion and sent to an asylum.”

George Bernard Shaw

Not only Jesus, as Shaw points out, but also many Catholic saints acted in ways that modern society would consider to be insane. In fact, in *Soul and Psyche* Victor White states, “[m]any of the saints would nowadays be diagnosed as neurotic or psychotic” (166). Saints are in some ways fanatics who see reality differently from the rest of us. They begin with premises that the secular world would consider illogical or worse. Catherine of Siena, for instance, supposedly drank the pus from a woman’s breast cancer lesions. The woman was a member of Catherine’s order who had persistently accused Catherine of contriving her raptures; Catherine felt that drinking the pus would in some way prove her love for this woman, her enemy. Catherine, like many of the saints, practiced mortification of the flesh, which many medieval Catholics believed to atone for sins and to lead to sanctity. Certainly, the logic of the saints counters the logic of the secular culture.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Sigmund Freud called religion a “universal neurosis,” and it would seem likely that he would find the religious zealot’s psyche especially affected. Sanity and madness, as Emily Dickinson points out, are defined by the biases of the “majority,” and in a world of few saints, the reasoning of these few will be called into question. Flannery O’Connor called Hazel Motes, the protagonist of her first novel *Wise Blood*, “a kind of Protestant saint” (*Habit* 69), and this description might help explain his often erratic and irrational behavior. When Hazel finally admits to

himself that he has a soul, he acts in ways as bizarre as Catherine of Siena had done: he blinds himself, mortifies his flesh by putting rocks and broken glass in his shoes, and wraps himself in barbed wire under his shirt.

Wise Blood challenges the modern secular understanding of what it means to be sane, which is based upon pragmatic values. Modern notions of sanity, or behaving in a logical or rational manner, are based on modern assumptions that knowledge is only gained empirically. Anyone who thinks and acts in ways that are based on or influenced by what cannot be seen and understood is in danger of being considered insane.

O'Connor's characters, especially her two primary characters in *Wise Blood*, often do not act in a traditionally accepted logical fashion. Thomas Merton described the sanity of O'Connor's characters in the following:

The good people are bad and the bad people tend to be less bad than they seem....

Her crazy people while remaining as crazy as they can possibly be, turn out to be governed by a strange kind of sanity. In the end, it is the sane ones who are incurable lunatics. The 'good,' the 'right,' and the 'kind' do all the harm."

(Kinney 71)

Hazel Motes, the novel's protagonist, and Enoch Emery, the character in the novel who claims to have "wise blood," are perfect examples of characters with a "strange kind of sanity." Enoch, who expresses his concern to Hazel Motes that after spending four weeks with an evangelizing care-taker that he worried he might become "sanctified crazy" (44), ultimately finds his identity in a gorilla costume. As for Hazel, whom the narrator reveals attempted to convince himself that belief in Jesus "was too foul a notion for a sane person to carry inside his head" (206), he initially, but unsuccessfully, tries to be

secularly sane, but eventually he succumbs to his Christ-haunted unconscious and acts completely out-of-step with the rest of the world, as he regularly tortures, and eventually blinds, himself. Mrs. Flood, Hazel's landlady, accuses Hazel of "believ[ing] in Jesus" because otherwise, she says, he "wouldn't do such foolish things" (235). Critics, too, concluded Hazel was crazy. Isaac Rosenfield's 1952 review of the novel in *New Republic* asserted that Hazel was "plain crazy" (19). It is no wonder that Hazel fears his religious instinct: The religious person appears insane to the secular majority.

Hazel's unsuccessful attempt to rationally rid himself of his deep religious inclinations reflects much of the modern response to religion that Victor White made in *God and the Unconscious*. After establishing in the first chapter that modern society had convinced itself that it had gotten rid of the gods, White spends the next chapter explaining why, in fact, the goal was not only unsuccessful, but impossible. He suggests that "the law of the conservation of energy holds some validity in the human psyche as well as in the physical universe" and that since "there is no reason to believe that the "psycho-physical constitution of man" differs today from his religious ancestors, "that none of this psychic energy [that requires a spiritual component in the psyche] has been lost or can be annihilated" (41). As we saw before, White adds that many psychologists readily accept that "psychic forces which are not consciously accepted and directed will not on that account cease to exist or to be active, but will become unconscious and affect our thought and behaviour none the less" (41). In Hazel's case, he refuses to consciously believe what he cannot sense: the very first time he climbs up on his car,³³ which serves

³³ An Essex, a name that suggests some of the sexual inclinations that dominate the psyches of Taulkinham residents, perhaps suggests Hazel's attempt at assimilating his psyche to the culture's.

as his altar, and preaches, he begins by challenging his street audience with the practical question, “Where has the blood you think you’ve been redeemed by touched you?” (104), and to the last person to whom he preaches, a boy working at a gas station, Hazel says, “it was not right to believe in anything you can’t see or hold in your hands or test with your teeth” (206). Hazel, however, cannot remain consistent in his nonbelief because he is haunted by “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 water and not know it and then suddenly know it and drown” (22). He is constantly being tempted by a force in his unconscious, then, to move toward Mystery, away from what can be known with certainty, empirically or logically. Speaking about all of O’Connor’s protagonists, Frederick Asals says, “the unconscious exists in O’Connor’s fiction not as a psychic area to be probed but as a violent force denied” (95), but it is especially true of Hazel Motes. In fact, Asals summarizes *Wise Blood* as a novel “centrally concerned with the psychological and religious conflict within Hazel Motes” (20). He might have more appropriately used the word “battle” than “conflict,” for in Hazel’s case, his headstrong fight against the “violent force” within him leads him to murder.

In the end, though, it is Hazel’s inability to remain true to his pragmatism that O’Connor highlights as his greatest virtue. In an “Author’s Note” to the second release of the novel, O’Connor stated that for most readers, “Hazel Motes’ integrity lies in his trying with such vigor” to get rid of the “ragged figure,” but for her Hazel’s “integrity lies in his not being able to do so.” She then emphasizes that “free will does not mean one will, but many wills conflicting in one man,” which helps explain his bipolar tendencies.

William Sessions and Susan Srigley both emphasize that O'Connor's use of the word "integrity" refers to a sense of wholeness or "unity of self" (Sessions 248; Srigley 177). The novel is essentially the story of Hazel achieving this unity, of getting the "many wills" existing within to become harmonious with the deep will of the "ragged figure," which requires that he accept the unconscious spiritual forces within his psyche. The thesis of Jungian and Catholic priest Josef Goldbrunner's, *Holiness is Wholeness*, describes this very problem. He begins the text by claiming that the "striving after the Godlike makes for health and wholeness" (13) and argues that man tends to avoid this process as "[m]an's spiritual energies [...] groan under the tyranny of the intellect" (23). Goldbrunner concludes that the intellect must accept the forces of the spiritual unconscious or man's many wills conflict causing "diseases of the spirit" (24). Consciously, Hazel desires to live a safely logical and practical life, but some deep instinct within him wills something less comfortable. As this novel has been appropriately called "allegorical"³⁴, Hazel Motes represents every man. For every person in O'Connor's fallen world suffers psychologically from a conflicted mind, as the egocentric person's desires battle with those of his or her Christ-haunted unconscious.

While the overly religious might reveal themselves to be psychologically unbalanced, Victor White explains why people who deny their faith, as Hazel does, experience their own conflicts. White believes that when "man is filched of his gods" a "new religion" becomes "epidemic" (43). He argues that the occurrence of the Second World War is a consequence of man "clear[ing] the sky of its gods" (42). He then quotes

³⁴ Jill Baumgartner, after citing Frederick Asals' comment that *Wise Blood* is a "modern pilgrim's progress of a blaspheming believer," points out the important contrast that Bunyan's Christian "holds on to the ideal of his salvation" while Hazel rejects it.

Carl Jung who had said, “many neuroses are caused by the fact that people blind themselves to their own religious promptings because of a childish passion for rational enlightenment” (*God and Unconscious* 44): In large part, this explains the essential problem Hazel faces throughout the novel.

From the very beginning of the novel, Hazel’s conflicted desires are apparent. Hazel is introduced returning from the army on a train “looking one minute at the window as if he might want to jump out of it, and the next down the aisle at the other end of the car” (*Wise Blood* 9). His conscious intent is to travel to Taulkinham where he says, he is going “to do some things [he’s] never done before” (13). His plans are to explore his bestial nature, and the town “Taulkinham³⁵” (or “Talking ham” where people are beast-like), where the zoo is appropriately placed in the center of the city, is the place for such a quest. The reason he has never done such things before is that he grew up believing that he had a soul, but his comrades in the army convinced him that he did not have one (24). Hazel had always found believing that he has a soul too burdensome, and had, consequently, always attempted to avoid sin in order to avoid God’s punishment. When he did sin, he inflicted on himself harsh punishments, like walking with stones in his shoes, to atone for them and to avoid God’s rebuke. Without a soul, however, he would not have to concern himself with such fears. Now that he has denied his soul’s existence he was going to pursue the sinful experiences he had previously avoided. Yet, his desire to jump out of the window reveals that he is not completely comfortable with this direction and that his soul still has its influence. Frederick Asals calls Hazel a “tension of

³⁵ Frederick Asals (49) and Christina Bieber Lake (60) both highlight the animal qualities of the people in Taulkinham. Lake says “Taulkinham is a place of easy metaphoric metamorphosis between the animal and the human” where “[p]eople look and act like animals.”

opposites” (37) as he is compelled by both fear of and desire for the divine. O’Connor continues to emphasize Hazel’s conflicted desire throughout the book’s early chapters. The second chapter begins by explaining that Hazel arrived in Taulkinham a day late because he had gotten off the train “to get some air,” but while he “had been looking the other way” the train took off without him (29). This short incident may seem trivial, but Freud would counter that this kind of “accident” reveals the contents of the unconscious: Hazel, has, as O’Connor says, “many wills conflicting” within him, and a part of him does not want to go to Taulkinham. Even when he finally arrives, he is tempted to get back on the train (29). The third chapter continues to hint at Hazel’s double desires, as it begins noting that Hazel’s shadow appears to be “walking backwards” (37).

Hazel’s inability to get rid of “the ragged figure” appears to have much to do with the images that haunt him from his upbringing. Freud had believed that childhood experiences played a crucial role in the psyche’s development, and O’Connor appears to believe, similarly, that a person’s childhood experiences greatly affected his or her spiritual development and sensitivities. In *Soul and Psyche*, White had emphasized that the images one encounters in childhood play an important role in the soul’s development, and O’Connor highlighted this point in her review of his work. She summarizes White’s point saying, “The images absorbed in childhood are retained by the soul throughout life.” She then adds that in “medieval times” children were exposed to more mature images that “were adequate for the realities they stood for,” meaning that they were more severe, that they went beyond “a smiling Jesus with a bleeding heart.” Consequently, she says, “When childhood was over, the image was still valid and was able to hold up under

the assaults given to belief”³⁶ (*Soul and Psyche* Review 312). And these “assaults” continue to attack Hazel, for in Taulkinham, as was the case for him while in the army, a secular culture mocks all religious feeling, but images from his childhood play a major role in his faith’s survival.

O’Connor’s point about the necessity of mature and severe images in helping the psyche withstand the assaults on one’s belief is revealing in part because it suggests an explanation for much of the confusion about Hazel’s eventual religious conversion. Many critics are not convinced that Hazel ever experiences one. Debra Cumberland, for instance, arguing that *Wise Blood* is not a Christian novel, highlights that Hazel “does not like people and does not wish for human companionship” (7) and that he refuses to have any “communion” with Mrs. Flood during the time of his supposed conversion. O’Connor’s version of faith, however, is not typical of the culture’s version, but has some parallels with Soren Kierkegaard’s in that neither Kierkegaard nor O’Connor believes faith is easily attained and that it challenges our traditional sensibilities. It is not a trivial point that the false prophet, Hoover Shoats, or as he calls himself, Onnie Jay Holy, repeatedly emphasizes that his Church offers “sweetness” (150-153) because, as he advises Hazel, “If you want to get anywheres in religion you got to keep it sweet” (157) or that he once hosted a radio show called “Soulsease” (156). For O’Connor, the devoted religious soul is tormented. In her works the characters who are professed believers, like Mrs. Cope in “A Circle in the Fire” or Mrs. Turpin in “Revelation,” have only a complacent and superficial faith that does not prepare them for life’s harder realities. They need a violent experience to shake them. It is why no less than four of O’Connor’s

³⁶ Although she says that White himself only made these comments in passing, she believed that this “discussion alone” made the book an important work.

characters commit murder on their way to experiencing grace: Not only does Hazel kill Solace Layfield, but in “A Good Man is Hard to Find,” The Misfit will kill the Grandmother; in “The Displaced Person,” Mrs. McIntyre will remain silent rather than warn Mr. Guizac as a tractor crushes and kills him; in *The Violent Bear It Away*, young Francis Tarwater drowns Bishop in his failed attempt not to baptize him. In all of these murders, the story suggests that the murder actually caused the internal upheaval necessary for grace to intervene. Thus, the spiritually maturing soul, in O’Connor’s view, does not necessarily result in a person becoming more charitable, but it is likely to become tormented, and O’Connor believed that the images one is exposed to as a child play an important role in helping a person mature spiritually in a world that does not recognize a spiritual reality.

In the first chapter of *Wise Blood*, O’Connor emphasizes the impressions Hazel has retained from his childhood memories of a religious ritual, specifically, the funerals of his relatives, and especially their being placed in their coffins. The memory is triggered by a coffin-like berth that he lay in on the train. He first remembers his grandfather’s coffin, “[t]he first coffin he had seen with someone in it” (19); he had believed that his grandfather, who had been a circuit preacher, would not allow himself to be shut in the coffin but would block the coffin from closing at the last second (20). His mind then moves to the coffin of his little brother, whom Hazel had attempted to save from being shut in the coffin because “he had thought, what if he [Hazel] had been in it and they had shut it on him” (20). When Hazel finally falls asleep in the berth, he dreams of his father’s funeral. In his dream his father had tried to keep the coffin from closing by keeping his “can in the air,” but the strategy did not work (20). The chapter ends with

Hazel, in a “half-sleep” remembering his mother in her coffin, and the expression on her face that he had seen through the cracks in the coffin prompted him to believe that she might “spring up and shove the lid back” (27). In a later chapter, Hazel remembers yet another coffin he had seen, this one in a carnival tent that advertised a “SINsenational” spectacle (60). Hazel sneaked into the tent after his father had gone in and saw a naked woman squirming in a casket. These images, both real experiences and imagined ones, all suggest that Hazel instinctively believes that death is not final. Hazel anticipates an escape from the coffin for each of his relatives. For the men who see the naked woman in the coffin, the coffin becomes a place of sexual reproduction, of new life. Even the “berth” that Hazel sleeps in appears to him as a coffin, again connecting the notion of death and new life. The first chapter ends with Hazel feeling claustrophobic in the berth, and screaming, “I can’t be closed up in this thing. Get me out!” and then cursing “Jesus ... Jesus” (27). Of course, in O’Connor’s view, Jesus is the only power that can get him out of a coffin.

Individuation Aids: Enoch Emery, Asa Hawkes, Hoover Shoats, Solace Layfield and the Police Officers

Hazel Motes’ true identity, then, is masked by his conscious attempt to define himself as a person independent of a Creator. He wishes to avoid the seemingly irrational influence of his Christ-haunted psyche. Instead, he developed what Carl Jung called a “persona.” Jung pointed out that as people develop, they put on masks in order to present more socially accepted identities. Jung defined a “persona” as “a complicated system of relations between the individual consciousness and society, fittingly enough a kind of mask, designed on the one hand to make a definite impression on others, and, on the

other, to conceal the true nature of the individual” (*Works* 7.192). The persona, however, faces a bombardment of challenging impulses generated in the unconscious that work to reveal the Self.

Not only does Hazel run from his Christ-haunted psyche, but he also guards himself against any kind of intimate relationship. David Eggenschwiler suggests that psychic fragmentation in O’Connor’s characters results in symptoms that help explain Hazel’s isolation when he notes,

to be estranged from God is necessarily to be estranged from one’s essential self, which involves a form of psychological imbalance and neurotic compulsion. This spiritual and psychic estrangement also causes an estrangement from other men, thus some form of anti-social, or more precisely, anti-communal behavior. (13)

Hazel avoids relationships with others, it seems, is an extension of his Christ-avoidance. The more Enoch attempts to befriend him, the ruder Hazel treats him. His sexual relationships with Leora Watts and Sabbath Hawks are devoid of any intimacy and are instead purely utilitarian, for he pursues the first to prove to himself that he is not pursuing Jesus and he pursues the second to convince Asa Hawks, the preacher, that he does not pursue Jesus. When his landlady suggests that they should marry, he immediately leaves her. He is frightened, even terrified, of the power of love and of intimacy. Despite his attempted isolation, his unwanted interactions with others regularly expose him to the terrifying power that he denies exists.

The Taulkinham residents with whom Hazel interacts function to prompt his psyche to recognize and accept “the ragged figure” haunting his psyche. Even, and perhaps “especially” would be more appropriate, the most sinister characters Hazel

encounters confront his Christ-avoidance. The residents of Taulkinham, which Gregory Kilcourse appropriately labels “the secular city,” have more successfully denied their souls than Hazel has; however, they function almost like Jungian archetypal images in that they influence the spiritual contents of Hazel’s unconscious toward consciousness. In this section I will show that the people whom Hazel encounters help him progress toward individuation³⁷. His encounters with Enoch Emery eventually force him to see a flaw in his Church Without Christ that demands a “new Jesus”; in Asa Hawks he discovers a man who, like himself, is running from Jesus; Hoover Shoats, a man whose very name echoes his own, furthers what Enoch began in getting Hazel to admit that his faith in the Church Without Christ is a pretense. Solace Layfield, whose physical presence mirrors Hazel’s, works on Hazel’s conscience and forces him to see that he has been deceiving his true Self. Finally, after these people all challenge Hazel to see his self-deceptions, a police officer, an authority figure and likely a symbolic representative of the Church, forces Hazel to see a greater reality than he has had the courage to allow. These challenges to his persona ultimately force what Victor White called “the many deaths of the ego” (*Soul*

³⁷ Similarly, many of the characters find something intriguing or “familiar” in Hazel’s face and eyes, as if they are reminded of something long repressed deep in their own psyches. Mrs. Hitchcock, the prattling train passenger, finds herself entranced by Hazel’s eyes (10). Enoch Emery tells Hazel that he has a “familiar face” (57), and the misspelling suggests that O’Connor is implying that Enoch sees Hazel as “family.” Sabbath Lilly is also fascinated with Hazel’s eyes (109). Mrs. Flood regularly finds herself staring into Hazel’s face “as if she expected to see something she hadn’t seen before” (214). Hazel’s religious psyche is so powerful that many interpret the look in his face and eyes, the windows of his soul, as betraying his faith. A cab driver says that “a look in [Hazel’s] face somewhere” prompted him to suppose Hazel was a preacher (31). At separate times, Enoch and Sabbath Lilly Hawks say they knew from the moment they first saw him that Hazel wanted “nothing but Jesus” (58 and 188). While these characters *seem* spiritually hopeless, O’Connor hints that their souls, as she will later do with The Misfit, are not completely without hope.

and Psyche 179), which will prepare him for the revelation that forces him to eventually accept the contents of his unconscious.

“Individuation” is Jung’s term for the process of harmonizing the contents of the unconscious with those of the conscious, a necessary development for the realization of the Self, or the state of the self having become completely integrated. The individuated person becomes whole, settling the conflicts between the many wills that pull him in opposing directions. Jung believed that during a person’s early years ego-consciousness dominates the personality at the expense of the unconscious, but during the second half of life the process of individuation should begin to move a person toward the Self. The ego must experience many conflicts and wounds, eventually killing the persona in order to bring life to the Self. The process includes paying attention to dreams, to intuitions, to passions, including fears and hatreds, and attempting to discover one’s roots. This process leads often to confrontations with archetypes, especially the shadow, a part of the Self that is denied by the ego.

Many critics have similar interpretations of Enoch Emery’s purpose in the novel. Asals calls the “interaction” between Hazel and Enoch “symbolic rather than narrative,” for he is “an inverted mirror of the protagonist” and “the comic embodiment of all that Hazel claims he wishes to be” (43). Kilcourse calls him a “foil” for Hazel (59), for while Hazel attempts to rationally define himself, Enoch, who is generally described as a canine, such as a “fox” (38) or a “dog” (83), acts like an animal, instinctually rather than rationally. Kilcourse’s observation is supported by the text, which presents Enoch’s mental tendencies in the following way: “Sometimes he didn’t think, he only wondered; then before long he would find himself doing this or that, like a bird finds itself building a

nest” (129). When his blood tells him to start saving money and to clean his room (130), he does not question his compulsion: he simply follows it. He is often frustrated by it, as “he didn’t want to be always having to do something that something else wanted him to do” (135). Jung claims that those who are driven too much by their unconscious are likely to become psychotic and that at times “the unconscious is capable of taking over the role of the ego. The consequence of this exchange is insanity and confusion, because the unconscious is not a secondary personality with organized and centralized functions but in all probability a decentralized congeries of psychic processes” (*Works* 9.278).

Christina Bieber Lake notes that while most critics “dismiss him as a comic or diabolical foil” who “exists only to reveal Haze’s spirituality by contrast,” she counters that Enoch “plays an essential role in Haze’s rediscovery of the necessary connection between the spiritual and the physical,” for Enoch’s “wise blood” tells him “that the mummified man – the grotesque ‘new jesus’ – is important to Haze” (72-73). O’Connor says that Hazel’s rejection of the mummy is important because it is “[w]hat he has been looking for with body and soul throughout the book,” but when it is “presented to him [...] he sees it has to be rejected” and that it is not “really what he is looking for” (*Habit* 404). In fact, his rejection is so extreme that it inspires his first act of violence. After Enoch introduces Hazel to the mummy in the museum, Hazel leaves abruptly but not before throwing a rock at Enoch, hitting him in the head and knocking him out. The mummy is important to Hazel in that it forces him to re-examine his lack of faith; for if the mummy is “the new jesus,” then there is no escape from death, which obviously haunts Hazel. This experience wounds Hazel’s conscious persona because it forces him to see that if the mummy is his “new jesus,” then he can find no security in it.

Asa Hawks, the failed preacher who feigns blindness, plays an especially important role in influencing Hazel's psyche. Hawks had once been a zealous preacher, but he lacked the integrity and courage necessary to follow that calling. He is introduced in the text as a blind man who promises to beg rather than preach if the crowd will be charitable. Eventually, his blindness and his faith are revealed to be shams. Asals says "Hawks's hypocrisy mirrors, in reverse, [Hazel's] own" as "the pseudo-Christian and the pseudoatheist are merely upside-down reflections of one another" (42), and while this is true, it is incomplete. Hazel and Hawks differ in that Hazel's hypocrisy is unconscious while Hawks is consciously and purposefully deceptive. What is often overlooked, though, is that Hawks in his youth had much in common with Hazel. Hawks shows Hazel an article that explains the scars on his face and his blindness. Hawks had planned on publicly blinding himself to "justify his belief that Christ Jesus had redeemed him" (112). Under the article, a picture of Hawks reveals a man with "a wildness in his eyes that suggested terror" (112). While the article does not reveal that Hawks, in fact, stopped short of his task, the narrator reveals that Hawks

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

Hawks had feared and fled his Christ-haunted psyche in much the same manner Hazel is now doing. Just as Hazel is terrified by the intense forces in his soul, so was Asa Hawks. Although Hawks now rejects Christ, there are some hints that he is still somewhat Christ-haunted. When he first encounters Hazel, Hawks tells him, "I can smell the sin on your

breath” (49), and he recognizes the “urge for Jesus” in Hazel’s voice (50). Hawks has some of the ambiguous inclinations that Hazel has, as he initially encourages Hazel to pursue him, yelling out his name so Hazel can find him the next time Hazel chooses to follow him (56), but then later he tries to avoid Hazel because Hazel’s intense integrity frightens him and makes him “nervous” (109). He complains to his daughter that Hazel is a “Jesus-hog” (109), to which his daughter responds, “Well look what you used to be,” and adds, “Look what you tried to do [blind himself]. You got over it and so will he.”

Names are of great symbolic importance in O’Connor’s works and especially in *Wise Blood*, and like Hazel Motes’s name, Asa Hawks’s name is symbolic as it relates to vision. Susan Srigley has collected the observations of a few critics on the importance of Hazel’s name. She refers to Richard Giannone who tells us that *hazel* in Hebrew means “God sees,” but that the shortened “Haze,” as L. Gregory Jones points out, can refer to a lack of clear vision (63). “Motes,” as many critics have recognized, alludes to the Biblical verse in Matthew that warns that we should not be concerned with the “mote” in our “brother’s eye” when we have a “beam” in our own (Matthew 7:2-3). Thus, the very name “Hazel Motes” suggests a tension of opposites, of vision and of blindness. One of the ironies of the novel is Hazel’s continued and improved transcendent vision after he blinds himself: His landlady observed that her blind tenant always had a “look of seeing something” (214). Hazel tells his landlady that she “can’t see” when she asks him to explain why he puts glass and stones in his shoes (222), and he tells her that he hopes we are blind after death because “[i]f there’s no bottom in your eyes they hold more” (222).

As for “Asa Hawks,” Kilcourse interprets the name in the following way: “‘As a’ predatory ‘hawk,’ he preys upon the sentiment of people who would be moved by this

pretense [his blindness] but not engaged in genuine religion” (63). Yet, Hawks is more conflicted than this description indicates. In a novel so concerned about vision, the name Asa Hawks is likely to refer to one’s ability to see. Like Hazel, Hawks was a preacher terrified by his Christ-haunted psyche. He, too, both has vision and lacks it at the same time. “As a hawk” would suggest that he sees very well, and at times he does seem to have prophetic vision, for he sees that Hazel is following him because of his Christ-haunted psyche. The novel, though, also reveals that a hawk can blind. At one point, Hazel stops by a cage connected to a shack and finds a bear and a chicken hawk inside. The two caged enemies had each been wounded by the other, and the hawk had gouged out one of the bear’s eyes. It is Hawks’s influence that inspires Hazel to blind himself, to carry through with the odd logic that by blinding himself he will “justify his belief that Christ Jesus had redeemed him.” When Hazel sneaks into Hawks’s room in the night and lights a match to look at his scars, he discovers the truth, that Hawks is a phony. Hazel now has to admit that he has no use for Hawks because the only reason he had pursued Hawks was that he unconsciously wanted Hawks to try to save him. When Hazel is later convinced that he has a soul and that Jesus exists, he will blind himself, indicating that Hawks’s influence on Hazel is significant. The experiences of Enoch’s “new jesus” and Hawks’s fake blindness have jolted Hazel’s psyche, but he remains true to his new church, the Church Without Christ. He will need a few more important encounters before he is ready to accept the deeper forces in his psyche.

Hazel’s first disciple is a false one, named Hoover Shoats. Critics have tended to focus on his last name alluding to swine. His first name, though, may hint at the spiritual vacuum in his soul, for he uses faith only as a means for making money. Unlike Hawks,

nothing about him suggests that his soul still haunts him. What critics have overlooked completely is that his name sounds very much like Hazel Motes, and there certainly are dynamic similarities, along with some significant differences, occurring between the two identities. Both are preachers, but Hazel screams his sermons with a bare rhetoric that challenges his listeners; Shoats, on the other hand, pretending to be a recent convert to Hazel's church, uses seductive rhetoric and claims that Hazel's church teaches of the "natural sweetness" inside of everyone and addresses the crowd collectively as "Friends." Rather than screaming, he tells the crowd that he wished he had his guitar with him because he "somehow can say sweet things to music bettern plain" (149). While he reveals his true name to Hazel, he introduces himself to the crowd as Onnie Jay Holy, and quickly adds his false last name to the name of Hazel's church, calling it "The Holy Church of Christ Without Christ" (151). After Hazel refuses to partner with him, he will, like Hazel, create his fictional own church and incorporate his fictional name.

Hazel needs to see something of himself in Shoats in order for him to continue his individuation process, and the similar sounding names can encourage that connection. The similar names will hint to Hazel's psyche the similarities between the two of them, similarities that he will find troubling to his intense integrity. One of the more important similarities between them is that both Motes and Shoats are preaching without the aid of the unconscious influence, of the "ragged figure." Both are trying to harness religion and faith to use for their own ends, for safety and comfort. White says, "To 'sell' religion for its psychological benefits is to run a grave risk of destroying religion and turning it into a species of magic. Religion, on the contrary, is the ego's expression of subjection to, and dependence upon, superhuman power" (*Soul and Psyche* 193). Shoats's fascination with

the “new jesus” and his insistence that Hazel show it to him flusters Hazel and forces him to admit, “There ain’t no such thing or person,” and adds, “It was just a way to say a thing” (158-159). Shoats responds with a comment that was sure to bite Hazel who had insisted on empirical evidence: “That’s the trouble with you innerleckchuls [...], you don’t never have nothing to show for what you’re saying” (159).

A few critics have emphasized O’Connor’s use of the “double” in her fiction. Asals, in his chapter “The Double,” which analyzes O’Connor’s “obsessive” use of the double figure, notes that her “Doppelgänger” serve “to reflect aspects of [the protagonist’s] self-division” (96). John Han calls Enoch Hazel’s “double” (194). I have suggested that in some way, most of the characters Hazel meets lead him to see something of himself in them. Solace Layfield is one of the more obvious doubles Hazel encounters.

Layfield is introduced not just as a physical copy of Hazel, but as a trigger for Hazel’s conscience. Robert Coles calls Hazel’s rage against Solace Layfield the “rage of self-recognition” (81). Just prior to seeing Layfield for the first time, Hazel preaches to a small group, “Your conscience is a trick,” and adds,

it don’t exist though you may think it does, and if you think it does, you had best get it out in the open and hunt it down and kill it, because it’s no more than your face in the mirror is or your shadow behind you. (166)

Immediately after Hazel accuses the conscience of being a phantom, Hoover Shoats and Layfield park a car nearby. Layfield is wearing a “glare blue suit and a white hat” (167), a copy of the outfit Hazel wears everyday. As Shoats introduces his new prophet to the group of people who had been listening to Hazel, one woman asks Hazel if he and the

other man were twins. Hazel simply responds by repeating his previous statement: “If you don’t hunt it down and kill it, it’ll hunt you down and kill you” (168). Hazel has immediately connected his conscience with Layfield.

The process by which Hazel kills Layfield is important because it reveals Hazel’s attitude toward his own conscience. First, he follows Layfield after Layfield had finished preaching. Once they reach a desolate country road, Hazel bumps the back of Layfield’s car with his Essex until Layfield stops his car and walks over to Hazel to ask him what he wants. Hazel responds by using his Essex to push Layfield’s car into a ditch and taunts Layfield with a similar taunt he had received from others concerning his car: “What you want to keep a thing like that on the road for?” (203). Hazel then accuses Layfield of not being “true”³⁸ (203), which his conscience is obviously accusing him of being as well. Hazel next insists that Layfield disrobe, a symbolic demand because, essentially, Hazel is asking him to take off his persona, the mask he is wearing that makes him appear to be Hazel. Again, this is what Hazel’s conscience is telling him he must do. Layfield begins running while taking off his suit, but once he is down to his undergarments, Hazel drives over him and then backs over the body. Significantly, the narration reveals, “The man didn’t look so much like Haze, lying on the ground on his face without his hat or suit on” (204). His murdering Layfield is his symbolic attempt to murder his conscience. As Hazel drives away, however, a police officer will practically replay this scene with Hazel playing the role of Layfield, and it will spur Hazel’s conscience to greater vision.

³⁸ Henry Edmundson points out that Hazel’s accusing Layfield of not being “true” makes Hazel guilty of “rank hypocrisy” and adds that this instance points to the significance of Hazel’s last name, since he attempts to “pull the mote” out of his brother’s eye without recognizing the “beam” in his own (56). While this is insightful, it is important to recognize that Hazel is unconsciously transferring his own sin onto his double.

A few critics, like Jill Baumgaertner (174) and Catherine Feeley (63-64), have argued that Hazel's murder of Layfield is the turning point for Hazel's conversion. While it certainly plays an essential role, more needs to happen before Hazel, as Baumgaertner argues he does after murdering Layfield, can acknowledge his "sin" and "faith" (174). Hazel, in fact, was on his way to begin "preaching the Church Without Christ in a new city" until he was pulled over by a patrolman. He needs one final encounter before he is ready to put his faith in the Haunt inside his unconscious.

Twice patrolmen appear in *Wise Blood* in order to direct Hazel's vision upward. The patrolmen are authority figures, perhaps symbolic representatives of the Church³⁹, that apparently Hazel needs to help him. The opening paragraph of the third chapter reveals that no one in Taulkinham was "paying attention to the sky" (37). When Hazel first begins stalking Asa Hawks, he is so focused on his pursuit that he walks right through a traffic light. A patrolman points to the light and asks Hazel if he understood the purpose of the light, and Hazel responds, "I didn't see it" (45). George Kilcourse translates this passage as Hazel's not "seeing the light," as Christ is the light of the world (60). At one point, Hazel preaches from his Essex to a small group, "You needn't to look at the sky because it's not going to open up and show no place behind it" (165). The second policeman Hazel encounters, however, directs Hazel's vision to the sky, and Hazel takes in a "view" that contradicts his earlier sermon. The patrolman's desire to

³⁹ Complicating that interpretation, though, is that in the last chapter, two patrolmen beat Hazel as he lies helpless, almost dead on the ground. Interestingly, then, these patrolmen continue the role of the previous patrolman who destroys Hazel's car in a manner similar to the way Hazel destroyed Layfield's: these officers' beating of Hazel results in their murdering him, just as Hazel had beaten Layfield as he lay on the ground after Hazel had run him over. They seem to be providing a kind of justice and judgment on Hazel for his sins.

have Hazel see the view, may be seen as simply a ploy to get Hazel's Essex to the edge of the cliff so that he can push it over; however, the patrolman also appears to be unconsciously helping Hazel to take a final step toward grace.

Hazel stood for a few minutes, looking over at the scene. His face seemed to reflect the entire distance across the clearing and on beyond, the entire distance that extended from his eyes to the blank gray sky that went on, depth after depth, into space. His knees bent under him and he sat on the edge of the embankment with his feet hanging over. (209)

Even when the police officer continues to speak to Hazel, Hazel does not turn away from the view as his face "seemed to be concentrated on space" (210). The importance of the sky is stressed a few times in the novel and climaxes when Hazel finally gives it his attention. In the chapter that Hazel leaves the city with Sabbath hiding in the back of the car, the narration regularly describes the sky. It begins with detailing the color of the sky as "a little lighter blue than [Hazel's] suit" and of a "blinding white" cloud "with curls and a beard" (117). In the middle of the chapter, as Hazel drives with Sabbath Lilly in the car with him, the "blinding" cloud appears to be directing them, as it keeps "a little ahead of them" or "directly in front of them" (120). The chapter ends with this same "blinding" cloud having "turned into a bird with long thin wings" and "disappearing in the opposite direction" from Hazel's (127). The chapter seems to imply that Hazel is being observed and maybe even directed by some force in the sky. Now that he has observed the sky, the symbol for God that finally has affected his psyche, his conscience recognizes his sin, and from this point on his life changes drastically.

On Hazel's Blindness

It is tempting (and logical), too, to interpret Hazel's blinding himself as his giving in to the demons that had encouraged Hawks to blind himself⁴⁰. An important difference, however, is that Hawks advertised his blindness as some kind of sensational demonstration and proof that Jesus had redeemed him. Hawks seemed to be trying to convince himself as much as his audience. Hawks's blinding himself was not truly inspired but more contrived. Hazel certainly did not feel redeemed. In fact, after finally observing the sacramental sky, he feels, rather, guilt, and while he had insisted previously that he was "clean" (95), he admits to Mrs. Flood in the last chapter, "I am not clean" (224). Thus seeing Hazel's blinding himself as simply his following through with what Hawks had failed and feared to do seems shortsighted. For some critics, Hazel's blinding himself has implied that O'Connor was espousing a Manichean view and renouncing the material world⁴¹. By blinding himself, this thinking goes, he is symbolically rejecting the material world and encouraging his mind to follow only its spiritual longings. This, too, seems unlikely given that the sacramental sky plays such an important part in Hazel's great revelation. Perhaps the most convincing argument explaining why Hazel blinds himself comes from Christina Bieber Lake, who sees an Oedipal connection in his self-blinding, a likely connection since O'Connor was writing this chapter while living with

⁴⁰ Miles Orvell calls Hawks Hazel's "inspiration" and describes it as Hazel's "refutation of the imposter prophet Hawks" (83).

⁴¹ The recent argument that *Wise Blood* represents and endorses a mind/body and physical/spiritual separation comes from Andrew Peter Atkinson's "Virgil If Punched in the Gut: A Defense of Jansenist Interpretations of *Wise Blood*," found in *Wise Blood: A Reconsideration* (2011). In his essay, Atkinson mentions previous scholars such as Gene Kellogg and Asals who also saw *Wise Blood* as a product of a Manichean or Jansenist mind.

the Fitzgeralds as Robert Fitzgerald was translating the tragedy. Lake says Hazel has “become an Oedipus who acknowledges how he has blinded himself to his own participation in Taulkinham’s moral degradation” (88-89). The act of self-blinding as a result of having finally seen the truth, as Oedipus had done, certainly resonates with O’Connor’s text, and he did begin to realize that he was not, as he had always insisted, “clean,” but Hazel’s truth is not that he has finally seen himself as sharing the responsibility for Taulkinham’s sinful state: He had come there with the plan of participating in that degradation. Many readers likely are as confounded as Hazel’s landlady, Mrs. Flood, who believed there was no sense in it at all. Hazel’s blinding himself, though, has more to do with increasing his ability to see than it does with his ridding himself of vision altogether.

O’Connor explains in a letter to Robert and Sally Fitzgerald that she sees Hazel’s acts of mortification against his flesh as a “form of love” (*Habit* 40), and later, in a letter to Betty Hester, she compares Hazel’s sacrificing his vision to Abraham’s sacrificing his son (116), and defends his actions by simply saying, “he was a mystic and he did it” (116). She goes on to admit that Hazel “does not seem believable enough as a human being to make his blinding himself believable for the reasons that he did it” and concludes that her characters “will have to seem twice as human as humans” in order for them to be believed and perceived as human (116). This conclusion seems appropriate if she wants her saints and prophets to seem believable because saints and prophets tend to be inspired by a different logic than the rest of us.

O’Connor’s point that Hazel’s blinding himself is a form of penance and love makes a great amount of sense when it is viewed as Hazel making an instinctive attempt

at furthering his individuation. His blindness seems to diminish the role of his ego, as it encourages Hazel to rely on the “ragged figure” buried deep in his unconscious rather than to rely on his eyes, for the eyes can be thought of as a symbol for consciousness, and Hazel needs to learn to rely on, to have faith in, his spiritual unconscious. In an extreme metaphor, individuation can be thought of as a killing of the self-constructed persona, and this certainly seems to describe what is happening with Hazel. In the last chapter, when Hazel is blind, some critics have highlighted that the narration’s point of view has shifted from that of Hazel to that of the landlady, Mrs. Flood⁴². This can be explained, in part, by recognizing that Hazel’s previous point of view has died with his persona. The narration only gives us Hazel’s actions in the last chapter, but his thoughts, inspired now by the “ragged figure,” are likely beyond the scope of the reader and the narrator. His focus on penance and his renouncing his former persona resonates with a description of repentance provided by C. S. Lewis. Lewis once described repentance as a process that required “unlearning all the self-conceit and self-will that we have been training ourselves into for thousands of years. It means killing part of yourself, undergoing a kind of death (*Mere Christianity* 44-45).

⁴² Debra Cumberland says we never know what is going on in Hazel’s head “after his blinding” (6); so we cannot judge whether he has really changed. I counter that once Hazel has accepted the ragged figure, his logic would not make sense to the secular audience. We are faced now with trying to understand Hazel through the eyes of Mrs. Flood, and, like her, we find his enigmatic actions beyond our comprehension.

The Homing Instinct and the Death Instinct

Sonya Freeman Loftis argues that Hazel “fears death even more than he fears faith” and observes that “images of death abound” in the novel (389). The images of death haunting Hazel’s imagination, while they do suggest a fear of death, also relate to a homing instinct that appears early in the novel. The way home, though, for fallen humanity comes only after death. In *Holiness Is Wholeness*, Josef Goldbrunner says “the way to God is the way of the Cross, at the end of which a slow death must be endured until all human transitoriness is no more. Only in death can man be transformed into the likeness of God” (14). Victor White argues that “wholeness” includes “not only a living whole” but also a “dying whole” and that the “components to be harmonized” in a truly healthy person “are not only life-giving but death bringing” (172). In other words, if a person is only concerned about the present life and not the after life, his or her death will seem catastrophic, but if the person has some awareness of life beyond death, then death is not something to be avoided at all costs but rather to be accepted and even awaited. The death instinct for O’Connor’s characters often manifests itself in a longing for home⁴³, and this is the case for Hazel as well, as he returns from the army to find himself homeless. Ralph Wood’s assessment of Hazel Motes touches on his homing instinct (and his madness, which he calls “foolish[ness]”):

⁴³ In many of O’Connor’s stories, a character’s homelessness is a key component to the story. In “Judgment Day,” Tanner has to move in with his daughter in New York and will die trying to get back home to Georgia. In “A Good Man Is Hard to Find,” the Grandmother, who lives with her son’s family, will dream of a heavenly mansion and will misdirect her family to The Misfit in her attempt to find it. In O’Connor’s other novel, *The Violent Bear It Away*, Tarwater looks for a new place to call home after his uncle dies. Other stories that include characters with tenuous living arrangements include “The Displaced Person” and “A View of the Woods.”

Hazel Motes is the single character in whom O'Connor's Augustinian theology is most fully realized. He is a vivid embodiment of her conviction that – even after the Fall – humanity possesses an indelible divine imprint, a homing instinct for God that makes the heart restless until it finds its peace in His will. The blood drawn from Immanuel's veins pours into all the rivers that course the world. It flows in Hazel's vascular system, making his blood divinely wise when he would be humanly foolish. (“The Catholic Faith of Flannery O'Connor's Protestant Characters: A Critique and Vindication” 22)

Woods' connecting O'Connor with Augustine here is especially significant. O'Connor spoke often of her connection with Aquinas, but from her very first novel to her last short story her fiction shows evidence of Augustine's influence, as all of her protagonists appear “restless” and to be longing to “rest” in Him⁴⁴. Augustine refers to the *heart* being restless instead of the soul, and it is the blood pumped by the heart coursing through Hazel's body that makes him both wise and restless. In fact, O'Connor says Hazel's blood is “too wise for him ultimately to deny Christ” (350). Lorine Getz, the author of *Flannery O'Connor: Her Life, Library, and Book Reviews*, notes that O'Connor's “copies of Augustine are more marked” than her copies of Aquinas's works (74). Like O'Connor's protagonists and unlike Aquinas, Augustine needed a personal revelation for his conversion to satisfy his restlessness. He believed his homing instinct would not let him be content with Manicheism, neo-Platonism, nor any other non-Christian philosophy. In O'Connor's fiction, those who become complacent, who are no longer restless, do not

⁴⁴ In his essay “The Ambiguity of Vocation,” William Sessions also emphasizes Augustine's influence on O'Connor and argues that *Wise Blood* “is genuinely more Augustinian” as opposed to being influenced by Aquinas (233).

experience grace. In *Wise Blood* the people of Taulkinham appear comfortable with their bestial appetites, and appear to have completely overwhelmed their deep Christ-haunted unconscious. Hazel, however, because of his integrity, will find no satisfaction or pleasure when he attempts to corrupt himself by having sex with a prostitute or to corrupt the young and seemingly innocent Sabbath Hawks by having sex with her. His conflicted nature has never let go of the greater desires within him. In O'Connor's, and Augustine's view, humans were designed for greater pursuits.

As we saw earlier, back at the start of the novel, the narrator revealed that Hazel, while in the army, felt a "misery" as a result of his "longing for home," and immediately adds that Hazel, still battling against the notion of his having a soul, concluded that his misery and longing "had nothing to do with Jesus" (24)⁴⁵. The only things Hazel kept with him after returning from the army were his mother's glasses "in case his vision should ever become dim" and the Bible, "because it had come from home" (25). It should be clear, though, that from O'Connor's perspective, the Bible, being the Word of God, while it comes physically from his earthly home, its origin and its message come from his heavenly one. To reinforce the theme of going home, while traveling on a train to Taulkinham, a talkative fellow passenger, Mrs. Hitchcock, repeatedly asks Hazel if he is going home, to which he replies after her third inquiry that he is not; however, the reason

⁴⁵ In terms of their reactions to faith, Hazel Motes and Freud might both be said to "protest too much." Victor White calls religion an "obsession" for Freud as he "could never leave it alone for very long" (*God and the Unconscious* 64); Similarly, Hazel confronts passengers on the train about their faith, making them uncomfortable, while insisting at almost every turn that he is not a preacher. Although they complacently believed, or believed with little integrity, Hazel attempted to not-believe with all of his conscious will.

he is going to Taulkinham is that he had already returned to his childhood home only to find it abandoned and in bad repair.

With his earthly home no longer an option, Hazel does not have a clear direction to go; so when Hazel finally arrives in the city, he walks with a contrived sense of direction and purpose, but the narrator reveals the truth: “No one observing him would have known that he had no place to go” (30). Throughout the book, he will insist that he has some place to go, but always ambiguously or vaguely. When the tag-along Enoch Emery finds Hazel unfriendly, he accuses Hazel of “having nobody or nothing but Jesus” and Hazel replies, “This is where I’m going in at” (58) and turns up the walk to the door of the prostitute Leora Watts. Hazel had visited Mrs. Watts, one of the many animal-like residents of Taulkinham⁴⁶ the night before, but his undefined “This” in the context of Enoch’s remark implies that Hazel is still unconsciously seeking Jesus, despite his desire to avoid Him. Yet even his visiting Watts might imply his unconscious quest for Christ, for G. K. Chesterton claimed, “Every man who knocks on the door of a brothel is looking for God.” Bruce Gentry offers a similar interpretation of Hazel’s quest for sin, suggesting that Hazel unconsciously connects sinning, especially the sin of fornication, as a way to return to Christ because he had previously believed the way to avoid Christ was to avoid sin (126-127). Hazel had awkwardly told her that he had come “for the usual business,” but then he added, “What I mean to have you know is: [sic] I’m no goddam preacher” (34), obviously attempting to convince himself that he has abandoned his desire for God and home. Along the same lines of Hazel seeking Christ through sin, Hazel says, “The

⁴⁶ Leora Watts’s teeth are described as “small and pointed and speckled with green and there was a wide space between each one” (33-34).

only way to the truth is through blasphemy” (148), and he blasphemes throughout the novel.

Despite his having no conscious idea of where he wanted to go, Hazel experiences an Enoch-like impulse to purchase a car the morning after spending the night with the prostitute. The name of the make of auto Hazel eventually chooses for his new “ride,” the Essex, implies a connection to his introductory sexual experience. Hazel lacks the strong sexual impulse found in the rest of the Taulkinham’s residents, such as Leora Watts, Enoch Emery, the woman at the pool, and Lilly Hawks, and he certainly did not find his first encounter gratifying. The car becomes his most intimate companion, as he values the car more than he does any person. After Hazel purchases the Essex⁴⁷ at a used car lot, he reveals his forlornness, as he tells the salesman, “I wanted this car mostly to be a house for me” and then adds, “I ain’t got any place to be” (73). Later, he would tell a mechanic, “since I’ve had [the car], I’ve had a place to be that I can always get away in” (114). Later, when the patrolman destroys Hazel’s car and then offers him a lift to wherever Hazel had been going, Hazel, who had plans to start preaching in another city, admits that he was not going anywhere (210).

Without a car, Hazel returns to live with his landlady and purposely blinds himself, but he restlessly walks around the “five or six blocks he knew” (229); thus, essentially, going nowhere. Hazel’s last words to his landlady as he leaves her are in answer to her question of whether he was leaving to go to another city. They are, “That’s not where I’m going. There’s no other house nor no other city” (228). Hazel’s last words before he dies are to the two police officers who find him lying in a ditch. He says, “I

want to get where I'm going" (230). Consciously, Hazel does not know where he is going, but he does feel the need to keep moving. His blinding himself, though, is an important indicator of where he unconsciously wanted to go. Up until that point, he had throughout his life had a desire to keep "his two eyes open, and his hands always handling the familiar thing, his feet on the known track," but blinding himself is his direct response to the "ragged figure" operating deep within his psyche, always beckoning him "into the dark where he was not sure of his footing" (22). Being blind was the only way Hazel could advance toward Mystery.

In the final chapter, which covers Hazel's return to his apartment and his eventual death, the narration presents the point of view of his landlady Mrs. Flood rather than that of Hazel; consequently, the reader better appreciates his effect on her⁴⁸. She initially had planned to throw him out of the house because he refused to wear glasses to cover his hideous facial scars and unsettling eye sockets, but she became inexplicably compelled by his face, constantly staring at it "as if she expected to see something she hadn't seen before" (213). She begins to believe that somehow Hazel is withholding a secret from her and that she is being "cheated," (213) so she allows him to stay while she attempts to uncover what he is hiding. Meanwhile, she cheats Hazel out of his privacy and his income. She steams open one of the envelopes containing his government check, and promptly begins charging him more for both room and board (216). Her soul (or psyche), however, slowly begins to take advantage of Hazel's presence and alters her.

⁴⁸ Henry T. Edmundson III makes the argument that Mrs. Flood, whose name he sees as representing everyone in "need of The Flood of Genesis [...] stands for all those in need of judgment and redemption" (59).

Mrs. Flood's imagination begins to work on her as she tries to understand Hazel.

When she tried to project what life would be like to be blind, she

imagined it was like you were walking through a tunnel and all you could see was a pin point of light. She had to imagine the pin point of light; she couldn't think of it at all without that. She saw it as some kind of star, like a star on Christmas cards. (218-219)

Hazel's presence nurtures Mrs. Flood's imagination and vision. When Henry Edmunson III describes Mrs. Flood's problem as being only able to "'see' what is material; she has not sight for the spiritual" (60), he echoes what O'Connor says the prophet and the artist must do, "penetrate the concrete in order to find at its source, the image of ultimate reality" (*Mystery* 157). Hazel's influence will encourage that type of vision for her. When she asks herself, "Why had he destroyed his eyes and saved himself unless he had some plan, unless he saw something that he couldn't get without being blind to everything else?" (216), the question's ambiguity reveals that unconsciously Mrs. Flood is already connecting Hazel's blinding himself with his salvation. The grammatical sense of her question is connecting his salvation with his blindness.

Ultimately, Mrs. Flood's character and vision are altered in the last chapter. After first thinking that marrying Hazel could benefit her financially, especially if she could inherit his government checks once he passed away (219), she eventually begins to be so compelled by his presence, his mysterious habits, that she performs acts of charity for him. She starts bringing him meals (223) and she longs to "penetrate the darkness behind [his face] and see what was there" (225). She worries about him when he becomes sick and still insists on taking his walks during the cold winter. She finally suggests that they

should marry, telling Hazel, “I have a place for you in my heart” (227). This proposal scares Hazel to the point that he leaves abruptly, never to return alive. When the police officers return what they and Mrs. Flood believe to be a still living but unconscious Hazel Motes to his apartment, Mrs. Flood’s symbolic statement, “Well, Mr. Motes, [...] I see you’ve come home” (231) means much more than she realizes. She immediately tells the corpse that he can live with her for free and she will wait on him as long as he remains. She has been converted because she is drawn to the mystery she finds in his face, especially in his eyes. The novel ends with the following sentence:

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

Her “staring with her eyes shut” suggests that she is using her soul to see rather than her eyes. Like Hazel, she has begun to recognize that the eyes can only see the immanent but the soul can see the transcendent. And just as Hazel had to learn to trust this vision, to let himself be led into the “darkness,” so has Mrs. Flood apparently begun her journey.

Ironically, only after Hazel gave up on his Church Without Christ did he gain a follower, his landlady Mrs. Flood.

From the very first chapter until the last, Hazel’s restless soul keeps him longing for home. In the last chapter, however, Hazel’s soul seems to be sensing it is coming home as he is able to finally find some kind of peace. We are told that Mrs. Flood rocks in her chair on the front porch for hours with Hazel, but he remains still, like a “corpse” (217). This stillness is in obvious contrast to his inability to sit still on the train in the first

chapter. He has shed his persona and is no longer so self-divided. His individuation is near completion and he is becoming his true self. David Tracey points out an important difference between Jung and Freud: he says for Jung the individuation process worked to “heal our fragmentation, our not-at-homeness” (356), which is an apt description of what happened to Hazel Motes.

“A Good Man Is Hard to Find”: A Reworking of Freud’s Death Drive

One of Freud’s theories that would have no place in O’Connor’s Catholic imagination, at least not as he presented it, is that of the Death Drive. Freud realized that the Pleasure Principle did not explain all human behaviors, and in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* proposed the existence of a “death drive” or “death instinct” within the unconscious. He concluded that there existed an “urge in all organic life to restore an earlier state of things” (618-619), which opposed the life-producing drive of the libido. In “A Good Man Is Hard to Find,” O’Connor repackages the drive’s goal as being, ironically, a drive that leads to grace and salvation, or eternal life. This story provides an example of a character whose divinely aided unconscious consistently works toward bringing her face-to-face with a murderer, who will in turn so unsettle her egocentric perceptions that she will undergo the individuation necessary in order to bring her to a conscious recognition of her true identity and make her capable of accepting grace. In fact, the story’s two most significant characters, the Grandmother and the Misfit, each seems to be guided to the story’s deadly conclusion by a Christ-haunted unconscious. The Misfit, in many ways the Grandmother’s opposite, complements the Grandmother’s death obsession with his obsession with the resurrection. The plot leads to a climactic moment when the Grandmother, whom O’Connor calls the story’s “heroine” (*Mystery* 110), finds herself in what O’Connor says is “the most significant position life offers the Christian,” that of “fac[ing] death” (110). The plot covers the Grandmother’s journey to this “most significant position” as she accompanies her son’s family on an outing during which all of them are killed by the Misfit; however, the Grandmother experiences an “intrusion of grace” just before her death. The Grandmother’s psychological concerns, both those of

which she is conscious and unconscious, work together to drive her directly to this Life-saving killer.

Before examining the Grandmother's "death drive," it will be helpful to point out some of her more obvious character traits. She is characterized as especially vain in regard to her social status and her self-righteous goodness. Throughout much of the story, the Grandmother smugly emphasizes her status, which she associates with goodness, until she makes a gesture of sincere self-recognition at the story's end. She wears a dress so that in case of an accident she would be identified as a lady (*Complete* 118), which in the South has always been a term of status. She condescendingly points out a little black boy and tells the children, twice using degrading terms for blacks ("pickaninny" and "niggers"), implying status for herself as a white lady, while highlighting that blacks "in the country do not have things like we do" (119). Her story about being courted by Edgar Atkins Teagarden, whom she emphasizes was "a gentleman" and "very wealthy," also suggests her desire to be connected with the upper class. Simultaneously, the Grandmother, whom O'Connor called "hypocritical" (*Collected* 1125), in her attempt to be seen as "good," represses her obvious faults and spends much of her time criticizing others. Throughout the story, the Grandmother is critical of the members of her family and of people in general. She criticizes Bailey, her son, for taking his children in the direction of The Misfit. Of course, she condemns The Misfit for being a murderer. Soon after they begin the trip, she disapproves of Bailey's speeding (*Collected* 138). She constantly rebukes the children for their disrespecting adults and once for disrespecting their native state of Georgia (139). She even blames Europe for the bad state of affairs in America (142). The Grandmother's superficial self-assessment as a person of special

status will need to be confronted if she is to experience the Grace her psyche desires for her, and her deadly encounter with The Misfit will provide such an opportunity.

In addition to her obvious vanity, the Grandmother reveals a subtle obsession with death. Despite the abundance of analysis that scholars have given this work, the Grandmother's death-obsession has seemingly gone unnoticed⁴⁹. The story begins with her pointing out a newspaper headline and warning her son Bailey that he is endangering the lives of everyone in the family by taking them to Florida, which is where the murderous Misfit is said also to be heading. While this concern may appear healthy and natural, it should be contrasted with Bailey's attention to the sports section and the children's attention to the comic section. Their concerns are for trivial entertainment, and while the Grandmother's conscious concerns are selfishly motivated – she is really trying to convince her son to take the family to Tennessee so she can visit her “connections” – the story will continue to hint at her obsession with death. As they prepare to leave on their vacation to Florida, she is concerned that her cat, Pitty Sing, might “brush against one of the gas burners and accidentally asphyxiate himself” (*Complete* 118), so she secretly brings it on their road trip. Again, her desire to bring the cat is more likely selfish, but she justifies her bringing Pitty Sing with an unlikely occurrence of the cat's dying. Another instance of her constant thoughts of death appears in her concern, as already noted, that if she is found “dead on the highway,” at least her dress would reveal her to be a lady (118). Along the way, she highlights a graveyard to the children (120).

⁴⁹ Jill Baumgartner, in her work *Flannery O'Connor: A Proper Scaring*, recognizes that “[r]eferences to death permeate the story,” and lists some of those references, but she limits the connection as a characteristic of the narration instead of a characteristic of the Grandmother specifically.

Even her story about the recently deceased Edgar Atkins Teagarden hints at this obsession.

The Grandmother's death obsession is complemented with a series of actions suggesting a force working within her leading her to her ultimate end. For instance, she knows that the Misfit is said to be hiding out in the general area of their destination and claiming that she would never take her children "in any direction with a criminal like [The Misfit] a loose in it," adding, significantly, that she would not be able to "answer to [her] conscience" if she did; she is, however, the next morning "the first one in the car, ready to go"⁵⁰ (*Collected* 138), suggesting that she in fact unconsciously desires the encounter. Her statement about not being able to answer to her conscience if she took her children in The Misfit's direction (which is exactly what she *will* do), implies that she might desire taking her family in that direction, but her conscience will not allow her to acknowledge that desire. While passing the town with the evocative name of Toombsboro, she recalls a plantation she had visited long ago and believes it to be in the vicinity. She deviously misleads the others with a story about a legend that a nearby mansion contained a secret panel hiding riches stored in it during the Civil War, which leads them off the highway and onto a secluded dirt road. There, she upsets the box containing her hidden cat so that it jumps on Bailey's shoulder causing an accident⁵¹.

⁵⁰ Bruce Gentry argues that the Grandmother has "no unconscious desire to encounter The Misfit" (33), but he bases this on linking the Grandmother with Red Sammy, the restaurant owner, saying they both are "interested in The Misfit only as a basis for mindless complaints and self-congratulation" (34); this explanation is unconvincing and surprising from Gentry who generally acknowledges the importance the role of the unconscious plays, as "mindless" chatter is almost always considered revealing of deeper desires in psychoanalysis.

⁵¹ Bruce Gentry reveals that in an early draft of the story, O'Connor has Pitty Sing causing the accident without the Grandmother's influence (32). That O'Connor revised

Such an “accident,” however, can be explained in Freudian thinking as an unconscious desire. When soon after they encounter the Misfit, she identifies him, forcing him to kill them, when he might have easily been satisfied simply stealing the car, as his response suggests: “it would have been better for all of you, lady, if you hadn’t of reckernized me” (127). Of course, the Grandmother could not have known that her actions were taking her directly to her death, but the divine Haunt behind this orchestration, which is not done working with and through her, could have. Her preoccupation with death, her string of actions, and even the story’s imagery suggest that some unconscious and omniscient Force within her was intent on her destination, where she encounters the Misfit and will be forced to see herself as she never had before.

O’Connor appears to have incorporated an altered version of Freud’s theory of the death instinct or death drive into the story. Freud believed that the death-drive was the result of chemical reactions of bodily elements having a desire to return to their original material status. O’Connor, however, believing that God draws us to himself (John 6:44), appears to have used a Jungian approach to the psyche to accommodate that belief. In *Holiness is Wholeness*, Josef Goldbrunner, a Jungian and a Catholic priest, presents the death instinct in a way that would have appealed to O’Connor. The instance of the death instinct, Goldbrunner says, “is a law of the quest for perfection” that insists “the way to holiness leads through death. Only as man follows Christ in the way of the Cross does he

the story to have the Grandmother upset the box is significant because, once again, the Grandmother appears to be unconsciously desiring the death encounter. Stephen Gresham connects the cat being hidden to many of the other things in hiding throughout the story, including the references to the policemen who hide behind signs to catch speeders and to the reference to Stone Mountain, about which he says “informed readers” would know is mostly hidden beneath the surface (17). While Gresham relates this theme of “hiding” to the “mysterious radiance” of the story, he overlooks the most important of hidden things, the hiding of the Grandmother’s deepest desire in her soul.

become like God” (14). The soul, from this perspective, functions similarly to the way Freud describes his material version of the soul, that it has a desire to return to its original source. In Goldbrunner’s view, the desire is the same, but the source is Divine. Thus, the death-instinct is justified from both perspectives⁵². In Jungian thought, our development and our “quest for perfection” come from the process of individuation, and in *Soul and Psyche* Victor White similarly claims that “the experiences of the individuation-process give our Christian hope a certain plausibility, to the extent that they already accustom us to the pattern of life through death, of the gaining of life or *psyche* through losing it” (180), and he emphasizes that it is death that “in one way or another, finishes and completes us” (181). White then quotes Jung who had said that “Death is the great Finisher” and “Man evades as long as he can becoming conscious of those things which are still wanting to his completion, and so hinders becoming conscious of his true ‘self’, and thereby his readiness for death” (181). These Jungian interpretations of the death instinct correspond with the Grandmother’s instinct for death. Her instinct was not influenced by what Freud’s theory suggested, a mechanical determinism, but rather from a Christ-haunted unconscious that desired her completion or salvation; her unconscious, however, also knew that her salvation could only come from a jolt to her consciousness.

The Grandmother’s violent death is significant to her experiencing grace.

O’Connor once said, “I have found that violence is strangely capable of returning my characters to reality and preparing them to accept their moment of grace. Their heads are

⁵² If we consider O’Connor’s respect for Teilhard, who argued that the universe is constantly evolving to an Omega Point, or a maximum level of complexity and consciousness, we can see a correlation with a psychic instinct that pulls one toward eternal life. The psyche is working on the Grandmother to help her evolve, drawing her toward Christ.

so hard that almost nothing else will work” (*Mystery* 112)⁵³. The Grandmother needed to be confronted with a violent death in order to shake her superficial view of herself and to spark a gesture that O’Connor describes as “both in and beyond character” (*Mystery* 111). In Victor White’s theory of the unconscious, as in Jung’s, the knowledge of ultimate reality is deeply buried in our unconscious, and our limited human logic cannot normally grasp it. Confronted with the physical reality of The Misfit, the Grandmother’s unconscious begins to recall a reality that transcends her experience. When she first sees him, “she had the peculiar feeling that the bespectacled man was someone she knew. His face was familiar to her as if she had known him all her life” (*Complete* 126). Bruce Gentry argues that the Grandmother is simply recalling the newspaper picture she had seen earlier in the day (34), but this explanation does not support her having the feeling that she had known The Misfit “all her life.” Rather, the Grandmother is beginning to sense her connection to all of humankind, including the most sinful of people. The Grandmother seems to have suddenly realized Jung’s point, that we “prefer to localize the evil in individual criminals or groups of criminals, while washing our hands in innocence and ignoring the general proclivity to evil. This sanctimoniousness cannot be kept up in the long run, because the evil, as experience shows, lies in man” (Jung, *The Undiscovered Self* 53-54). Perhaps most importantly, the Grandmother finds the Misfit’s face “familiar,” which hints that she sees him as “family.” She will soon be ready to admit this connection.

⁵³ George MacDonald makes a similar observation about Shakespeare’s characters, that their greatest prophetic insights come just prior to their deaths as a result of their imaginations being “cleared of all distorting dimness by the vanishing of earthly hopes and desires” (“The Imagination: Its Function and Its Culture” 8).

Soon after her meeting The Misfit, she finds her head clearing enough for her to “see with blinding sight” the reality that she had long suppressed and to say to The Misfit, “Why, you’re one of my babies. You’re one of my own children⁵⁴” (*Complete* 132). As she reaches out and touches him, The Misfit kills her, shooting her three times. The Misfit shows his instinctive insight about the nature of goodness when he says that the Grandmother could have been a “good woman,” if only she had “somebody to shoot her every minute of her life” (133). Being a “good woman” is what the Grandmother unconsciously desired from the story’s beginning, so her Christ-haunted unconscious not only leads her to her death, but to a purposefully violent one. The Grandmother’s death position suggests she achieved both her spiritual and her psychological goal: she is described as half-sitting in “a puddle of blood with her legs crossed under her like a child’s and her face smiling up at the cloudless sky” (*Complete* 132).

Another Jungian, Roger Brooke, highlights a connection of the psyche’s completion coming not only through death but also from a “union of opposites”⁵⁵ that is evident in the story. In *Pathways into the Jungian World: Phenomenology and Analytical Psychology*, Brooke notes that Jung

came to appreciate that as a psychological reality death refers not only to a regressive condition but to an evolved state of wholeness in which customary

⁵⁴ The narration suggests early in the opening paragraph that the Grandmother had another son: “Bailey was the son she lived with” (1). This implies that she had a son she did not live with, and at some level, she knew this.

⁵⁵ Brooke is not the first to link Jung to the concept of the union of opposites: John P. Dourley, a Catholic priest, titles a chapter in his book *The Psyche as Sacrament: A Comparative Study of C. G. Jung and Paul Tillich*, “God, the Union of Opposites, and the Trinity.” His focus is on Jung’s joining the ego and the unconscious in the creation of the self.

ego-based boundaries give way in favour of a more encompassing totality, a union of opposites or *mysterium coniunctionis*. This capacity for transcendent consciousness involves the incarnation of the Self in a way that is also conducive to the development of the ego, even though it may be experienced, at least initially, as a threatening upheaval. In other words, the ego's boundaries are transcended and "widened" without its basic integrity being compromised [...] It is in this light that Jung wrote of the transcendent capacity of the Self as 'the voice of a fuller life, of a wider, more comprehensive consciousness,' leading to a recognition that death, in its 'positive' form, is no less than a liberation from the narrow confines of egocentric consciousness. It reveals to us 'the primacy of the psyche, for that is the one thing that life does not make clear to us. (129)

Brooke's emphasis on a "wholeness" that results from the Self's moving beyond the "boundaries" of the ego are exactly what is happening to the Grandmother. His point that something like a "threatening upheaval" must occur for one to develop psychologically echoes O'Connor's belief that violence was necessary in order for her characters to become prepared for their "moment of grace." As long as the Grandmother continued to see herself as "good" she would never achieve that "wider, more comprehensive consciousness" that enabled her to see her connection to The Misfit. Brooke's reference to a "union of opposites" is also an important concept in understanding what is happening in this story, for Jung's theory of individuation, the union of the unconscious and the conscious reveals the essential significance to the union of opposites in general. This union is represented here in the union of the Grandmother and The Misfit, two characters with opposing traits, that is necessary for her salvation: The Grandmother is pretentious

in her goodness and The Misfit is genuine in his evilness. Another important opposition is that the Grandmother is obsessed with death and The Misfit, as we shall see, with resurrection.

O'Connor's characterization of The Misfit as blatantly possessing the negative traits that the Grandmother represses encourages the reader to see him as her shadow⁵⁶. O'Connor once mentioned that Jung's concept of the shadow related closely to Church dogma (*Habit* 382). Jung's theory of the shadow argues that we hide our faults in the shadow of our unconscious and project them on others instead of accepting that we possess them ourselves. Our individuation requires, however, that we acknowledge the existence of our shadow. Of course, the Grandmother has been projecting her faults on others throughout the story. Ironically, however, when she is face-to-face with this murderous villain, she calls him "good." It is not surprising that she had found his face "familiar," for she is not only seeing her familial connection to this evil man; she is also seeing her secret self in him, the side of herself that she cannot accept. His ironic character, although murderous, also reveals a certain integrity that the Grandmother lacks. When she says, "I know you're a good man. You don't look a bit like you have common blood. I know you must come from nice people" (127), The Misfit contradicts her and claims, "I ain't a good man" and even though he is not sure what he has done wrong, he understands and accepts that "somewhere along the line I done something wrong" (130). That "line" can be translated not only as referring to his personal history but also to his ancestral line: he does not remember all that he has done wrong because he

⁵⁶ Ralph Wood also mentions that The Misfit can be seen as her shadow, but he makes no reference to Jung. His point also emphasizes that The Misfit is not simply the Grandmother's shadow, but he is a shadow for all of humankind (39).

was born into sin and he, unlike the Grandmother, has a vague notion of this. He insists, when the Grandmother suggests his imprisonment was a miscarriage of justice, that his punishment was “no mistake”(130). Having her shadow forced in front her visually, the Grandmother begins to finally see herself, to see her connection to him and to sin. Because the Grandmother has never accepted her true self, she has inhibited the process of individuation, the process of accepting the unconscious elements into the consciousness which when leads to the discovery of the Self.

The Grandmother’s psyche appears to have been working from the very beginning of the story to confront The Misfit in order to bring the necessary changes in her character that would prepare her for Grace. She does not see herself for who she really is until a few seconds before The Misfit shoots her. O’Connor once stated that Jung was “useful” in that he could help a “person face his own psychic realities, or those realities that the great mystics have always faced and that the Church teaches (in spite of Jung’s constant contention that she does not) we must face. [...] St. Catherine of Genoa said ‘God is my best self,’ by which she realized probably what Jung means but a great deal more” (382). The self that the Grandmother discovers here is that she is not the “good” person that she has always perceived herself to be. O’Connor opens the story with some subtle hints of the Grandmother’s deep desire to know herself. O’Connor is known for her meticulous revising and structuring of her stories. She insisted that a writer (“if he is any good”) “selects every word for a reason, every detail for a reason, every incident for a reason” (*Mystery* 75), yet “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” begins with the simple, seemingly trite (and critically neglected) sentence, “The Grandmother did not want to go to Florida.” This sentence begs analysis, perhaps psychoanalysis would be the better

word. Where *did* she want to go? The following sentence states that she wanted to “visit some of her connections in Tennessee”; ironically, she will keep the family from ever visiting Florida when she schemes to visit a plantation that she misremembers as being not far from their present location in Georgia (when it is actually in Tennessee). Memory lapses and false memories in Freudian analysis are significant because, like the slip-of-the-tongue, they suggest unconscious desires (“An Autobiographical Study” 29).

The Grandmother’s rerouting her family to the plantation is another example of her “Christ-haunted” unconscious leading her to *The Misfit*. The criticism of Miles Orvell, who makes some astute observations about the mansion from the Grandmother’s dream that compels her to redirect the family’s vacation plans, assists the argument that her psyche was directing her towards her salvation:

Significantly, the grandmother has been dozing off, and it is upon awakening, as if the splendid house had taken shape in her dreams, that she recalls it. [...]. What is barely concealed beneath the literal description of the mansion is its symbolic equivalence to a heavenly mansion; and the addition of the secret panel suggests its mysterious containment of the treasures of the past. It is home in the broadest sense – the place where one starts from, the place to which one returns. (131)

The contents of one’s unconscious inspire images in dreams. Here, Orvell connects the mansion to heaven and adds the point, one that harkens to Freud’s death drive theory, that it is a desire to return to an original state, that the mansion is calling her back to her original home. If, as White argues, a separation of the psyche and soul is “untenable,” then the contents of her unconscious could quite logically be God-influenced and designed to direct her to her salvation. Thus, the Grandmother has a dream of a mansion

that represents heaven; then her faulty memory places the mansion in their immediate proximity. From there the events unfold that lead her to her salvation. This combination of psychic activity certainly implies that it had a destination in mind. The reason for the psyche desiring this destination is never overtly revealed in the narrative, but might be inferred using White's analysis of Jung. If the unconscious functions also as the soul, however, her mis-remembrance may serve to take her to the destination of her deepest and most profound desire. It is important to remember that White referred to Tertullian's belief that slips of the tongue, which are akin to mis-remembrances in terms of their tendency to hide deeper desires, typically indicate a spiritual desire, which Freud will later translate as referring to sexual desires. Her kneeling position and smiling up at heaven are easily translated in religious terms: kneeling, she is both humbly honoring her Creator; and smiling, she recognizes that she has been saved.

While the story is primarily about the Grandmother's journey, O'Connor hints that The Misfit's soul (or psyche) is relentlessly working on him as well. In "Things Darkly Buried: In Praise of 'A Good Man Is Hard to Find,'" Stephen Gresham highlights the Misfit's compulsion for digging into the ground⁵⁷ (18). His restless desire seems to want, to use a phrase O'Connor regularly used, to "penetrate the surface" to find something beneath it. Additionally, The Misfit's obsession with the resurrection appropriately complements the Grandmother's death obsession. As soon as the Grandmother mentions the name "Jesus," The Misfit begins speaking of the resurrection of the dead. Jesus' resurrection, according to The Misfit, threw "everything off balance"

⁵⁷ Gresham points out that not only had The Misfit once been an undertaker, but even while conversing with the Grandmother, he is consistently digging into the ground with his shoe and then covering up the holes he makes. At other times, he pounds the ground with his fist or scratches the ground with the butt of his gun.

(*Complete* 131). After trying to make logical sense of sin, punishment, and justice, The Misfit concludes that Jesus should have never raised anyone from the dead (132), and, like a doubting Thomas, he does not believe in the resurrection because he was not there to verify it. For if he could have witnessed Jesus' resurrection, then he would "throw away everything and follow Him." The Misfit's bringing the concept of resurrection to the death-obsessed Grandmother at the very least helps the reader understand The Misfit's paradoxical role in the story of murderer and prophet: He actually is bringing simultaneously death and life.

The figure of the Misfit appears to have been constructed within the scope of Freud's theories, especially of the Oedipus complex, but in reality he reveals an occasion for O'Connor's comic use of Freud. Freud fathered the idea of the Oedipus Complex, which posits that young males possess a desire to kill their fathers due to a jealous possessiveness for their mothers (*Totem and Taboo* 143). About the Misfit, David Eggenschwiler writes,

One could approach this murderer from a clinically psychological point of view, for he has some classically psychotic symptoms. He has killed his father, an act which he cannot remember; he recoils violently when the Grandmother calls him one of her children and reaches out to touch him; he kills gratuitously and yet at times seems shy and embarrassed; and he feels disassociated from his crimes. (46)

While appearing to be a textbook case for Freud's Oedipal theory, something deeper appears to be also operating in the Misfit's unconscious. He *is* motivated by pleasure, which for him comes from doing some "meanness"; however, in the midst of his having a

whole family murdered, his frustration with his life of meanness reveals that it does not satisfy him nor give him pleasure; after he murders the Grandmother, he will realize that he must start searching for something else. As for his killing his father, The Misfit says that he learned from the “head doctor” who treated him while he was in prison that he was guilty of killing his father. Of course, had The Misfit literally been accused of killing his father, he would have heard about it from someone other than a “head doctor.” The Misfit recalls the true occasion of his father’s death and defends himself against what he believes to be an accusation: “My daddy died in nineteen ought nineteen of the epidemic flu and I never had a thing to do with it. He was buried in the Mount Hopewell Baptist churchyard and you can go there and see for yourself” (*Complete* 130). These details certainly imply that O’Connor is having some fun with Freud.

The Misfit’s exchange with the Grandmother potentially will benefit his soul to the same degree that it benefited hers. His frustration with his life of “meanness” and his obsession with the resurrection reveal that he is becoming increasingly conscious of his need for change. As mentioned earlier, his striking the ground and his unsteady voice indicate a repressed passion for a different reality or truth than he is experiencing. Practically in tears, The Misfit appears to recognize his own depravity (acknowledging that he is not a “good man”). Also significant, his frustration is expressed while acknowledging he did not know Jesus. After killing the Grandmother, he acknowledges that he has found “no real pleasure in life” (153), a striking contrast to his earlier belief that meanness provided pleasure. The final description of The Misfit has him cleaning his glasses, exposing eyes that were “red-rimmed and pale and defenseless looking” (153). In O’Connor’s fiction, the physical description of a character’s eyes always reveals his or

her spiritual character. His cleaning his glasses indicates that he is attempting to see more clearly, to look more closely at a spiritual reality. His “defenseless” eyes indicate that he is no longer going to resist, perhaps because he is no longer able to, the Haunt within him. He makes a telling statement after cleaning his glasses, saying the Grandmother “would of [sic] been a good woman [...] if it had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life” (22). His understanding of “good” contrasts with the Grandmother’s. Where she had always associated goodness with status, he understands that her final gesture was her one truly good act. O’Connor claimed that she is hopeful for the Misfit, believing that the Grandmother’s gesture may eventually cause enough pain within him to “turn him into the prophet he was meant to become” (*Mystery* 113).

“Good Country People”: The Psyche Rejects the Self-Made Woman

Like “A Good Man Is Hard to Find,” O’Connor’s “Good Country People” suggests that fallen man has a faulty understanding of the nature of goodness. O’Connor called *A Good Man Is Hard to Find* a collection of stories “about original sin” (*Habit* 74). In the Biblical story of original sin, the serpent tells Eve that if she eats from the tree of knowledge that she will “become like the gods, knowing good from evil” (Genesis 3.5), but these stories suggest otherwise, for often the most sinister characters are those who appear to be the most innocent.

“Good Country People” presents four characters, all of whom display Christ-haunted psyches, one of whom, like *The Misfit* in the last story, is a late arriving character who represents a component of the protagonist’s psyche; however, while the *The Misfit* represented the Grandmother’s shadow, in this story a character will embody the nihilism to which the protagonist subscribes and force her to reevaluate her worldview. The story takes place on Mrs. Hopewell’s farm, where she lives disharmoniously with her one-legged daughter, Joy, the story’s protagonist. Mrs. Hopewell would prefer Joy be more social and convivial, more “joyful,” but Joy, whose Ph.D. in philosophy has led her to take a nihilistic view of the human condition, despises her mother’s petty concerns and lifestyle and would prefer to be lecturing at a university. Since Mrs. Hopewell cannot connect with her daughter, she relies on Mrs. Freeman, a sharecropper on the Hopewell farm, for companionship. Together they fill the air with trite gossip, usually centering on Mrs. Freeman’s two normal and socially active daughters, Glynesse and Carramae. The day Manley Pointer, a door-to-door bible salesman, interrupts their daily routines and steals Joy’s wooden leg results in Joy being

forced to reevaluate her empty philosophy. While all the characters are suffering from deep-rooted psychological conflicts, Joy and Manley Pointer, two people with symbolically weak hearts, generally get the most critical attention.

Joy, or Hulga, the name she legally took because she thought it ugly, has allowed her intellect to function as her arbiter for grasping reality. O'Connor said that the story implies that Hulga's "fine education" destroyed whatever faith she might have had (*Letters* 170). Instead of faith, Hulga has embraced intellectual nihilism. Goldbrunner argues that people who have "developed the intellect at the expense of the soul" will find themselves suffering from "spiritual diseases known as neuroses" (*Holiness* 22). Victor White notes that Jung himself argued that many people experience neurotic disease as a result of a "childish passion for rational enlightenment" (*God* 44). Hulga's intellectual pursuits have, in fact, left her spiritually bankrupt: O'Connor says of her: "She believes in nothing but her belief in nothing" (*Mystery* 99). Hulga, herself, insists that she "sees *through* to nothing" (*Complete* 286), meaning she does not believe that anything lies beyond what is experienced, or as Miles Orvell notes, what is "scientifically knowable" (137). While Hulga may deny any supernatural realm, Jung argues that psychic realities will not be repressed without some substitute reality taking their places: if the psyche, or soul, demands a God, it will find one. Hulga replaced believing in God with believing in Nothing. Notice that Hulga sees only what she desires to see and is blind to what she chooses not to see: her eyes are described as having "the look of someone who has achieved blindness by an act of will and means to keep it" (*Complete* 273). By the story's end, however, her glasses stolen, she will find the need for a new vision.

Hulga's renaming herself also has important implications concerning her consciousness and her identity. She rejects her given name "Joy," a name with spiritual implications, and replaces it with a name that resembles her physically: she is "hulking" (273), or as her mother felt, with the name that invokes the image of "the broad blank hull of a battleship" (274). Hulga reinforces her physical presence by exaggerating her deformity: she purposely makes more noise when walking than necessary (275). Suzanne Paulson notes that in changing her name, Hulga attempts to recreate herself (51), and the fact that Hulga considers her renaming as "her highest creative act" appears to support the notion that Hulga indicates she has rejected a Creator and is in the business of being self-made. Hulga only accepts that of which she is consciously aware, and identifies herself in light of this perception, but both Jung and Goldbrunner argue that a consciously-created identity inhibits individuation, which requires that the unconscious and conscious harmonize; in other words, that her identity should be discovered rather than created.

Although Hulga does not consciously search for a spiritual reality, something inside her appears to be struggling to make itself known. Glen Arbery notes that early in the story when she is insisting that her mother accept her as she presents herself, she says, "If you want me, here I am - LIKE I AM," and Arbery concludes that Hulga is unconsciously referencing Samuel's call to prophecy when she says, "here I am" and following that with an emphatic statement that she is made in the likeness of God, as I AM alludes to the name Moses is given to identify his God ("Ontological Splendor" 46). Like many of O'Connor's characters, Hulga will occasionally reveal her deepest desires

in her speech and word choices, except her desires are not sexual Freudian slips, for in O'Connor's fiction, the meaning is always spiritual.

Later, many of Hulga's out-of-character reactions to Pointer suggest she is driven to him for spiritual reasons. Ironically, she becomes drawn to Manley Pointer⁵⁸, a man who, from outward appearances, should have repelled her, for he represents all those things that Hulga despises: he is selling Bibles; he claims that he wants to be a missionary; and, perhaps worst of all, he claims to be "good country people"(278), the type of simple, poor people that her mother classifies as just above "trash" (272) but that Hulga had always found revolting. Initially, she does reject him, for when Mrs. Hopewell invites him to stay for dinner, Hulga rudely ignores any of his remarks directed at her. When Pointer leaves, however, she meets him in the yard and his intense gaze focused on her struck her as intriguingly familiar, although she could not recall "where she had been regarded with it before⁵⁹" (283). Hulga lies to Pointer when he asks her age, hesitating before answering that she is seventeen when she is really thirty-two. When he tells her that he may die soon, she "suddenly" replies, "I may die too" (284). Here, Hulga appears to have surprised herself, for she had hesitated before delivering her deceptive and guarded lie concerning her age, but an impulsive desire to share something intensely personal compelled her to reveal her fragile existence.

⁵⁸ Manley Pointer's name, of course, easily translates to a phallic symbol as critics such as Orvell (138) and Kilcourse (183) have pointed out. Perhaps more interesting, though, is that he, like Hulga, has decided to rename himself, although he renames himself for every new encounter. He appears to have some connection to Satan here, who is said to have many names and to be the father of lies.

⁵⁹ I will show later that Pointer "regards" her much in the same way Mrs. Freeman does.

Hulga's mysterious attraction to Pointer inspires her to share intimate information about her personal health, an atypical action for her⁶⁰. She even agrees to a date with Pointer on the following Saturday. Critics have credited Pointer's attraction for Hulga as a response to his seeming innocence⁶¹. John McCarthy says that Hulga has a "strong, if subconscious, desire to return to the innocence that the young man represents" (1144). Preston Browning points out that "[o]n the level of conscious awareness Hulga believes that she allows Pointer a limited degree of intimacy because his innocence will afford her a rare opportunity to be the 'professor' of atheism and nothingness," but Browning assigns Hulga's true motivation to her unconscious longing for "the warmth of human contact" (47). Henry Edmondson says that Pointer "represents the essence of nihilism itself" (76) and that "Hulga's persistent flirtation with nihilism, by word and behavior, has conjured up the spirit of nihilism itself" (76-77). While these explanations tell part of the story, it should be remembered that O'Connor found psychoanalytic approaches to understanding human behavior "an inadequate instrument for understanding the religious encounter or the fiction that describes it" (*Mystery* 165), and that the psyche and the soul are often connected in her fiction. What Hulga ultimately longs for, the story implies, is not simply "the warmth of human contact," but a religious experience.

On this date with Manley Pointer, Hulga experiences a religious-like conversion. Pointer had claimed that he hoped to become a missionary because in dedicating himself

⁶⁰ Her attraction for Pointer is strikingly similar to Hazel Motes' fascination with Asa Hawks: both Hulga and Hazel are nihilists drawn to false religious figures. Both will be disappointed when they discover that the other does not have any intentions of saving their souls.

⁶¹ One of the stronger arguments for Hulga's attraction to Pointer being related to innocence might include O'Connor's referring to both of them repeatedly as the "boy" and the "girl" while they are on their date, rather than by their names.

to the service of others he would be following the Biblical instruction: “He who loseth his life shall find it” (280). Victor White refers to this same Biblical passage when he points out that the word “psyche” is the Greek for “life,” so the passage could be read, “He who loseth his psyche shall find it” (*Soul* 22). O’Connor once said “the abandonment of self” can only happen by a “sanctifying grace” (*Habit* 455). Hulga, especially, lacks the humility necessary to lose her self-created identity to discover her deeper identity. Instead, she hopes to seduce Pointer and use the experience afterward to take away his shame and “turn it into something useful” (*Complete* 284), meaning enlightening him to the meaninglessness of his faith. Pointer, though, has already begun *his* deception. Believing in nothing himself, he plans to steal Hulga’s leg, as he will later reveal to have some neurotic obsession with physical deformities. He and Hulga seclude themselves in a barn’s loft and Pointer persuades Hulga to admit that she loves him. He then demands that she prove it by first showing him where her leg joins on, but, to show her complete faith in him, he then requires that she let him remove and re-attach it. Here, we are told that Hulga had always taken care of her leg “as someone else would his soul” (288), so in giving up her leg to Pointer, he, possessing her “soul,” replaces her nothingness, which had previously replaced God in her consciousness. Hulga, as she allows Pointer this access, feels like she is “surrendering to him completely” and that she was “losing her own life and finding it again, miraculously, in his” (289), the very activity Pointer had falsely claimed that he had planned to do for the Lord. For Hulga, though, her surrender is authentic. When Pointer successfully removes and then reattaches her wooden leg, Hulga fantasizes the two of them running off together and “every night he would take the leg off and every morning put it back on again” (289), revealing her longing to be able to

completely subject her life to a force outside of herself. The interaction between Hulga and Pointer suggests that Hulga unconsciously desires a religious conversion, but she substitutes Pointer's presence for Jesus'.

Hulga's misplaced trust or faith, though, results in forcing her to analyze just what it means to believe in nothing. When she realizes that she is the one who is being seduced and being taught a lesson, she demands her leg, or wooden soul, back, but Pointer begins to leave her, taking her leg with him. A significant point usually overlooked by critics is that Pointer also steals her glasses. Just as Hazel Motes goes blind before his conversion or The Misfit cleans his glasses after killing the Grandmother, which O'Connor says may be so painful to him that it might "turn him into the prophet he was meant to be" (*Mystery* 113), so Hulga is about to find herself in need of a newer vision, one that perhaps is less dependent upon her own perceptions. Interestingly, Pointer tells Hulga as he is leaving that he has once used the same deception to get a glass eye from a woman. Before he leaves, he chastises Hulga, telling her, "you ain't so smart. I been believing in nothing ever since I was born!" (291). Just before Pointer descends from the loft, he says, "I know where I'm going" (290), a slip-of-the-tongue of sorts as his psyche seems to be influencing his speech as his lack of faith is likely to lead him to a descent into hell.

The spiritual element of Hulga's unconscious brought her here to force her to re-evaluate her lack of faith. O'Connor says that after Pointer steals her wooden leg, that Hulga recognizes "her deeper affliction for the first time" (*Mystery* 99); this "affliction" O'Connor implies, came from her "fine education" that had replaced her "faith" (*Letters* 170). In a lecture, O'Connor sums up Hulga's situation: "Early in the story, we're presented with the fact that the Ph.D. is spiritually as well as physically crippled. She

believes in nothing but her own belief in nothing, and we perceive that there is a wooden part of her soul that corresponds to her wooden leg” (*Mystery* 99). The wooden leg, therefore, is a spiritual crutch. She leans on it, but to her own downfall. The best thing that can happen to her soul is her losing her wooden leg. Her Haunt gets to work on that when a devilish Bible salesman enters her life.

At least one critic has pointed out that Hulga suffers from psychological disease. David Eggenschwiler sees Hulga as a “case study in repression and neurotic compensation,” as she “has never danced, never been kissed, and, in her mother’s terms, has never had ‘any *normal* good times” (52). Eggenschwiler notes that Mrs. Freeman’s two daughters serve as foils as their sexually promiscuous lives contrast with Hulga’s sterile and stunted social life (53). Of course, a repressed sexual drive also will find its expression in some disguised manner. Eggenschwiler notes that Hulga’s vision, in which her new name is “working like the ugly sweating Vulcan who stayed in the furnace and to whom, presumably, the goddess had to come when called,” carries “clear sexual implications” (54). Eggenschwiler also translates Hulga’s fantasy to enlighten Manley Pointer after sexually humiliating him, calling Hulga’s choice to seduce Manley Pointer in order to convert him to her “pseudo-nihilistic view of life a “comic psychology” and concluding that it “reveals much about her own unconscious and the sexually neurotic bases for her philosophy” (56).

Hulga’s antisocial behavior could be explained from either a secular or a supernatural perspective. Psycho-analytic theory might look at her poor relationship with her mother and at her mother’s divorce of her father to explain Hulga’s apparent fear of intimacy and mistrust of others. Goldbrunner, though, says that “spiritual diseases known

as neuroses” result from a “neglect of the energies of the spirit” and from an overdevelopment of the intellect (*Holiness* 23). In this light, Hulga’s divorcing herself from her heavenly Father is a more likely cause for Hulga’s emptiness.

Manley Pointer also appears to be attempting to fill the emptiness in his soul. One should ask why Pointer’s primary goal in orchestrating his rendezvous with Hulga was to steal her wooden leg and her glasses. Why, also, one might ask, would he have previously stolen a woman’s glass eye? Of course, these actions imply a neurotic compulsion, and in O’Connor’s fiction, a problem within the psyche is a problem of the soul. O’Connor said that Pointer’s stealing the leg was “inevitable” (*Mystery* 100) and that in doing so “he has taken away a part of the girl’s personality” (99). The reader should also have made the connection pointed out earlier that Hulga’s wooden leg corresponds to her wooden soul. If Edmondson is correct and Pointer is “the spirit of nihilism itself,” then he would have nothing in his soul. His stealing Hulga’s leg might be interpreted as his own attempt at filling his soul. O’Connor also regularly connects the eyes to the soul, as her characters’ vision (*The Misfit’s* dirty glasses, Hazel’s blindness, etc.) reveals the state of their souls; thus, Pointer is stealing the physical body parts in some vain attempt to replace the spiritual void in his soul. More likely, though, Manley is like the serpent in the garden. At times he seems almost otherworldly. He lies about his name, suggestively choosing Manley Pointer as his name and especially appropriate in his intended role as a seducer. He claims that he has a “heart condition,” which gives him a common bond with Hulga and helps him win her trust. He tells Hulga that he “knew” she would meet him.

Although Hulga and Manley Pointer justifiably get most critical attention, Mrs. Freeman and Mrs. Hopewell also deserve some recognition for their parts in O'Connor's tale of psychological vision and blindness. Freeman is subtly tied to Pointer in a variety of ways, most notably, though, in her obsession with physical deformities. While Miles Orvell notes that neither Mrs. Freeman nor Mrs. Hopewell has a "perception of the world" that "penetrates beyond outward appearance" (137), the differences between the two characters are significant. In fact, Mrs. Freeman's ability to upset Hulga is directly credited *to* the depth of her perception (275). Mrs. Freeman has a keen sight for anything sickly and for the grotesque in the world, while Mrs. Hopewell's optimism makes her short-sighted when it comes to assessing those whom she categorizes as "good country people."

Many critics overlook Mrs. Freeman's significance to this story. Paulson notes that in a superficial reading, Freeman "seems totally unnecessary to the plot" (49). Preston Browning, after citing one critic who argued that O'Connor prolonged the story beyond its natural ending, "at the moment of 'symbolic deflowering'" (45), maintains that ending the story with Freeman is necessary, noting that she "plays a significant role in the story's thematic development."⁶² Browning points out that Mrs. Freeman reinforces the story's correlating deformations of the body with those of the spirit. Much of the story does in fact imply a sort of connection between Freeman and Pointer, two people who are linked in a few subtle ways throughout the story; most notably, though, as already noted, both are obsessed with deformities of the body. The story's title directly

⁶² Initially, the story did end directly after Manley left Hulga in the barn, but, according to Sally Fitzgerald, Robert Giroux, O'Connor's editor, suggested that extending the story with a short exchange between Mrs. Freeman and Mrs. Hopewell would improve it (*Habit* 75).

applies to only these two characters. The reason Mrs. McIntyre hires Mrs. Freeman is that Mrs. Freeman represents “good country people” (*Collected* 272) and Mrs. Hopewell invites Pointer to stay for dinner for the same reason.

The eyes of both of the “good country people” are described similarly: Mrs. Freeman’s are “beady” and “steel-pointed” (275) and Pointer’s eyes are “like two steel spikes” (289), which explains why Hulga thought his “gaze seemed somehow familiar” (283). For these two characters, nothing of the spiritual realm appears to penetrate into their cold, hard vision, but both of them are able to pry into Hulga’s secret insecurities. While Pointer will cause Hulga to believe that he possessed “an instinct beyond wisdom” that enabled him to “[touch] the truth about her” (289), Freeman’s eyes “penetrated far enough behind her face to reach some secret fact” (275).

Mrs. Freeman’s obsession over physical deformity hints at her spiritual emptiness. She is said to have “a special fondness for the details of secret infections, hidden deformities, assaults on children. Of diseases, she preferred the lingering or incurable” (275). When she first heard the story of Hulga’s leg being “blasted off” during a hunting accident, Mrs. Freeman could not hear enough about it (275). When talking of her daughters, she tends to focus on the gruesome details of Caramae’s vomiting (277) or of Glynese’s sty that her boyfriend rids her of by having her lay down in his car while he “popped her neck [...] several times” (281). What fascinated her more than anything, however, was the same thing that most fascinated Pointer, Joy’s wooden leg which serves as Joy’s soul substitute. Mrs. Freeman, like Pointer, has repressed her soul to the point that she is almost soulless at times.

Freeman's diminished spiritual identity is represented in her being compared to a machine. The story actually begins with Mrs. Freeman being compared to an automobile. She wore a "neutral expression" when alone, but moved alternately to "forward and reverse [...] for all her human dealings." In the rare occasion when she had to withdraw a statement, "her face would come to a complete stop" and "would no longer be there in spirit" (*Complete* 271). The story's ending reinforces her machine-like existence. As she works with Mrs. Hopewell digging up some onions, her gaze "drove forward" upon Pointer as he walks away with Hulga's leg in his valise and then, symbolically, since she is void of any spiritual nature, returns "her attention to the evil-smelling onion shoot" (291), implying that Mrs. Freeman's strange affinity for deformities might also include an affinity for evil.

If an awareness of the Divine can only occur for people who look deeply into the world of matter and spirit, then little hope can exist for Mrs. Hopewell. Mrs. Hopewell's primary shortcoming is her superficial perception. The title of the story comes from her naïve belief that simple, honest, people who work the land are "good country people." She lacks what O'Connor calls analogical vision, the looking long and hard at any particular object in order to see what it reveals about much of the rest of the world: Instead Mrs. Hopewell quickly glosses over everything she encounters. Like Hulga, she has achieved a willful blindness. Mrs. Freeman and Pointer are examples, in her eyes, of "good country people," but this assessment reveals the degree of Mrs. Hopewell's blindness.

Hulga recognizes this blind optimism, and agonizing that her mother does not look deep enough to have any self-recognition (274), she once screams at her: "Do you

ever look inside and see what you are *not*? God!” (276). Orvell says “‘God’ ‘is an expletive, not a deity” (137). While he is right in a manner of speaking, certainly it is also purposely placed to imply more meaning than just a curse, for Hulga does see that her mother does not ever “look inside” of anyone because for her the surface persona is all that matters. Hulga is also making another point, although unconsciously. Directly after making this statement, Hulga adds, “Malebranche was right: we are not our own light” (276). Ironically, Hulga, who believes that she sees by her own light, condemns her mother for the same thing. Hulga’s ironic accusation that alludes to an obscure French philosopher from the 17th century proves significant. Malebranche argued that we know all things through God’s light and not our own. What Hulga’s own words are attempting to communicate to her via her unconscious is that she is not God, although she lives as if she were, and she should not act as if she were her own light, but she should instead rely on the light of God to guide her. Unfortunately, she does not grasp this message yet.

Just as the story proves that Hulga does not know herself or others as well as she thinks, it implies the same for Mrs. Hopewell. This is an essential theme to understanding the story. Mrs. Hopewell classifies people in terms like “good country people” or “trash” (272), but as the story highlights, the people she classifies as “good country people,” Mrs. Freeman and Manley Pointer, are the two people whose goodness appears to be most questionable. Her naming her daughter “Joy,” in an apparent attempt to have the name influence her daughter’s identity, further indicates her belief that one’s identity can be attained by superficial means. In fact, just as her daughter had changed her name to Hulga in an attempt of autogenesis, so her mother’s marrying a man named “Hopewell” suggests that she chose a man whose name represented the persona she has chosen for

herself. Her belief that Joy would be happier if she would just smile more often (276) and that if people would look “on the bright side of things” they would seem “beautiful even if they were not” (275) further shows Mrs. Hopewell’s superficial understanding of the Self. By the story’s end, Hulga’s constructed self will necessarily be reconstructed, and her mother’s self is certain to face a reality that she will not be able to gloss over due to the good country people.

The Displacement of God Within the Psyche

Karl-Heinz Westarp notes that O'Connor's stories regularly "present 'displacement' with its physical and spiritual dimensions" and the concern that "man is essentially 'displaced' and 'alienated', constantly in search of his proper place and his true self" (98). Such a depiction seems especially appropriate for O'Connor's "The Displaced Person." Unlike most of O'Connor's stories, this one offers an overtly Catholic presence, as a Jesuit priest brings a Christ-figure, or displaced person from Poland to an American farm. While the title literally refers to the Polish man's physical displacement from his European home, figuratively, the story suggests that all of the characters are displaced from their "true country."

The images in this story work to penetrate the psyches of the characters in order to reveal to them hints about their true country. In Jung's analytical psychology, archetypal images function to prompt the contents of the unconscious forward to consciousness, resulting in individuation. Unique to Jung's theory is the concept of the collective unconscious, a framework within the psyche that creates expectations for a person to fully experience the human condition. Goldbrunner summarized the role of archetypal images as a collection of images "which are 'aprioristic' categories" that prepare humans for the experiences of such things as "birth," "community," "death," and "God" (*Individuation* 104-105). According to Jung and Goldbrunner, man's collective unconscious demands the religious encounter. Jung's belief that each of his neurotic patients "in the second half of life [...] fell ill because he had lost that which the living religions of every age have given to their followers" (*Modern* 264) is echoed by Goldbrunner who said, "If in the first half of life the archetypal foundations have been

ignored in the ambitious quest for success and the ‘instincts’ and the ‘truths of the blood’ disregarded, nature will very likely be avenged now in the form of a neurosis” (149). Thus, archetypes appear in our fantasies and especially our dreams since those are the times when images from the unconscious have free rein. These archetypal images function to satisfy psychological necessities and if their influence does not result in some acceptance or recognition, then a neurosis results. This story exposes the psychic consequences of two characters who deny God’s reality and as a consequence do not recognize the powerful images surrounding them.

O’Connor’s insistence that the concrete world revealed the eternal world is especially relevant in this story about displacement. O’Connor, responding to a critic who had complained that no modern novelist speaks “for America today,” argued that the Christian writer speaks for “his true country,” which is “eternal and absolute” (*Mystery* 27). With this in mind, consider O’Connor’s statements about the concrete world:

[T]his physical, sensible world is good because it proceeds from a divine source. The artist usually knows this by instinct; his senses, which are used to penetrate the concrete, tell him so. When Conrad said that his aim as an artist was to render the highest possible justice to the visible universe, he was speaking with the novelist’s surest instinct. The artist penetrates the concrete world in order to find at its depths the image of its source, the image of ultimate reality. (*Mystery* 157)

Each of the two main characters⁶³ in this story sees her identity and status as tied to her location: Mrs. Shortley sees her status as an American as privileged over that of the immigrant Polish family, and Mrs. McIntyre views herself as privileged as a landowner. Neither of them possesses the vision necessary to “penetrate the concrete,” so important symbolic images, like the sun or the peacocks running around the farm, fail to have any impact on their imaginations, and thus they fail to recognize the references to their “true country.” In contrast, the priest immediately responds to the beauty of the peacocks, seeing in them suggestions of the transfiguration.

The plot divides its attention between these two women and their reactions to Mr. Guizac, the Polish man who has come to America by the help of a Catholic priest to both escape persecution and to work on Mrs. McIntyre’s farm. The first section of the story focuses on Mrs. Shortley, one of Mrs. McIntyre’s employees and her closest friend. Mrs. Shortley feels threatened by the industrious Guizac and plots against him. Mrs. McIntyre values Guizac’s various skills around the farm until he “upsets the balance” there, a phrase that should remind the reader of *The Misfit’s* complaint that Jesus threw “everything off balance.” For Mrs. McIntyre, the farm is her primary source of security, and she values it above all else because she is “practical,” a term that she uses to imply that she is not spiritual.

Mrs. Shortley is a perfect example of one of O’Connor’s spiritually blind characters. She is introduced at the story’s beginning as having “ignored the white afternoon sun,” (*Complete* 194), significant because in O’Connor’s fiction, the sun is

⁶³ O’Connor originally ended the story with Mrs. Shortley’s death, who was the protagonist in Part 1 of the story. O’Connor later added Parts 2 and 3 in which Mrs. McIntyre is the main character.

often a Christ-symbol. The sun, described as an “intruder,” appears to be attempting to get Mrs. Shortley’s attention, but she keeps her focus on earthy matter, as she “cast her gaze down the red clay road” (194). Not only is the sun attempting to make its presence known, but a peacock, another important religious symbol in O’Connor’s works, follows her. Jill Baumgartner interprets the peacock’s following Mrs. Shortley as “God in pursuit” (86), and throughout the story future references continue to connect the peacock with God. The peacock, in contrast to Mrs. Shortley, has its attention “fixed in the distance on something no one else could see” (194). To accent Mrs. Shortley’s spiritual blindness, the priest later overtly calls attention to these two religious symbols. He describes the peacock’s tail as “full of suns” (*Complete* 226). This contrast’s significance becomes more discernible as the peacock becomes increasingly connected to the sun and to Christ. When the peacock actually spreads its tail, the priest responds to its effect on him, “Christ will come like that” (226). O’Connor elaborates on this symbol in a letter: “The priest sees the peacock as standing for the Transfiguration, for which it is certainly a most beautiful symbol. It also stands in medieval symbology for the Church – the eyes [of the tail] are the eyes of the Church” (*Habit* 18). Mrs. Shortley, her name perhaps referring to her short-sightedness, however, denies God’s existence (ignoring the sun being a symbolic indication), thinking that religion is “essentially for those people who didn’t have enough brains to avoid evil without it” (*Complete* 203) and is oblivious to the potential revelations these symbols might communicate. What she denies and ignores, or does not see, becomes more important in connection to the two inner visions she has during the story.

Mrs. Shortley's psychological and spiritual void will have its consequences. As we have seen, Victor White argues, applying the law of the conservation of energy to the activity within the psyche, that an omniscient God is an essential component of our psyche and if God is denied or repressed, some substitute, be it a government "Party," a "Leader," or "ourselves," will fill the void (*God* 41-2). He then added Jung's warning that "*whenever* the Spirit of God is excluded from human consideration, an unconscious substitute takes its place," and, Jung adds, "[w]hen God is not recognized, selfish desires develop, and out of this selfishness comes illness (*God* 42). It would be difficult to characterize Mrs. Shortley's conflict in this story any more accurately than Jung or White might have done with this description.

Mrs. Shortley has a series of visions, each of them different in regards to their source. In her first vision, she sees herself as an angel. Immediately prior to her first inner vision, O'Connor presents her as "reflecting, her unseeing eyes directly in front of the peacock's tail" (200). This sets up the inner vision as being disconnected from any true vision or revelation. O'Connor, influenced by Jacques Maritain and Allen Tate, who emphasized that people could not, as the angels could, circumvent the natural world in their quest for knowledge of God, emphasizes Mrs. Shortley's blindness to the natural world to indicate that her vision will not be authentic. The first inner vision consists of her seeing herself as "a giant angel with wings as wide as a house, telling the Negroes that they would have to find another place" to make room for the displaced persons coming from Europe (200). This vision is self-serving, self-worshipping, and may be part of a self-protection mechanism as she really fears her and her husband's own displacement if more efficient workers come to replace them. A letter O'Connor wrote to

her friend William Sessions suggests that interpreting Mrs. Shortley's vision as demonic might be credible: "The Catholic believes any voice he may hear comes from the Devil unless it is in accordance with the teachings of the Church" (*Habit* 410). The circumstances and contents of her second vision, though, suggest that it might have been truly prophetic.

Between her first and second vision, Mrs. Shortley, who views herself as both a proud American and a respectable Christian, becomes even more anxious about America being overrun with displaced foreigners with strange beliefs. She begins to suspect the priest of trying to convince Mrs. McIntyre to bring more displaced families to the farm and realizes that not only the black workers but also her own family is in danger of being displaced. Her mistrust of the priest is in large part inspired by her mistrust of Catholicism. Like most Southerners, Mrs. Shortley sees Catholicism as a corrupt faith⁶⁴. In fact, her American and Protestant identities are part of a persona she has created for herself that keeps her respectable within her community. Her xenophobia and her anti-Catholicism provide her with a community identity with which she feels comfortable. Confronted with the uncomfortable idea of being invaded by foreign Catholics, she imagines a "war of words" resulting in the "Polish words, dirty, all-knowing and unreformed" throwing dirt on the "clean English words until everything was equally dirty" (209). As a result of these anxieties, she begins reading the Bible and her

⁶⁴ While the root of Protestant mistrust of Catholics goes all the way back to Luther, and includes beliefs that the Catholic Church is not Biblically justified or inspired, Shortley's mistrust of Catholics is obviously simply cultural. For her, faith and patriotism were for the gullible or for when it served her purposes. She believed, for instance, that her son would be a successful preacher because he had a "sweet voice for hymns and could sell anything" (197). Only later, when she wanted to believe that God had a special plan for her, did she begin to read the Bible (209).

understanding of the Apocalypse serves only to reinforce her own sense of self-importance (209).

Although the second vision goes beyond being simply self-serving, for in this vision some truth is revealed to her, Shortley's xenophobia and lack of humility cause her to misinterpret it. A possible explanation for this vision carrying some real prophetic content is that Mrs. Shortley is fatigued to the point that her consciousness is also too fatigued to resist the influence of her deeper psyche. She is walking up a steep incline immediately prior to experiencing the vision. Being a very heavy woman, she is said to "heave a sigh of exhaustion" as her heart felt like "a child's fist, clenching and unclenching inside her chest" (210). Now her mind is ready to accept revelation⁶⁵.

In contrast with the last vision, Shortley's eyes were not "unseeing," but instead were "on the distant low-lying clouds," and she observes a "gigantic figure facing her" that was "the color of the sun" (*Complete* 210). After shutting her eyes, she hears a voice saying simply "Prophecy!" Her response is "[t]he children of wicked nations will be butchered [...]. Legs where arms should be, foot to face, ear in the palm of hand. Who will remain whole? Who will remain whole? Who?" (210). Here, working within some mysterious realm of her unconscious, she is provided with a vision of Truth devoid of human subjectivity or bias, a Truth that is also a warning. Unfortunately for the self-righteous Mrs. Shortley, she believes the European countries to be wicked and America to be righteous, and from the beginning she had equated the Displaced Person with the

⁶⁵ Bruce Gentry cites Stuart Bones and argues that the "gigantic figure" in the sky that confronts and commands Mrs. Shortley is that of a peacock. He believes the influence of the image in the sky legitimizes her prophecy (30).

devil (203); so she completely misses the warning that she, herself, is the child of the wicked nation of which her prophecy warned.

According to White, a mistaken interpretation of revelation, such as Mrs. Shortley is making, is not surprising. He says that according to St. Thomas, revelation “in its most typical forms” does not correspond to our logical expectations (*God* 126). He highlights St. Thomas’s analogy that “in respect to divine things, our minds are as a bat’s eyes before the naked light of the sun” (129); thus, the prophet himself may have trouble understanding the prophecy he receives. As we saw earlier, White points to a distinction St. Thomas made between the reception of a prophecy and its proclamation: the first requires a passive reaction to something that intrudes upon the prophet’s psyche while the second, the proclamation, the prophet operates under his or her own control. The prophet can decide to speak or not to speak, to act or not to act. But the prophet’s words and actions are his or her own; they are not the revelation. Mrs. Shortley, who receives this revelation in a passive state, interprets it and acts upon it under the influence of her xenophobia and self-righteousness.

Mrs. Shortley encounters another significant image the night before she dies. After her vision, she goes into the barn so that she can listen undetected to a conversation between Mrs. McIntyre and the priest. Just before she hears Mrs. McIntyre’s plans to dismiss Mr. Shortley because Mr. Guizac can do Shortley’s work more efficiently, she observes a calendar with “a bearded gentleman in a frock coat, holding up a bottle, and beneath his feet was the inscription, ‘I have been made regular by this marvelous discovery’” (*Complete* 211). Mrs. Shortley is said to have “always felt close to this man as if he were some distinguished person she was acquainted with” (211). After hearing of

Mrs. McIntyre's plans to fire her husband, Mrs. Shortley is described as looking straight ahead at the "gentleman on the calendar" who was "holding up his marvelous discovery"; however, just as she failed to see the sun at the story's beginning, she "did not see" the gentleman. The kind of familiarity Mrs. Shortley feels for the old gentleman in the advertisement, like the Grandmother's feeling that she had always known The Misfit, in O'Connor's stories suggests that the unconscious, or the soul, is connecting an image or a person to something transcendent⁶⁶. Other critics have nothing or little to say about Mrs. Shortley's encounter with the image on the calendar. George Kilcourse mentions the fact that Shortley failed to see the gentleman, but his only commentary is that the advertisement provides some "comic irony" as it is "advertising a laxative" (195). Karl-Heinz Westarp says that the advertisement "has gained a very concrete meaning" for Mrs. Shortley when she learns that her husband is going to be fired because she will be "made regular," having lost her status as someone of importance on the farm (105). This is an unlikely interpretation because Mrs. Shortley, after hearing of her husband's firing, "found herself looking straight ahead at the opposite wall where the gentleman on the calendar was holding up his marvelous discovery but she didn't see him" (212), so she is not engaged with the calendar or the gentleman. The likely significance of the elderly gentleman who has made a "marvelous discovery" and has become "regular" relates to Mrs. Shortley's soul and salvation. Her unconscious is attempting to communicate to her that she needs something at which the advertisement hints. The narration suggests that the

⁶⁶ Outside of this story and "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," O'Connor used this type of familiarity in stories when a character encounters someone who will help trigger their unconscious to some revelation. As we saw, in *Wise Blood* Enoch Emery tells Hazel when he first encounters him that he has a "familiar face" (57). In "Revelation," Mary Grace is said to have known Mrs. Turpin "in some intense and personal way, beyond time and place and condition" (500).

familiar looking old gentleman and the priest are connected. Directly after observing the advertisement and in the same sentence that the narration tells us of the gentleman, Mrs. Shortley is said to begin to focus on “the dangerous presence of the priest” (*Complete* 211). It is the priest who can change her, but she has resisted that discovery. It is also likely that her unconscious would want to turn her focus to the priest because he is a representative of the Church. Mrs. Shortley’s turning her attention to the priest is much like Hazel’s becoming fascinated with Asa Hawks or Hulga’s with Manley Pointer: the unconscious is always working to guide the conscious mind toward an instrument of salvation.

Mrs. Shortley’s final vision and her death fulfill her second vision and also reveal that she had misunderstood it. Later that evening after she and her family have hastily packed all their belongings into their car and are escaping the farm before they have to face the humiliation of being forced to leave, she has a final vision. At the onset of the vision, she begins to grab her husband’s elbow and her daughter’s foot and attach them to herself, eventually upsetting the balance of everything in the car. Her “icy blue eyes” are described as having “a peculiar lack of light” as “[a]ll the vision in them might have been turned around, looking inside her” (213). When she dies in the manner described in her own prophecy, she appears to be attempting to “remain whole” and to “contemplate for the first time the tremendous frontiers of her true country” (213-4). Like the Grandmother in “A Good Man Is Hard to Find,” just as her death is imminent, she allows herself to see what she had always missed.

Once again, a power within the unconscious reveals what her blind pride would not allow her to see. She had a sense of self-righteousness in her identity as an American

and, again like the Grandmother in the earlier story, believed that Europeans and the Catholics brought sin to the States. Miles Orvell notes that from the very beginning of the story, Mrs. Shortley not only sees Guizac as an intruder, but she also sees the God-symbolizing sun as an intruder as well (142). Her unconscious overcomes her pride and allows her to see for the first time “her true country,” a term that O’Connor says alludes to a prayer to the archangel St. Raphael that he might “guide us to the province of joy so that we may not be ignorant of the concerns of our true country” (*Habit* 132).

Bruce Gentry makes an important observation about Mrs. Shortley’s options for responding to the news that she and her family are about to be displaced. Earlier, the narration had revealed that Mrs. Shortley had learned through Astor, one of the hired black workers, that Mr. Guizac was “up to” something that would turn Mrs. McIntyre against Mr. Guizac (208). Only after her death does the story reveal the contents of Mrs. Shortley’s secret, that Guizac planned to have his niece marry one of the black workers. Mrs. Shortley rightly understood that this revelation would have saved her from being displaced, but Gentry argues that Mrs. Shortley possessed an “unconscious desire for redemption through displacement” and consequently “pushes this reasonable option aside” (30).

Initially, this story ended with the death of Mrs. Shortley, but when O’Connor republished the story, she extended it to cover further interactions between Mrs. McIntyre, the priest, and Mr. Guizac.

Interestingly, Mrs. McIntyre, like Mrs. Shortley, is compared to an angel. While Mrs. Shortley sees herself as an angel, Mrs. McIntyre, who has a “cherubic face” (224), cannot see herself as one. Mrs. McIntyre’s first husband purchased a sculpture of an

angel because he thought it looked like her, yet she could not see any resemblance (221). When the statue was stolen by some of the her former workers, however, she was “outraged” (221). While she lacks the necessary humility that is needed to allow for salvation, Mrs. McIntyre is revealed to be potentially angelic, and potentially more open to redemption. She welcomes the priest, the Displaced Person (initially), and, even though she has no great love for the peacocks, she feels a compulsion to keep them on the farm “out of a superstitious fear” (218).

Mrs. McIntyre’s unconscious is constantly working on her salvation. It is noteworthy that she seeks a priest “on the business of getting her a Displaced Person” (*Complete* 225). The fact that the priest is the instrument used to bring the Displaced Person to her implies that Mrs. McIntyre unconsciously seeks to fill the void from having displaced Christ from her soul. She does not make the connection consciously that she connects the Displaced Person, Mr. Guizac, with Christ, but her language, often loaded with religious meaning, implies that her spiritual unconscious is working on her. For instance, when she realizes that Mr. Guizac’s efficiency will save her money, Mrs. McIntyre calls him her “salvation” (203). She once unconsciously correlates Mr. Guizac with the risen Christ when she considers increasing his pay, stating that “[h]e is worth raising, [...] he saves me money” (204), perhaps unconsciously expressing the inner battle she is experiencing in trying to displace God with the financial security that the farm provides her, but these strange slips of the tongue seem to reveal her deeper desires. Another time she insists to the priest that “Christ was just another D. P.,” meaning to argue that Christ was not relevant to her concerns; however, she went to the priest initially to request that he bring a “D. P.” to her farm. McIntyre’s speech, with its

constant unconscious references to her own salvation calls to mind Tertullian, the third-century Christian thinker, who we have seen claimed that the soul is “naturally Christian” and when an atheist proclaims “Oh God,” the soul is expressing its desire for its savior. (Nichols 44).

Even when she makes a conscious effort to fire the Displaced Person, she finds that she cannot. After she discovers Mr. Guizac’s plan to bring his white cousin to America to marry one of the black farm workers, she immediately decides that she must fire Mr. Guizac because he “doesn’t fit in” (*Complete* 225). For some unexpressed reason, though, she has an unnecessary compulsion to “have this out with the priest” before firing him (228). She is unsuccessful in various attempts to fire Guizac, whether by having the priest take him away or by directly dismissing him herself.

Mrs. McIntyre finally rids herself of Mr. Guizac in a way that reveals that Americans are no less guilty than the Europeans, whom Mrs. Shortley had believed to be more tarnished with evil. Although one critic calls Mr. Guizac a victim of a “random tractor accident” (Bauerschmidt 172), the story makes it clear that this “accident,” could have easily been prevented had Mrs. McIntyre, Mr. Shortley, or any of the other hired farmhands desired. Mrs. McIntyre allows Mr. Guizac to get crushed by a tractor as it slowly begins rolling toward him while he is lying on the ground working on another one of her tractors. She has plenty of time to save him with a simple shout of warning, as do one of the black workers and Mr. Shortley, who had returned to work on the farm a few weeks after leaving it, but she chooses to remain silent and let him get crushed .

Mr. Shortley, as one of O'Connor's "unredeemable" characters⁶⁷, appears to be demon-haunted rather than Christ-haunted. David Eggenschwiler argues that "O'Connor's characters who have turned from God" become "demonic" (33), and that description fits Mr. Shortley. At one point, he is compared with a "snake" (231). Little attention has been given to the important role he has in the story, although George Kilcourse associates Shortley with the "devil," and aligns him with a "cliché that runs like a refrain throughout the story," which was a saying of Mrs. McIntyre's first husband: "The devil you know is better than the devil you don't" (202). Kilcourse also notes, "He wears a shirt 'with red and white palm trees' and looks like 'a man who had gone for a long time without water'" (*Flannery O'Connor's Religious Imagination* 202) and concludes that Shortley is "the devil who is familiar with the desert as the tempter of souls" (202). Kilcourse could have said much more that connects Shortley with the devil. He is introduced as having a cigarette in his "blistered mouth" (*Complete* 200) and later his whole face is described as "blistered" (227), giving him a face that might suggest that he has been burned by Hellish fire. He has a habit of using his tongue to pull the remains of cigarette stubs into his mouth (a snake-like gesture) before spitting them out (*Complete* 200), and is said to have courted his wife using this very trick. It is perhaps revealing that he is using fire to seduce his wife, as he appears to be an agent of Hell. He is also regularly described as a "corpse" or as "paralyzed" (200, 206, 227). Another time he rises out of bed like "Lazarus from the tomb" (208). When Mrs. Shortley is talking to him

⁶⁷ O'Connor says she can "fancy" Mr. Shiftlet as being "unredeemable" (*Habit* 350). He, like Mr. Shortley, is compared to a snake (*Complete* 152).

about Mr. Guizac, he responds, “Don’t worry me now [...] I’m a dead man” (208). These descriptions of Shortley as lifeless imply that he has already lost his life.

Mr. Shortley also makes loaded statements about his having fought and died for his native land. When he returns to the farm a month after he left, he complains to Mrs. McIntyre, “a man that’s fought and bled and died in the service of his native land don’t get the consideration of one of them like them he was fighting” (228). While this reference obviously alludes to Jesus’ dying for all people and not getting the proper “consideration,” it also might mean that it was in the war that Mr. Shortley lost his soul: He has figuratively come back “a dead man.” Later, he will repeat his complaint to the people around town, still mentioning that he had “died” in the war (232). Another subtle point in his claims is that they imply that he is Godlike, just as Lucifer had aspired to become. This detail becomes more important in his role of seeking his revenge against Mr. Guizac.

Shortley’s last words in the story further imply that he, like Satan, aspires to be God’s equal. He blames Mr. Guizac for his wife’s death (227), and later tells the black workers on the farm: “Revenge is mine saith the Lord” (233), his last words of the story. His next action is to park the tractor on a “slight incline,” and he is described as being “warmed” by the tractor, “as if its heat and strength sent impulses up through him that he obeyed instantly” (234). The tractor’s brake slips and rolls over Mr. Guizac and kills him. In this instance, Mr. Shortley’s deepest desire, to get revenge and to exact that revenge himself, is completed. It might seem accidental, but Mr. Shortley nurtured his hatred for Mr. Guizac until it influenced his action. Perhaps, O’Connor is even alluding to Jesus’ warning that those who are angry with their brother are “liable to judgment” to the same

degree as a murderer (Matthew 4:21) and that the person with lust and desire for a sinful act has “already committed” the act “in his heart” (Matthew 4:27). When Mr. Shortley “turn[s] his head with incredible slowness and stare[s] silently over his shoulder” (234) to watch the tractor run over Mr. Guizac, he appears, at some level, to have anticipated the “accident.”

The result of this murder is that everyone is displaced from the farm. All of the workers leave immediately afterward, and Mrs. McIntyre, with no one to help her run the farm, had to have it auctioned off. She never “has it out with the priest,” though. The story ends with a kind of victory for her Christ-haunted psyche: although everyone else has abandoned her, the priest comes regularly to feed her peacock and explain to her the doctrines of the Church” (235). The implication is that Mrs. McIntyre needed to lose everything in order to find room for Christ. The priest is once again bringing her a Displaced Person.

“Judgment Day”: The Psyche as Homing Device

In this last chapter, we consider one of O’Connor’s final stories, “Judgment Day,” written just before her death in 1964 and a story that appeared to haunt O’Connor, for it is the last of many attempts to rework her 1946 story, “The Gernanium.” While some critics, like Ted Spivey and Jill Baumgaertner, argue that O’Connor’s last stories indicate that she was experimenting with new approaches toward her fiction⁶⁸, Jung’s influence remained apparent in her last story.

“Judgment Day” reveals O’Connor’s continued interest in the workings of the psyche, as most of the story takes place in the memory of an elderly man who had recently suffered a stroke. Especially important to this story is recognizing that, for O’Connor, the unconscious is not primarily a receptacle for our repressed desires and traumatic pasts as Freud seems to have believed, but its most significant purpose was to influence the psyche to a destination or goal, as Jung believed.

About a month before she died, Flannery O’Connor wrote to her editor Catherine Carver to ask for some feedback on a story she had just finished but was “not satisfied with” (*Habit* 585). The story was “Judgment Day,” a reworking of the story that had opened the collection of stories in her MFA thesis. It would be fair to say that this story haunted O’Connor, for she had also attempted a rewrite of “The Geranium” in 1955 and at that time had retitled it “An Exile in the East” (*Habit* 74-75). Some critics, most notably Bruce Gentry, have cited O’Connor’s late dissatisfaction with “Judgment Day” to

⁶⁸ Spivey says that “Judgment Day” and “Parker’s Back” indicate that O’Connor “was searching for new psychological depths to match the vision of renewed spiritual life she was continuing to discover for herself in Teilhard’s work” (163-64). Jill Baumgaertner believes that “Judgment Day” indicated that O’Connor was exploring a “new direction” in her fiction, specifically in regards to the “limitations of language” (206-07).

support their belief that it was not one of her more successful stories. Other critics, on the other hand, such as Jill Baumgaertner (206-207) and Ralph Wood (“From Fashionable Tolerance to Unfashionable Redemption” 10) have praised the work for its unique qualities and viewed it as an indication of O’Connor’s furthering her artistic vision. Given that O’Connor was working on this story right up until her death⁶⁹ when she was also working on two of her more critically acclaimed short stories, “Revelation” and “Parker’s Back,” it is difficult to dismiss this story as a failure. Her creative powers seemed to have been at their most mature. The likely variance of the assessment of this story might be that critics have overlooked its unique characteristic: Tanner is the only one of her protagonists who is experiencing his revelation throughout the story rather than only in the story’s climax.

The story revisits two themes found in other stories, the psyche’s (or soul’s) longing for home and the importance of memory. The story’s first line tells the reader, “Tanner was conserving all of his strength for the trip home” (*Complete* 531). Like Hazel Motes who is unconsciously compelled throughout the novel to get to his eternal home, but consciously can only understand that he needs to “get where [he’s] going” (*Wise Blood* 230), Tanner also is unconsciously driven to reach his eternal home. While the role of the memory has played an important role in much of O’Connor’s fiction, in “Judgment Day” O’Connor appears to be exploring the power of memory as a tool for revelation, for the protagonist’s memory becomes a primary element of the plot as more of the story

⁶⁹ In fact, Karl Heniz Westarp convincingly argues that O’Connor’s last draft of the story was not the one published. He points out that ten versions of the ending exist, and the one that O’Connor settled on, while remaining true to the general plot, contained “greater precision” and “greater complexity through handling of point-of-view and double-edged language” (61).

centers on his memory and his imagination revisiting his past than it does on his present action. The role of memory plays an important role in many of O'Connor's Christ-haunted characters. In *Wise Blood*, Hazel's memories of his family members' funerals haunt him as he struggles to deal with his own mortality. In "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," the Grandmother's faulty memory leads her and her son's family directly to The Misfit. In another story, "A Late Encounter with the Enemy," the 104 year old George Poker Sash cannot distinguish his imagined past from his real past. In "Judgment Day," O'Connor tells the entire story through the perspective of the protagonist Tanner, who had recently suffered a stroke. The story jumps back-and-forth between the present and the past as Tanner's mind finds it difficult to keep his focus on the present. To highlight the significance of these two themes, it will be helpful to highlight some important contrasts between O'Connor's original version of this story, "The Geranium," and her final one, "Judgment Day."

"The Geranium," as other critics have noted, lacks much of the complexity found in O'Connor's mature works. Ralph Wood calls the story "a callow critique of Southern racial attitudes" (134) and concludes that it is "simplistic" (135). Miles Orvell highlights the lack of "dramatic action" in the story and calls it "simply a portrait of a man in a hostile environment" (185). In this story, Old Dudley is introduced as regretting his decision to move from the South to live with his daughter in New York City. He had impulsively given in to a romantic notion of living in the big city and decided to accept his daughter's invitation to move in with her. Once there, he spends a great deal of time simply looking out his apartment window at a sickly geranium the neighbors across the street put on their apartment window ledge everyday. He contrasts his current situation

with his active life back home where his window revealed the river on which he and his companion, Rabie, a black man who lived in the basement of the same boarding house in which he lived, would often fish, or he would think of the two of them going hunting in the neighboring wood. When a friendly black couple moves into an apartment across the hall, Old Dudley is outraged that his daughter tolerates “liv[ing] tight with niggers” (9). Old Dudley later encounters the new neighbor when he is on the stairwell performing an errand for his daughter. He had drifted into a memory of hunting with Rabie and his new neighbor observes him shooting a make-believe rifle. The neighbor addresses him as “old-timer” and chats with him about hunting and guns as he helps Old Dudley up the stairs. Old Dudley cannot even look at his neighbor and feels humiliated. When he gets back into his apartment he looks for the geranium in the window across the street but finds only a confrontational neighbor who does not appreciate Old Dudley’s habit of looking into his window. Old Dudley asks him about the geranium and learns that it has fallen to the sidewalk. The story ends with the neighbor threatening Old Dudley, “I don’t like people looking at what I do. [...] I only tell people once” (14).

“Judgment Day” contains much of the same plot as “The Geranium,” as it tells of an elderly Southern man regretting having come to live with his daughter in New York City, and for many of the same reasons as in the earlier story, but the story is no longer so straightforwardly simple. In this version, the limited third-person narration is provided through the point of view of the protagonist, now called Tanner, who is introduced as a recent stroke victim, revealed later in the story as resulting from having been beaten by his new black neighbor. Despite his poor physical condition, Tanner furtively plans on returning home to Georgia after discovering that his daughter is not going to honor her

promise to have him buried there. He even attaches a note inside his pocket, with instructions to send his corpse to his black friend Coleman (who replaces Rabie from “The Geranium,”) if he should not make it all the way home (*Complete* 531). As the plot only covers Tanner’s final few hours, a major portion of the story deals with Tanner’s memories, and to a lesser extent his dreams and imaginings. During much of the story, Tanner reminisces about his former relationship with Coleman, which is much more intimate and complex than Old Dudley’s relationship was with Rabie: Old Dudley missed his shared adventures with Rabie, but Tanner misses his friendship with Coleman. The two had become so close that they actually lived in a shack they had built together. Unfortunately, it turns out, the shack was on someone else’s land. Tanner moves to New York, not on an impulse to see the big city as Old Dudley had done, but only after a black man purchases the land on which he had been “squatting” and demands that Tanner work for him if he stays on the property. Tanner is too proud to work for a black man and resorts to moving in with his daughter. It is only after getting beaten and suffering a stroke that Tanner demands a promise from his daughter that she will at least have him buried in Georgia. When he overhears his daughter tell her husband that she is going to bury him in New York, he begins making plans to head back to Georgia. The story shifts back to the present as Tanner gets no farther than the stairwell where he falls down a flight of stairs and once again encounters his new Black neighbor. Unlike his counterpart in “The Geranium” who helps Old Dudley up the stairs, this neighbor gives Tanner another beating, this one fatal, after he misinterprets Tanner, who in his dazed state, had called him “Coleman.” The neighbor, thinking that Tanner was mockingly calling him a “coal man,” beats him to death.

One unique but overlooked characteristic of the revised story is the significance of Tanner's having suffered a stroke before the story even begins. O'Connor's stories are well known for their violence, and she defends her tendency toward violent plots in her often cited point about violence being "strangely capable of returning [her] characters to reality and preparing them to accept their moment of grace" (*Mystery* 112). While this point might invoke images of brutal murders such as a family getting gunned down by an escaped convict as happens in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" or a woman getting gored to death by a bull as happens in "Greenleaf," often, in O'Connor's stories, the violence done to the body is less important than the violence done to the psyche; so it is not surprising that so many of her characters suffer strokes, a violence occurring in the brain. O'Connor explains that violence is necessary for her characters to experience grace because her characters' "heads are so hard that almost nothing else will do" (112). Mrs. Shortley suffers a stroke just prior to her revelation and death in "The Displaced Person." Julian's mother suffers a fatal stroke in the climax of "Everything That Rises Must Converge." Likewise, George Poker Sash suffers a stroke in "A Late Encounter with the Enemy," as he experiences his revelation, and also dies in the process. It is only after they suffer their strokes that these characters' conscious egos relax their control upon their Christ-haunted psyches and experience their revelations.

Because Tanner suffers his stroke before the story begins, he has already begun to be influenced by his Christ-haunted psyche. Bruce Gentry finds "Judgment Day" lacking because the usual tension between the unconscious and the consciousness of the protagonist found in most of O'Connor's fiction is missing (88), but the relaxing of that tension is something that O'Connor seems to be exploring for the first time. In fact,

O'Connor had switched the point-of-view in *Wise Blood* from Hazel to Mrs. Flood after Hazel had his life-changing revelation⁷⁰, and it is likely she did this because of the problem of getting into the head of someone whose unconscious and consciousness are beginning to harmonize. It is not surprising, therefore, that the story begins with Tanner not only having the unreasonable goal of getting home, but also having the unreasonable resolution to pursue his goal even if it kills him: his religious instinct is telling him that the way home necessarily requires death.

Tanner's unreasonable religious instinct counters his daughter's practical modern views, and much of their difference echoes Jung's distinctions between the primitive man's and the modern man's psyches. Tanner's daughter responds to his insistence on being buried in Georgia with a practical response: "When I pass from this world I'll be considerate of them that stay in it. I won't be thinking of just myself" (534).

Their differences are strikingly similar to Jung's observation of a difference between modern and primitive man. The primitive man, he says, is more in touch with his collective unconscious and instincts (which includes the religious instinct), while the modern man, although still archaic "in the deeper levels of his psyche" (*Modern Man* 126), resists this content in favor of reasonableness (130). Tanner's daughter undervalues the ritual of burial because it appears unreasonable to ask the living to bother with a corpse. Conversely, Tanner, after having suffered his stroke, is ready to pay any price, even his life, to be buried back in Georgia rather than in New York City. Kilcourse

⁷⁰ Bruce Gentry even goes so far to say, "if O'Connor had continued to focus attention exclusively on Hazel Motes in the last chapter of *Wise Blood*, she might have produced the sentimentality we have in "Judgment Day" (89), but Gentry fails to appreciate the change in the psyche that these characters have experienced or the problems their change presents for O'Connor in representing their viewpoints.

rightly parallels Tanner's "preoccupation with the rite of burial" with that of Mason Tarwater's: both had an instinct that told them that their burial was important.

Another important contrast between the two and their psyches is their different perceptions of how to relate with others. While Tanner is certainly a racist, his racism is contradicted by his close relationship with Coleman. The first person Tanner attempts to "make friends with" (545) in New York City is a black man. In the city, though, he learns the rule is not to "love thy neighbor," but to "keep away" from him because in the city the appropriate goal is only to "get along" with your neighbor, which translates to "everybody mind[ing] their own business" (541). Highlighting the isolation people experience in the city, Tanner's daughter carries on conversations with herself, during which she talks to herself in one voice and answers herself in another (533-34). His daughter seems to be so caught up in her own consciousness that it is all that is real to her, or at least what is most real to her. Eventually, Tanner concludes that the city is "no place for a sane man" (541) and "no kind of place"⁷¹ (531). While his resolution to return to Georgia is an important consequence of the stroke, the most pervasive consequence found in the story is that he cannot keep focused on the present. His mind keeps jumbling it with the past, or at least his version of the past.

The function of memory and mis-remembrances is more important to understanding the psyche in Freud's psychoanalysis than in Jung's analytical psychology

⁷¹ The city is always desacralized in O'Connor's works. In both *Wise Blood* and "Judgment Day," both of which take place in the city, the typical symbols for Christ, such as a forest ("A View of the Woods" and "A Circle in the Fire"), a peacock ("The Displaced Person"), or the sun (many of her stories) are missing. Tanner's home includes much more of the natural world, such as the river and the forest, and St. Paul says that all of creation reminds mankind of God's presence (Romans 1:20-23). Thus, Tanner longs for a sacramental environment for his burial.

(their respective terms for their approaches), but Jung's approach to the psyche still remains more relevant to understanding what is happening to Tanner. Freud's theory of repression posits that the psyche works to protect consciousness by keeping unpleasant or traumatic memories buried in the unconscious⁷². Freud's theory has the psyche haunted by the past, but O'Connor's version of the psyche, like Jung's, has it pursuing a future end. Jung's analytical psychology did not delve into the past to the extent Freud's did, although Jung did theorize that the collective unconscious within every individual benefits from the collective past of all humankind. Jung, however, believed in a psychic energy, which he sometimes called the "libido," that drove the psyche toward individuation, whereas Freud believed primarily, if not exclusively, in a cause-and-effect world, so one's personal past was the sole influence on the psyche. Freud's theory of the psyche had no future. Victor White said that for Jung, "the important thing is not the acorn but the oak; the important thing for the patient to know is not what he had been but what he could and should become" (*God and the Unconscious* 76). So while Freud tried to unbury the past in order to help his troubled patients confront their pasts, Jung tried to

⁷² One unfortunate result of Freud's theory of the Oedipus Complex was that he suggests that children may confuse a fantasy with a memory, and because he believed children had unconscious sexual desires toward their parents, they may even begin to believe they had been molested by their parents. As a result, many allegations of sexual abuse by children against their parents were not given serious attention. In fact, Richard Webster relates in "Freud's False Memories" that the origin of the theory of the complex itself may involve a "false memory." Webster points out that Ernest Jones' biography of Freud provides the tale of a young Freud having seen his mother naked and becoming aroused. Webster counters that Freud's own account of the incident, shared in his adult writings, was that he remembered "a long train journey from whose duration he *deduced* that he might have had the opportunity of seeing his mother naked. He then speculated further that he might have been sexually aroused by this entirely hypothetical sight." Webster concludes that Freud "may eventually have come to experience the scene" he had only imagined, but the more likely truth is that it became a "false memory."

interpret the symbolic images of the deep psyche to help the patient see where he or she is being prompted. Jung says, “For in every adult there lurks a child – an eternal child, something that is always becoming, is never completed, and calls for unceasing care, attention, and education. That is the part of the human personality which wants to develop and become whole” (“The Development of Personality” 194). When Jung speaks of becoming “whole,” he means unifying or harmonizing the contents of the conscious and unconscious. In “Judgment Day,” Tanner has begun this process, for ever since his stroke, his conscious and unconscious are beginning to harmonize in order to bring him the experience of grace.

To highlight the difficulty Tanner has in keeping focused on the present, the narration shifts seamlessly from the present to the past, and even memories that interrupt the present are further interrupted with other memories. Typically, a narrator will shift to the past with some type of marker, the most common being a new paragraph. In “Judgment Day,” however, the shift happens uneventfully in the middle of paragraphs. For instance, when Tanner is arguing with his daughter about where he is to be buried, he drifts into a memory of her coming to retrieve him from Georgia to take him to New York:

He laid his head on the back of the chair for a moment and the hat tilted down over his eyes. He had raised three boys and her. The three boys were gone, two in the war and one to the devil and there was nobody left who felt a duty toward him but her, married and childless, in New York City like Mrs. Big and ready when she came back and found him living the way he was to take him back

with her. She had put her face in the door of the shack and had stared expressionless, for a second. Then all at once she had screamed and jumped back.

“What’s that on the floor?”

“Coleman,” he said. (534)

The first paragraph begins with Tanner in the present, sitting on a chair listening to his daughter complain to him, but by its end, the paragraph introduces a dialogue between him and his daughter when she had come back to retrieve him from Georgia. The memory continues for a few paragraphs, covering his refusal to join his daughter in New York, and then a few paragraphs later, another shift in time comes mid-paragraph, detailing the account of his discovering that the land on which he was squatting had been recently purchased by a black doctor. The narration details their conversation about Tanner’s trespassing, but it is interrupted by Tanner’s recalling his first encounter with Coleman, thirty years earlier. Again, the specifics are given of that encounter: Coleman, described as a “large black loose-jointed Negro” stands loafing around a worksite where Tanner is supervising six other black workers. When the workers’ production is negatively affected by Coleman’s presence, Tanner realizes he must confront him. That memory is interrupted by his returning to his previous memory:

And he had not got rid of Coleman since. You make a monkey out of one of them and he jumps on your back and stays there for life, but let one make a monkey out of you and all you can do is kill him or disappear. And he was not going to hell for killing a nigger. Behind the shack he heard the doctor kick over a bucket. He sat and waited. (539)

In this paragraph, Tanner's memory of his temptation to kill Coleman has reminded him of his temptation to kill Doctor Foley, so he drifts back to his earlier memory, as the statement, "He was not going to hell for killing a nigger" refers to both recollections. He could not have been brought back to the previous recollection by the sound of the doctor's kicking a bucket because that was not actually happening: that sound came from another memory. The narrator appears to be attempting to get into Tanner's head to the point that even the narration jumbles the past and the present.

Because stroke victims often suffer from memory loss, and much of this story covers Tanner's memories of his past, his version of his past should not be accepted without question.⁷³ There is no reason to doubt *everything* he remembers, but some clues suggest that at least one of his recollections strays. The most suspect of Tanner's memories is his recollection of his first encounter with Coleman. Ralph Wood says, "Tanner remembers this life-turning event of thirty years past as if it were yesterday" (*Flannery O'Connor and the Christ Haunted South* 136), but I would argue that he remembers it as if it were in the moment because he cannot separate his past and his present, nor should we expect that his memory of such a long ago event be precise. O'Connor worked hard to make her sacramental fiction work within the realm of the acceptable. The supernatural in her work is typically subtle (unlike the miracles in Graham Greene's *End of the Affair*). O'Connor expressed a desire to make the "intrusions of grace" in her works "almost imperceptible" (*Mystery* 112). Yet Tanner's memory of his first approaching Coleman strains the accepted boundaries of reality. The first reason

⁷³ Critics have, however, accepted Tanner's memories without question. For example, Ralph Wood says, "A series of five interwoven remembrances enables Tanner to burrow ever more deeply into his past, there to discern both the horror of his guilt and the hope of his salvation" (135).

to call it into question is simply that it happened over thirty years earlier. Tanner carried a penknife with him and whittled on small pieces of wood to hide a nervous twitch in his hands as a result of a kidney problem. Whenever he had to confront one of his workers for being lazy, he used the following line: “Nigger, this knife is in my hand now but if you don’t quit wasting my time and money, it’ll be in your gut shortly” (537), and this would always convince the worker to get to work. Tanner had his doubts, though, that this approach would work on the stranger. He remembers the encounter as unfolding in the following way:

The stranger was leaning against a tree on the edge of the clearing, watching with half-closed eyes. The insolence on his face barely covered the wariness behind it. His look said, this ain’t much of a white man so why he come on so big, what he fixing to do?

He had meant to say, “Nigger this knife is in my hand now but if you ain’t out of my sight...” but as he drew closer he changed his mind. The Negro’s eyes were small and bloodshot. Tanner supposed there was a knife on him somewhere that he would as soon use as not. His own penknife moved, directed solely by some intruding intelligence that worked in his hands. He had no idea what he was carving, but when he reached the Negro, he had already made two holes the size of half dollars in the piece of bark.

The Negro’s gaze fell on his hands and was held. His jaw slackened. His eyes did not move from the knife tearing recklessly around the bark. He watched as if he saw an invisible power working on the wood. (538)

This “power” working through Tanner creates “the connected rims of a pair of spectacles” and Tanner offers them as a gift to the man who surprisingly accepts them. Tanner convinces the man, Coleman, to work for him and the two become lifelong friends. Ralph Wood summarizes this encounter in this way: “Their unaccountable self-restraint is the moral and dramatic high point of the story” (136). The idea that Tanner could mindlessly carve a pair of spectacles seems farfetched, but the memory might not be accurate. The overt “intruding power” is atypical of O’Connor’s presentation of grace, as well.

An ironic effect of Coleman wearing the glasses is that it changes Tanner’s vision, not Coleman’s. These glasses never make another appearance in the story, and it is tempting to believe that Tanner’s memory adds them as a symbolic dimension to the beginnings of his friendship with Coleman. Their friendship allowed him to see himself in a black man, even though he had always demeaned blacks in the past. This is the same type of vision the proud and self-righteous Grandmother in “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” needed when she learned to see The Misfit as “one of [her] babies.” When Tanner observes Coleman wearing the spectacles, “he had an instant’s sensation of seeing before him a negative image of himself, as if clownishness and captivity had been their common lot. The vision failed him before he could decipher it” (538-539)⁷⁴. This is the second time the narration has highlighted Tanner’s lacking vision, as the first paragraph of the story also mentions Tanner’s “failing vision” (531). Tanner is not consciously ready to

⁷⁴ Kilcourse says O’Connor “deliberately presents” Tanner and Coleman “as ironic “opposites. The black man and the white man, the law-abiding and the criminal” (292), but that view overlooks and even contradicts the crucial theme of their likeness that Tanner slowly begins to appreciate. They are “reflections” of each other, not opposites.

accept that his vision needs help, but, perhaps, because his deeper psyche is attempting to communicate his faulty vision to him, his memory adds a pair of glasses to the scenario. Tanner is not quite ready, though, to put the glasses on himself, so he puts the glasses on Coleman.

Further evidence that Tanner had a habit of substituting Coleman for himself occurs in one of his daydreams. In the middle of arguing with his daughter about where he should be buried, he recalls a daydream he had had after his first and only excursion around the city. In this daydream, he leads Coleman around the bustling city, constantly instructing him how to navigate around the masses of people without getting knocked over. When, in the daydream, Coleman asked why they had come up to New York in the first place, Tanner imagines himself saying, "I come to show you it was no kind of place. Now you know you were well off where you were," to which Coleman replies, "I knowed it before [...] Was you didn't know it" (541). Coleman does not need this instruction, but Tanner remains unconsciously haunted by the vision "that failed him before he could decipher it" and feels more comfortable correcting and instructing Coleman than admitting his own faults.

Tanner's dreams also reveal that his psyche is preparing him for his judgment. After a long series of memories that jump back-and-forth between his encounters with Coleman and his black neighbor, Tanner warns his daughter (whom he has obviously been ignoring while he daydreamed of his past), "The Judgment is coming" (541). He then instinctively recalls his first encounter with his black neighbor, who, although Tanner does not realize it, has been, and will soon continue to be, the means by which his own guilt will be punished. After his first beating he secures from his daughter her initial

promise to have him buried in Corinth, Georgia, and he begins to sleep well again and dreams of his arrival in a wooden casket in Corinth where Coleman and a white friend, Hooten, await. In the dream he has reawakened, much like the dreams Hazel Motes has in *Wise Blood*. Coleman and Hooten hear movements in the casket, and Coleman convinces Hooten to open up the casket. Tanner then jumps up and shouts, “Judgment Day! Judgment Day! [...] Don’t you fools know it’s Judgment Day!” (546). Tanner will have the same dream when he finally makes his way out of the apartment to head back to Georgia just before falling down the first flight of stairs. As the Black neighbor passes him, he hears him speaking of Judgment Day and Tanner, still half-dreaming, mistakes his neighbor for Coleman. The neighbor responds that he is not a “coal man,” and says, “Ain’t no judgment day, old man. Cept this. Maybe this here judgment day for you” (549), and gives him his final, and fatal, beating.

Tanner’s neighbor provides a type of justice for the racist views Tanner had held most of his life. More than any of her other short-stories, “The Geranium” and “Judgment Day” explore the cultural problem of race. O’Connor’s changing the names of the characters emphasizes just how important race was to this story, as Coleman’s and Tanner’s names represent their relative skin colors. While the story’s ending points out, and critics have often highlighted, that Coleman’s name alludes to his skin color, no commentary has been made on the importance of the name “Tanner.” This compelling name for the protagonist of a story so concerned with race can refer to not only his skin being more “tan” than that of a Black man’s, but also to his slowly learning to identify himself with a black man. In seeing his “reflection” in Coleman, he is learning to see their similarities. His self-identity as a white man is getting “tanner.” Jill Baumgaertner

argues that “Judgment Day” is one of the few O’Connor stories that “omits symbolic or literal reference to the gospel and to conversion” (206), but Tanner needs one last act of violence to bring him “home”: his conversion is not final until then. In his final act, Tanner’s “failing vision” finally is able to grasp his oneness with his neighbor:

Tanner tried to catch hold of a banister-spoke to raise himself but his hand grasped air. The two faces, the black one and the pale one, appeared to be wavering. By an effort of will he kept them focused before him while he lifted his hand, as light as a breath, and said in his jauntiest voice, “Hep (sic) me up, Preacher. I’m on my way home! (549)

This paragraph alludes back to Tanner’s confrontation with Coleman when he had the “sensation of seeing before him a negative image of himself” in Coleman, but that vision “failed him before he could decipher it.” This time, as the two faces, “the black one and the pale one” waver, he is able to keep his focus and see their shared intimate connection. Consequently, he can speak confidently of his going to his eternal home, as he finally realizes that he had been truly longing for this home all along.

Although at least one critic (Baumgaertner 206) has mentioned that this story lacks a sacramental quality found in O’Connor’s other stories, this story implies that the psyche itself is sacramental⁷⁵. It drives Tanner toward grace not only with a homing instinct that inspires a desire for a proper burial, but also toward a new vision of his neighbor. Neither of these two desires is typical of Tanner’s desires before he suffered his stroke. His memory of the beginnings of his relationship with Coleman reflect a psyche no longer dominated by a conscious desire for status above the black man, for now that

⁷⁵ John P. Dourley highlights the sacramental quality in Jung’s works in a book called *The Psyche as Sacrament: A Comparative Study of C. G. Jung and Paul Tillich*.

desire vacillates with one that sees equality between the two. The story even holds some hope for Tanner's almost solipsistic daughter. She initially buries Tanner, as was practical, in New York City, but she consequently "turned and tossed" in her sleep and "very definite lines began to appear in her face" (550). She finally decides to have "him dug up and shipped his body to Corinth," and the story's final line reveals, "Now she rests well at night and her good looks have mostly returned."

Conclusion: A Union of the Imagination and Reason

In Jung's *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* he says that the modern man's psyche is "disturbed" because "the inner man wants something which the visible man does not want" (202). This statement applies to almost all of O'Connor's protagonists, as they are often hesitant prophets, with unsettled psyches who must free their souls from their oppressive personas. Once they have accomplished this, their ambitions or longings, their vision, their reasoning, and their imagination counter, confound, and often offend cultural norms. Consequently, her characters, like Tanner or Hazel Motes, generally seem on the brink of insanity and or at least fanaticism. Their personas are struggling against an interior urge for salvation. In her only other novel, *The Violent Bear It Away*, young Francis Tarwater, who like Hazel is a resistant prophet, a Jonah-like figure, claims not to be "worried about what [his] overhead is doing" (171), referring to the unconscious forces in his psyche, but meanwhile those forces lead him to become the prophet he was called to be. Referring to the climax of her story, "The Artificial Nigger," when Mr. Head and his grandson Nelson experience their revelation upon being confronted with a plaster statue of a Black man, O'Connor says, "I felt like such a black mountain of maternity would give him the required shock to start those black forms moving up from his unconscious" (*Habit* 78). These "black forms" in the unconscious that move up to the conscious cause the individuation necessary for her characters toward the pin point of light that Mrs. Flood imagined Hazel was heading toward. O'Connor insisted that her writing literature required a "gaze" that "extend[s] beyond the surface, beyond mere

problems, until it touches the realm which is the concern of prophets and poets” (*Mystery* 45).

For O’Connor, the persona functions to protect the individual from an intense and unsettling desire for grace. Her characters are like the speaker of a poem by the Catholic poet Franz Wright who is “No longer a boy frightened by the dark but a man terrified by the light” (“Emperor of Antarctica”) O’Connor sees the call to faith as a terrifying experience to consciousness, and God is not the father-substitute that Freud posits in “The Future of an Illusion” (694-695) that allays our fear of death, but a sublime Father who inspires both awe and fear. It is for good reason that O’Connor says people are “Christ-haunted” (*Mystery* 44). Consequently, the psyche expresses an ambivalent reaction toward that Reality. The Death Instinct which Freud said countered the desires of the libido becomes the Homing Instinct which demands that we lose our life in order to find it, as one of her first protagonists, Hazel Motes, and one of her last, O. E. Tanner, both discovered.

The vision of her prophets is altered once they experience Grace. William Blake said, “The fool sees not the same tree as the wise man,” and O’Connor might extend that difference to contrast the visionary prophet with the materialistic scientist or even to any secular person. In “A View of the Woods,” Mark Fortune lacks the vision that his granddaughter possesses, for she sees the sacramental quality in the woods he plans to cut down in order to build a gas station. To him, “A pine trunk is just a pine trunk” (*Collected* 348). It is not until he is severely beaten and about to die that he allows himself to see the trees in a sacramental light. In his dying moment, after stumbling into the lake, he notices “the gaunt trees had thickened into mysterious dark figures that were

marching across the water and away into the distance” (356). Unable to swim, notes the critic Jill Baumgaertner, he will have to rely on Christ, as Peter had done, to walk across the water (*Flannery O’Connor: A Proper Scaring* 131-132). In “Revelation,” the snobbish Ruby Turpin learns to recognize her uncleanness once she begins to see analogically how she can be justly accused of being “a wart hog from hell” by a college girl. At the story’s end, Turpin, while washing her pigs, “gazed, as if through the very heart of mystery, down into the pig parlor at the hogs” (508). Then her analogical imagination evokes an image of various souls lining up for heaven, and she notices souls much like herself lining up at the end of the line, behind souls of the “white trash” and of the blacks. Her kind were orderly and respectable, the only ones singing “on key,” while the others were chaotically dancing and leaping about. What shocked her most, though, was that “even their [those like her] virtues were being burned away” (508), and she begins to appreciate her uncleanness, how she is, in fact, in need of a washing, just as her pigs are in need.

The reasoning of O’Connor’s characters also confounds modern sensibilities. Freud would appear to agree with Francisco de Goya, who said, “The sleep of reason produces monsters,” which can be taken to mean that our conscious minds need to remain in control and we cannot allow our imaginations too much influence over our psyches if we want to avoid insanity. The “sleep of reason” insinuates that an active imagination, with its unpredictability, is the enemy of reason, but Jung and O’Connor counter this notion. Jung says that man

protects himself with a shield of science and the armor of reason. His enlightenment is born of fear; in the daytime he believes in an ordered cosmos,

and he tries to maintain this faith against the fear of chaos that besets him by night. What if there were some living force whose sphere of action lies beyond our world of every day? Are there human needs that are dangerous and unavoidable? Is there something more purposeful than electrons? (*Modern* 162)

Jung concludes that artists and prophets are “in touch with the night-side of life, while the masses “strive to construct a conscious world that is safe and manageable” (162). Jung is not necessarily against reason, but he is arguing that the active imagination has its necessary purpose, and it should not be consumed at all times by our conscious reason. O’Connor insists that we need not and should not forget that the imagination and reason are meant to work harmoniously together (*Mystery* 184). For the believer, this separation, she said, is “heal[ed] if we realize that faith is a ‘walking in darkness’ and not a theological solution to mystery” (184). This darkness obviously refers to the same “darkness” that the “ragged figure” in the back of Hazel Motes’s mind was motioning him to walk toward. Walking in this darkness inspired a reasoning that transcended Hazel’s desire to walk “with his two eyes open” (*Wise Blood* 22) so he could see clearly. So when Hazel blinds himself, or Tanner attempts to return all the way to Georgia from New York City when he can barely make it down one flight of stairs, we need to recognize their sanity is on a different plane than ours, but that difference does not translate to insanity.

Thus, at the root of her characters’ oddness and grotesquery is their imagination that springs from their unconscious. O’Connor’s characters begin to acquire an analogical and anagogical vision as they release their conscious control of their psyches and allow more balance between the influences of conscious reason and the unconscious

imagination. O'Connor stresses the importance of the imagination because it offers a kind of wisdom that reasoning on its own cannot grasp. What we can know of God can only come from analogy. O'Connor repeatedly insists that "the beginning of human knowledge is through the senses" (*Mystery* 42, 67, and 91), but while reason tends to reduce images to abstractions, the imagination, influenced by the soul, encourages the psyche toward an experience. The novel is a "way to have experience" (78).

This analysis of O'Connor's works lends itself to at least one potential extension. The first is what it suggests about the encounter with literature, and especially with her literature. Just as her characters need to be psychologically unsettled in order to allow themselves to experience Grace, the act of reading literature should be, in O'Connor's view, "a plunge into reality" and "very shocking to the system" (78) to the effect that the reader also experiences a shift in his or her vision. Her characters experience a trauma of some kind (at least three of them suffer strokes) which results in analogical vision. O'Connor seems to have similar aims for her audience as she does for her characters, as she claims that her goal in writing fiction is to help people see (47 and 93). As we have seen before, she cites Joseph Conrad to the effect that "the aim of fiction is to render the highest possible justice to the visible universe" (80), and of course, the "highest possible justice" one can "render" to the universe is to have it reflect its Maker. This perspective has parallels in Coleridge's notion of the "symbolic imagination." Coleridge argues that the symbol as it is found in Scripture "is characterized by a translucence of the Special in the Individual or of the General in the Especial or of the Eternal through and in the Temporal. It always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible" (30). Like O'Connor's sacramental notion of literature, Coleridge calls Nature God's "great book,"

which should be read in a manner that Scripture is read (29). Another perspective, that of George Steiner, also resonates with the idea that literature and the arts assist the imagination's aspiration toward its creator. In *Real Presences* Steiner says that the mass of men prefer "reviewers to bards" in part because "we crave remission from direct encounter with the 'real presence'" (38-39), by which he is alluding to a transcendent presence. Steiner makes an implied argument for the analogical imagination over analytical reason when he says that language is essentially "organic" and that "[n]o enumeration, no analytical ordering of the units of a sentence yields a corresponding sum of sense" and adds that "in the poetic, this 'surplus' is most evident" (84). Steiner concludes that the idea of a "secular poetics" is ultimately impossible because the arts are essentially religious (223-225).

In closing, I am going to suggest that O'Connor was not the only writer who created characters with spiritually-haunted psyches. Samuel Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner," Edgar Allan Poe's narrator in the "Tell-Tale Heart," and Fyodor Dostoyevsky's Raskolnikov are all driven by psyches that are haunted by their sins. Perhaps as much as any author before O'Connor, Nathaniel Hawthorne, writing before Freud's theory of the unconscious was published, created characters with conflicted psyches that struggled toward Grace. O'Connor once said, "Hawthorne interests me considerably. I feel more kinship with him than with any other American" (*Habit* 457). Like O'Connor's characters, Hawthorne's are often spiritually haunted, although not necessarily Christ-haunted. The depths of their psyches regularly interfere with their perceptions. Goodman Brown's walk in the wood creates a setting for the conflicting battles in his soul. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Dimmesdale is certainly haunted. Throughout

the novel, a power within his psyche spurs him to confess his sin in order to save his soul, but he is too weak. In his last moment, though, like the Grandmother in “A Good Man Is Hard to Find,” he finds Grace.

This research and its possible extension imply an importance to the arts that is missing in what O'Connor liked to call the “modern temper,” and she would likely find it unsurprising that the credibility of both the arts and religion are in great question. Glen Arbery, a great admirer of O'Connor, calls art “a riddle, with its own luminous intelligence” (230). Similarly, Jung called the works of a visionary artist “disturbing” and “of monstrous and meaningless happenings that in every way exceed the grasp of human feeling and comprehension” (*Modern* 157). O'Connor, it appears to me, believed the same, and for her this Intelligence springs from the soul of the seer, the prophet, and the artist.

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