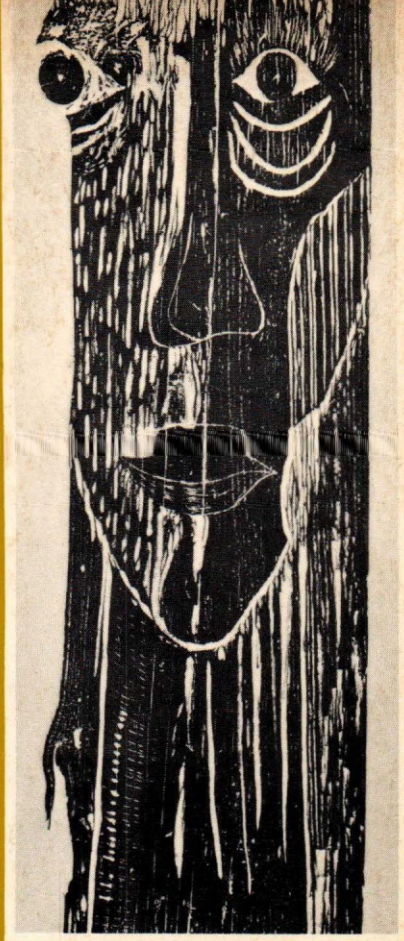


WINTER-
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1965



THE UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

KERYGMA

A JOURNAL OF COMMENT Vol. IV, No. 3

A Note on the Title:

KERYGMA is a Greek word meaning "proclamation" or "heralding." It originally designated the action of a herald; in the Gospels it takes on the particular connotation of a declaration of the "glad tidings" of Christ's resurrection.

In our context, however, it is a proclamation on a different level—a cultural one. It is an announcement that is meant to be heard. It is one that has direct consequences for modern culture—implications that demand to be either accepted or rejected, but never ignored.

Our major "proclamation" is the fact of an impending choice between a culture that is totally secular and one that is Christian. But this principal kerygma is surrounded by many minor ones, such as the place of the university in society, the grounds and bases of the arts, the place of the sciences in the humanities, and other specific problems.

We do not pretend that what appears in our magazine will always be complete and finished. Sometimes it will be only in the nature of a "kerygma," an idea which is to be developed and expanded later. Ours will be an exploration, an investigation of the implications of Christianity and the University in society.



A Journal of Comment at

THE UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

Winter-Spring Issue, 1965

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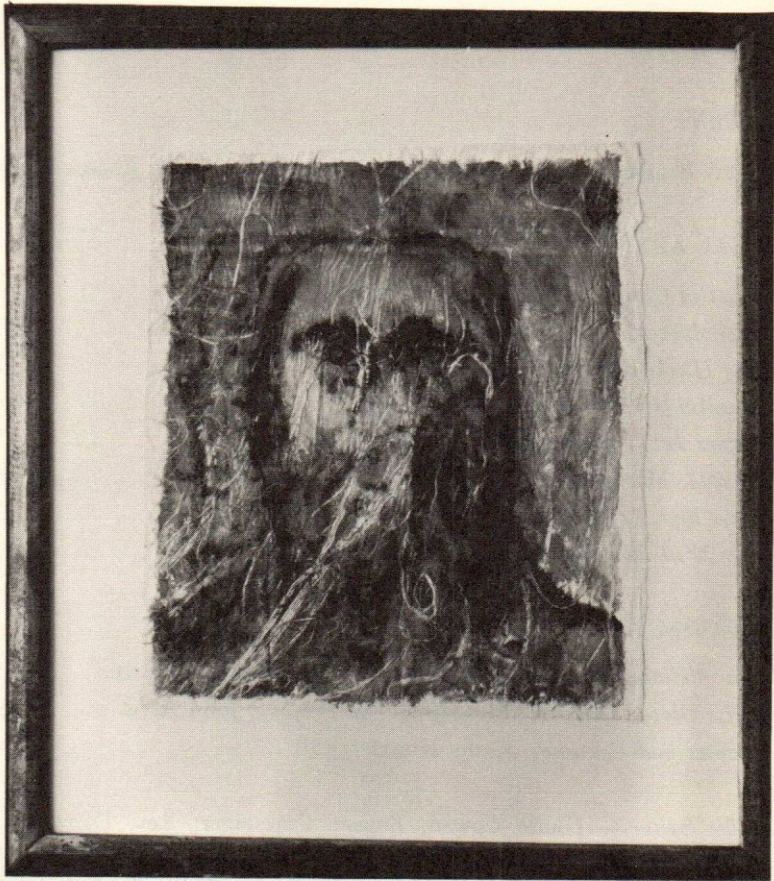
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Photographs — Heri Bert Bartscht



Head of Christ, Jan Hundhausen

The Fictional World of Flannery O'Connor

Though most of her stories take place in or about the state of Georgia, the imaginative world of Flannery O'Connor lacks the cartological definiteness of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County or of Joyce's Dublin. The South about which she writes is real and very much like the South of 1940-1960, yet even so there is a strange quality about her fictional universe which makes it seem, for all the accuracy of Miss O'Connor's descriptions and for all the familiarity of her scenes, a little more than real. This very quality has perhaps drawn forth the most severe objections to her art.

What has been called "sensationalistic" or "gothic" in Flannery O'Connor's stories takes on a different flavor when we shift our tastes from purely realistic or naturalistic fiction to a much older form of art. The violence of Greek mythology or of Grimm's Fairy Tales is transmuted because it takes place in a world of symbols. Flannery O'Connor's world, despite its contingency to the real world, is mythological in much the same sense.

Miss O'Connor's characters also have been criticized occasionally for seeming like types rather than like people, more like exaggerations of humors than real persons. But this criticism is really a prejudice; and when we reject the attempt to make Flannery O'Connor a Southern novelist of the school of Katherine Anne Porter, we discover several new aspects of her work.

Northrop Frye, in *The Anatomy of Criticism*, makes a distinction between the two types of fiction which he calls "novel" and "romance." The novel deals with personality and character, society and manners. The novelist attempts to create realistic scenes and persons. On the other hand, as Frye explains, the

romancer does not attempt to create 'real people' so much as stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes. It is in the romance that we find Jung's libido, anima, and shadow reflected in the hero, heroine, and villain respectively. That is why the romance so often radiates a glow of subjective intensity that the novel lacks, and why a suggestion of allegory is constantly creeping in around its fringes. Certain elements of character are released in the romance

which makes it naturally a more revolutionary form than the novel. The novelist deals with personality, with characters wearing their *personae* or social masks. He needs the framework of a stable society, and many of our best novelists have been conventional to the verge of fussiness. The romancer deals with individuality, with characters in *vacuo* idealized by revery, and however conservative he may be, something nihilistic and untamable is likely to keep breaking out of his pages. (pp. 304-05)

One could hardly ask for a better description of Flannery O'Connor's work, and the fact that she is a writer of 'romance' rather than of 'novels' should make us wary of applying the techniques of novel criticism too precisely when analyzing her writing.

Having done away with the objections that Miss O'Connor violates the canons of fiction, we can examine in more detail the world she writes about. The question of myth is an inevitable one; and though there is no classical mythology in her stories, Miss O'Connor presents her modern Christian view of reality in terms of a violent symbolism. It is little wonder, then, that Flannery O'Connor has been accused on occasion of a negative attitude of ironic mockery; what many fail to see is that there is a transcendent standard, created from her transmutation of these symbols, to which this mockery is referred.

The collection of short stories, *A Good Man Is Hard To Find* (1953), provides excellent illustration of all that has just been said. The ten stories in the book have been carefully chosen to form a definite thematic order. Whether each one is studied as a separate unit or several are examined as a group of similar motifs, all the pieces are related to the main title of the collection.

The world of the collected stories is an ordinary world. It is more a mode of existence than a place, describable in terms of attitude rather than of topography. The attitudes are strongly based on the rural way of life, and they are retained by anyone of rural origins, even after a lengthy residence in urban society. The universe, in the eyes of most of these characters, is ultimately good, especially when it is viewed in terms of the country virtues of gentility, honor, and tranquility. Everything in the country is normalized, predictable, and trustworthy; appearances may be believed in. The world of Miss O'Connor's stories is, then, more accurately described as pastoral than agrarian.

But these people realize that a pastoral world is too much a part of yesterday to be completely actual today.

"A good man is hard to find," Red Sammy said.
"Everything is getting terrible. I remember the day you could go off and leave your screen door unlatched. Not no more."

("A Good Man is Hard to Find")

"Nothing is like it used to be, lady," he said.
"The world is almost rotten."

("The Life You Save May Be Your Own")

She realized that nothing is perfect and that in the Freemans she had good country people and that if, in this day and age, you get good country people, you had better hang onto them.

("Good Country People")

Everyone agrees that the world is not what it used to be, but few really act as though they truly believe in the deterioration. People go on trusting appearances and following the old code, even when they feel that something terribly wrong is happening.

We must be cautious not to make this worsening of the world imply more than is intended. In the stories it represents only vaguely the analogue of the fall of mankind. The deterioration is rather that of a culture than of human nature; the old way of life, which embodied all the values of the past, is breaking up. Yet the external appearances of these values continue to exist, even when deprived of a supporting structure; and in the short stories they are all summed up by the key word, "good." Despite a superficial skepticism, the "good country people" in Flannery O'Connor's stories continue to believe that other people are good, even when they are faced directly with contradictory evidence. Evil things happen in the world, of course, but they happen to other people. "Good country people" live in a world which, if it is not exactly that of Arcadian shepherds, is still much more idealized than reality will ever permit.

The mind constructs its own pastoral world when it falls into this kind of complacency, but it is constantly in danger of being invaded by the sobering realities of an external world which has not been so shaped. In a Flannery O'Connor story it is this element of the unknown and uncontrollable that is constantly upsetting the order of the "good country people's" world. We may think of it as a principle of concrete reality which invades abstract illusion. Since the "good country people" exaggerate the ideal to such an extreme degree, this external element (the unexpected, the evil, or just the plain fact of morality) is likely to make its appearance under the form of something particularly grotesque.

The upsetting of the pastoral world of complacency is illustrated in a quiet fashion by the stories "A Stroke of Good Fortune" and "A Last Encounter With The Enemy." Ruby Hill, in the first story, is a country girl who has married a man from the city, who represents for her the power of salvation from the unsophisticated. She hopes to become even more sophisticated by moving from the city into the new suburban developments. It is obvious that she has left her family and hometown to cleave to her husband for selfish motives. Her brother, who in the war has seen action all over the world, still retains his old values from the country. She finds these values disagreeable yet somehow hopes that they may be ignored. At this point, however, a succession of obstacles from the external world begins to intrude on the world of illusion which Ruby has constructed around herself. Coming home to prepare dinner for her brother's arrival, she trips over a toy pistol that a neighbor's child had left on the staircase. On the landing, she notices that she is slightly dizzy, but she is distracted by Mr. Jerger, a retired schoolteacher who lectures her about the fountain of youth. We soon realize that what Ruby is most afraid of is pregnancy, because she believes that having children shortened her mother's life. She has trusted her husband, because he is from Florida, the land of youth, to be able to preserve her from old age and childbirth. Since he has failed to be the vehicle of escape she had expected, she has been forced to recognize, through her pregnancy, an uncontrollable and destructive principle outside her pastoral world. "It was as if it were not in her stomach. It was as if it were out nowhere in nothing, out nowhere, resting and waiting with plenty of time." Because she is a kind of solipsist who would ignore reality, the irony of the story becomes more pronounced as the signs of pregnancy become more definite. It is the very principle of life which is death to Ruby.

"A Late Encounter With The Enemy" is also a story of the recognition of mortality. Death, in fact, is the "enemy" of the title. General Sash, the central figure, is a hundred-and-four-year-old Civil War veteran who has outlived even history itself. "Living had got to be such a habit with him that he couldn't conceive of any other condition." For Sally Poker, his granddaughter, he is more an object than a person. Having General Sash on the stage while she receives her belated diploma is to be the highlight of her graduation. Like Ruby Hill, the General has long since rejected almost everyone but himself and cannot accept the idea of death. Despite his antiquity he has retained a characteristic appetite for pretty girls and parades.

Ironically, the past which he is supposed to represent, in which all his value lies, is for him a blank. History means the past; and the past means death, just as processions in somber black robes, as opposed to bright parades with plenty of girls, represent the march of mortality. He rejects death, the past, war, his family, and history until the last moment of his life, when all those things which he considered oppressive in his lifetime — wife, sons, and heritage — swarm upon him as he joins past and future into his rapidly failing present. Only in death does he achieve completeness; the old man dies on the stage and is rolled off back into the crowd without anyone's realizing it. That he is dead makes little difference, since he remains as much a museum piece as before.

Death is also the final solution for little Harry-Bevel of "The River." A child neglected at home by his dissipated parents, who send him out into the country with a baby-sitter, Harry attempts to find a world he can become a part of. He belongs neither in the city with his parents nor in the country. Yet it is not so much lack of love which drives the boy to his death as the sterility of attitude which surrounds him. At a communal baptizing ceremony in the country, Harry meets a new level of reality when he is about to be immersed by the preacher:

He had the sudden feeling that this was not a joke. Where he lived everything was a joke. From the preacher's face, he knew immediately that nothing the preacher said or did was a joke.

Harry desires to plunge deeper into reality, beyond the level of superficial irony which his parents impose on everything. After he is taken home, he finds his way back to the river in which the baptism had been performed and steps into the water:

He intended not to fool with preachers any more but to Baptize himself and to keep on going this time until he found the Kingdom of Christ in the river. He didn't mean to waste any more time. He put his head under the water at once and pushed forward.

In a second he began to gasp and sputter and his head reappeared on the surface; he started under again and the same thing happened. The river wouldn't have him. He tried again and came up, choking. This was the way it had been when the preacher held him under — he had had to fight with something that pushed him back in the face. He stopped and thought suddenly: it's another joke, it's just another joke!

When he has begun to believe that the river is going to reject him, that even the Kingdom of God is only a superficial jest, Harry-Bevel revolts. But only momentarily, because the river's undercurrent catches him and pulls him down, where he finds at last the only world which has meaning

for him, which will accept him. The two absolutely opposed ways of existence he has been caught between can be resolved only in death.

We may distinguish several character types in the stories of Flannery O'Connor. There is, first of all, the "good country person," for whom the pastoral world is still the real world. He is an optimist in a bad world, an idealist in an age where ideals are being rapidly destroyed. The opposing type to the idealist in a Flannery O'Connor story is not the realist but the skeptic. Despite his disbelief in the ideals of the past, the skeptic, like the "good country person," is highly rationalistic, imperceptive, and prejudiced. Whereas the "good country person" represents

We must be cautious not to make this worsening of the world imply all that was stable in a rural past and the skeptic all that is unstable in an urban present, there exists a third type who cannot be a part of either world. We may call him the "misfit," after the character of that name in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find." He is the product of irreconcilables: past against present, country against city. Each story has its own version of these three types; sometimes two of them are combined to make up one character and sometimes each type is exemplified in a separate character. But under whatever forms they appear, these typical personages are signal evidence of the symbolic tension around which each story is organized.

The characters in "The Artificial Nigger," for example, are both misfits and "good country people." Mr. Head, who is taking his grandson to the city for the first time, assumes that he is going to show the boy once and for all his superior intelligence of the world. Little Nelson learns his lesson well enough but with an unexpected turn. The grandfather himself has a lesson to learn, and when the city becomes too much for him he betrays his grandson in a cowardly fashion. Nelson's moral strength and ingenuity is actually much greater than Mr. Head's.

Nelson's ability to face the unknown bravely gives him the moral superiority he needs to forgive. Having once seen the city, the boy is intelligent enough to know that he does not belong in it. In the city, where his grandfather is as much a misfit as he is, the relationship between them is destroyed and they are made unfit for each other by a moral confusion. In order for Mr. Head to re-establish his dignity in the eyes of Nelson they must seek a symbol of their common alienation. The artificial nigger gives them this symbol because it stands for something which is foreign to both of them. Mr. Head regains moral stature by interpreting the symbol, for he represents that rational strain in the psyche which can raise the symbol to a level of explicit comprehension but which is helpless

in the face of direct experience. Nelson, whose approach to reality is direct and intuitive, falters before rationalistic encounter, and so at the end of the story when the two are returning on the train they both realize how indispensable they are to each other. In the country, where their relationship is permanent and unambiguous, there is no question of a crisis.

If the return trip means for Nelson a reintegration into his own element, it has an even deeper significance for Mr. Head. For the first time the grandfather has been brought face to face with the powers of destruction. By leaving the integrity of his rural world for the complexities of city life, he has learned to face a real hell. It is in his journey to the Styx and to the land of death that Mr. Head realizes the magnitude of divine mercy. The grace he recognizes at last has not only brought him and Nelson back together; it has reintegrated his own soul and brought him into a realization of his dependence upon God.

The little girl of "A Temple of the Holy Ghost" seems hardly to be a misfit, and perhaps she is so only because her age excludes her from certain sophistications and realities of life about her. On the other hand she sees more than anyone around her, and even at twelve she is more intelligent than any other character in the story. When two older girls arrive to stay at her home in the country, she sees how silly they are and how poorly they fit in the neighborhood. Her intelligence is pure; it cannot understand or accept the kind of compromise which makes Alonzo Myers of Mr. Cheatham necessary in the world. In her presumption the little girl resembles Mr. Head, but although she has a conviction of superiority, she recognizes that it is wrong:

She would have to be a saint because that was the occupation that included everything you could know; and yet she knew she would never be a saint. She did not steal or murder but she was a born liar and slothful and she sassed her mother and was deliberately ugly to almost everybody. She was eaten up also with the sin of Pride, the worst one.

Despite her conviction, the little girl is not capable of understanding the nature of the freak which the two girls and their escorts see at the fair. In her naivete she fails to recognize the prurient aspect of the presentation. Nevertheless, she succeeds in outwitting the other two girls into telling her about it.

Her pride, then, is redeemable because it has a real basis. Her intuition is capable of going far deeper into the significance of the freak than the

intelligence of others who encounter him. For the little girl he is an example of divine providence; in a dream she hears the freak admonish her.

"God done this to me and I praise Him."

"Amen. Amen."

"He could strike you thisaway."

"Amen. Amen."

"But He has not."

"Amen."

"Raise yourself up. A temple of the Holy Ghost. You!

You are God's temple, don't you know? Don't you know?

God's Spirit has a dwelling in you, don't you know?"

"Amen. Amen."

"If anybody desecrates the temple of God, God will bring him to ruin and if you laugh, He may strike you thisaway."

"Amen."

After the two visitors return to the convent school, the little girl stays for benediction, and as she attempts to pray, her mind wanders. In place of the host in the monstrance she sees the scolding hermaphrodite.

Like Mr. Head, again, she succeeds in realizing the greatness of God's mercy. She fuses the grotesque freak with the idea of the body as a sacred temple, and by doing so she comes to see that even the stupid, inferior people around her are somehow sacred. She realizes at the same time how fortunate she is if she really is better than they and that her reaction should be one of thankfulness rather than of disdain. Instead of laughing at the bestial figure of Alonzo as they drive back home, she quite objectively notices his resemblance to a pig and is silent.

The freak is a center of associations for her. Early in the story she meditates on the Roman martyrs, and at the end she draws all of her thoughts about sainthood and martyrdom into a contemplation of the freak. She sees him as a kind of saint, at least insofar as he is able to accept the will of God without complaining. She sees the sun as a bloody host sinking beneath the trees, and the imagery coalesces into an association of Christ—martyrs—freak—Alonzo. Christ himself, she begins to reason, was the greatest of martyrs and the greatest of freaks. He accepted the divine will when He had more reason to disdain and reject his inferiors than anyone ever had or would have. Christ, she understands at last, was the greatest misfit of all, and in his death he made all men capable of being perfect. The grotesque image of the freak brings the little girl to greater aspirations and more patient understanding both of God and of those around her.

Although many have accused Flannery O'Connor of being wilfully nihilistic and revelling in distortion for its own sake, Miss O'Connor's stories actually show a vision which goes beyond that of her good country people, misfits, and skeptics.

The perspective which establishes this distance between an integral vision and a disintegrating world is made clear even on the level of language. Frequently a Flannery O'Connor character, optimist or pessimist, speaks in platitudes and clichés; many of the story titles are, in fact, nothing more than that. Commonplace expressions move around like counters in the mind of a logic-dominated O'Connor character. Those whose minds are flexible enough to think in imaginative terms transform the clichés into meaningful experiences. Thus each of the titles exists on two levels; the superficial meaning belies a deeper experience which both exemplifies and contradicts the platitude.

This double perspective in language is also demonstrated by the names of various persons, and this minor theme of name-changing which runs through many of the stories is important because it is part of the overall typology. A name-changer, because he has no permanent identification with his surroundings, is also a misfit, for a person without a name to represent what he is is a person without a place in the world.

Mrs. Hopewell and Mrs. Freeman are both "good country people," and their places in the pastoral world they occupy are secure. Mrs. Hopewell has hired the Freemans because they are "good country people" and though the wife is not without faults, she determines to press even those into useful service:

Since she [Mrs. Freeman] was the type who had to be into everything, then, Mrs. Hopewell had decided, she would not only let her be into everything, she would *see to it* that she was into everything—she would give her the responsibility of everything, she would put her in charge. Mrs. Hopewell had no bad qualities of her own but she was able to use other people's in such a constructive way that she never felt the lack.

In short, Mrs. Hopewell does not really believe in or understand evil. She believes in imperfection on a verbal level, but the pure face of malice she cannot handle:

Nothing is perfect. This was one of Mrs. Hopewell's favorite sayings. Another was: that is life! And still another, the most important, was: well, other people have their opinions too. She would make these statements, usually at the table, in a tone of gentle insistence as if no one held them but her . . .

Though Joy Hopewell is in constant opposition to her mother, she is more like her than anyone else. Both are rationalists with little experience of true evil. Joy is skeptical, but she disbelieves only in her mother's healthy world of benevolence and sunshine. She is physically disabled and proudly thinks that her existence disproves the best of all possible worlds that her mother lives in. But actually Joy's godless world rests on the same foundations as her mother's, and she is simply the negative of all her mother's positive healthy exuberance.

If we take Joy and her mother as a pair of opposites who stay within the same basic personalities then the Bible salesman and Mrs. Freeman constitute a second pair. Mrs. Freeman not only knows about evil; she is fascinated by it. While Joy and Mrs. Hopewell are horrified by Nothing, she and the Bible salesman, Pointer, gaze into it with rapt attention:

Mrs. Freeman had a special fondness for the details of secret infections, hidden deformities, assaults upon children. Of diseases, she preferred the lingering or incurable.

Mrs. Freeman and Pointer are both fascinated by Joy's leg and the connection between them is confirmed in the last sentence of the story after he has stolen the leg and duped Mrs. Freeman, who is lacerated by the evil he can accomplish:

"Why that looks like that nice dull young man that tried to sell ma a Bible yesterday," Mrs. Hopewell said, squinting. "He must have been selling them to the Negroes back in there. He was so simple," she said, "but I guess the world would be better off if we were all that simple."

Mrs. Freeman's gaze drove forward and just touched him before he disappeared under the hill. Then she returned her attention to the evil-smelling onion shoot she was lifting from the ground. "Some can't be that simple," she said, "I know I never could."

Just as Mrs. Hopewell is able to get around Mrs. Freeman by giving her an overdose of her own curiosity, so Pointer triumphs over Hulga by showing her the nasty, disgusting side of evil. In the face of real immorality, the facile philosophical evil which Joy believes in fades into insignificance.

We may see, in addition, that each character shares something of the personality of the other. Joy and Pointer seem to have their isolation in common. Both are misfits: Joy isolated intellectually from her surroundings, and Pointer a nameless and placeless hypocrite and thief. Mrs. Freeman and Mrs. Hopewell have their platitudes in common. Each of the characters illuminates the others, but it is Mrs. Freeman and Pointer

who triumph in the end. Joy speaks her own best lesson when she says to her mother:

"Woman! do you ever look inside? Do you ever look inside and see what you are *not*? God!" she had cried sinking down and again and staring at her plate, "Malebranche was right: we are not our own light: We are not our own light!"

A related story is "The Life You Save May Be Your Own." Again there are two misfits, Mr. Shiftlet, the wandering tramp, and Lucynell Crater, the idiot girl. Mrs. Crater, like Mrs. Hopewell, is a good country person. What is different about Tom Shiftlet is that he has a "moral intelligence" which forces him to renounce analytical knowledge for direct experience. His character is summed up rather neatly on the first page: "He seemed to be a young man but he had a look of composed dissatisfaction as if he understood life thoroughly." Such a look characterizes all of Flannery O'Connor's wicked misfits. Furthermore, Tom Shiftlet has the same fascination with altering names that characterizes others of his type:

"I can tell you my name is Tom T. Shiftlet and I come from Tarwater, Tennessee, but you never have seen me before: how you know I ain't lying? How you know my name ain't Aaron Sparks, lady, and I come from Singleberry, Georgia, or how you know it's not George Speeds and I come from Lucy, Alabama, or how you know I ain't Thompson Bright from Toolafalls, Mississippi?"

Shiftlet is often referred to as if he were a bird (it is the first word he teaches Lucynell), and his own idea is that the spirit is "like an automobile: always on the move, always..." When he first becomes acquainted with Mrs. Crater he is attracted by her rusting old car, and he stays on and marries her idiot daughter just to get possession of it. Tom is like Hazel Motes in *Wise Blood*; he realizes that the automobile is a perfect instrument for the misfit. Not only can one get away from an undesirable place rapidly with a car; it also may serve as lodging. He sleeps in his automobile with the same dedication that "the monks of old slept in their coffins."

"Moral intelligence" is the right word for Mr. Shiftlet because he has no moral sense; his morals consist of platitudinous statements and his conscience is limited to a slight depression of feelings. He is not shocked by the actions, of himself or others, but by words; we know that he will speak of his defection of Lucynell in the same way that he speaks of leaving his mother. His combination of egoism and idealism places him far beyond the confines of human morality. "It's the law that don't satisfy me," he pronounces after being married to Lucynell. The

irony of the story is like the clichéd irony of its title, "The Life You Save May Be Your Own." Mr. Shiftlet's spirit compels him forward in a never-ending attempt to escape Evil. He himself, in his sentimental wickedness, is like a demon, and he wanders the earth seeking to exorcise the world in favor of his manichean soul.

The title of the story contains the definitive version of the evil misfit. The person who fills this role in "A Good Man Is Hard To Find" is a gentleman of sorts and something of an intellectual. The old lady, the "good country person," is as much out of place as The Misfit. She causes Baily to turn the car over, and she is eventually responsible for the death of the entire family. She and Red Sam exchange a series of platitudes about the deterioration of the world, but when the time comes to stand up to him, the grandmother has a failure of nerve:

"You wouldn't shoot a lady, would you?" the grandmother said and removed a clean handkerchief from her cuff and began to slap at her eyes with it.

A real lady would not ask such a question, and the fatuousness of the old woman becomes even more painful when she tries to convince herself that superficial appearances can still be trusted:

"Listen," the grandmother almost screamed, "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!"

But The Misfit insists that he is not a good man, though he is not "the worst in the world neither." In his description of his occupation we can almost hear Tom Shiftlet talking. In fact each mentions being a gospel singer before naming any other professions; each has seen a great deal of violence and evil in the world.

The Misfit turns out to be a cruel parody of the modern intellectual:

"If you would pray," the old lady said, "Jesus would help you."

"That's right," The Misfit said.

"Well then, why don't you pray?" she asked trembling with delight suddenly.

"I don't want no hep," he said. "I'm doing all right by myself."

After he and the grandmother are left alone the contrasts are pulled into a sharper perspective. Both reveal their true selves in the last minutes of this fatal interview:

Finally she found herself saying, "Jesus, Jesus," meaning Jesus will help you, but the way she was saying it, it sounded as if she might be cursing.

The grandmother's failure of nerve, her invocation of anything which she thinks will save her—money, Jesus, or good breeding—shows that for all her talk she really has no convictions. It makes no difference

whether she is praying or cursing because her thoughts are completely ego-centered. The Misfit, whose logic is as erratic and as indefensible as the old lady's, hardly cares what she says because he too is wrapped up within his own ego:

"Yes'm," The Misfit said as if he agreed. "Jesus thrown everything off balance. It was the same case with Him as with me except He hadn't committed any crime and they could prove I had committed one because they had the papers on me I call myself The Misfit," he said, "because I can't make what all I done wrong fit what all I gone through in punishment."

As The Misfit continues to talk the crazed grandmother begins to speak words which more and more reveal her character to be the very opposite of that which she had presented to the world all her life.

"Jesus was the only One that ever raised the dead," The Misfit continued, "and He shouldn't have done it. He thrown everything off balance. If He did what he said, then it's nothing for you to do but throw away everything and follow Him, and if He didn't, then it's nothing for you to do but enjoy the few minutes you got left the best way you can — by killing somebody or burning down his house or doing some other meanness to him. No pleasure but meanness," he said and his voice had become almost a snarl.

"Maybe He didn't raise the dead," the old lady mumbled, not knowing what she was saying and feeling so dizzy that she sank down in the ditch with her legs twisted under her.

"I wasn't there so I can't say He didn't," The Misfit said. "I wisht I had been there," he said, hitting the ground with his fist. "It ain't right I wasn't there because if I had of been there I would of known. Listen lady," he said in a high voice, "if I had of been there I would of known and I wouldn't be like I am now."

The Misfit has learned a lesson which is the exact opposite of that learned by Mr. Head in "The Artificial Nigger," where the latter felt the disproportion between crime and punishment. The only answer to this disproportion is the doctrine of Salvation on the cross, and if Jesus is rejected by the modern world, all that remains is to get as much pleasure as one can, since death and punishment are inevitable anyway. The Misfit, a caricature of the modern agnostic position, upon being confronted with the moral hypocrisy of the grandmother, cannot bear being reminded of the resemblances in their respective positions:

His voice seemed about to crack and the grandmother's head cleared for an instant. She saw the man's face twisted close to her own as if he were going to cry and she murmured, "Why you're one of my babies. You're one of my own children!"

This truth is too much for The Misfit; he shoots her three times through the chest. The Misfits are indeed the children of the faithless generation

which preceded them and insisted on upholding values which no longer had any meaning for them. If this moral hypocrisy had yielded to the truth, if the older generation had been forced to face reality honestly, as the grandmother has, the misfits would not have had the burden on their shoulders:

"She would of been a good woman," The Misfit said, "if it had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life."

"Some fun!" Bobby Lee said.

"Shut up, Bobby Lee," The Misfit said. "It's no real pleasure in life."

The fourth in this series of evil misfits, Powell, in "A Circle in the Fire," is like a youthful edition of The Misfit. Even his silver-rim glasses recall the description of the older man. Mrs. Cope and Mrs. Pritchard, the former always hopeful and grateful to God and the latter obsessed with morbid diseases, recall Mrs. Hopewell and Mrs. Freeman in "Good Country People." The little girl Sally Virginia is about the same age as the little girl in "A Temple of the Holy Ghost." This recurrence of types is not carelessness on the part of Miss O'Connor, but provides multiple links which reinforce the common themes of the stories.

Mrs. Cope's farm is paradise for Powell, occupying the same position in his thought that Jesus occupies in the mind of The Misfit. The three boys, like the three murdered in "A Good Man Is Hard To Find," decide that if they cannot have paradise they can own hell, and they proceed to set the woods on fire to accomplish it. Mrs. Cope, for the first time, is faced with an evil with which she cannot cope; and, like all other "good country people," she is affected severely:

The child came to a stop beside her mother and stared up at her face as if she had never seen it before. It was the face of the new misery she felt, but on her it looked old and it looked as if it might have belonged to anybody, a Negro or a European or to Powell himself.

The myth of the person who does not belong is the theme of every story in *A Good Man is Hard To Find*. The Misfit is not only unacceptable to society at large; society is not prepared to receive him. Thus he is not always an evil person.

This is illustrated in the last story of the collection, "The Displaced Person." Again there is the duo of the woman farmer and her tenant's wife, between whom there is a conflict of values. The Displaced Person himself, a Polish immigrant, is not a misfit because he cannot accept virtue; he is out of place precisely because he is almost perfect. Yet perfect people remain a bit shadowy always, and Mr. Guizac is no ex-

ception. He is nothing more than an idea, a force to the persons around him. He is the kind of Christ figure who is crucified, finally, by a tractor. Mrs. McIntyre tells us that as far as she is concerned, Christ was just another Displaced Person, and in a scene slightly reminiscent of that between the grandmother and the misfit, Mrs. McIntyre and the priest speak at cross purposes:

The old man didn't seem to hear her. His attention was fixed on the cock who was taking minute steps backward, his head against the spread tail. "The Transfiguration," he murmured.

She had no idea what he was talking about. "Mr. Guizac didn't have to come here in the first place," she said, giving him a hard look.

The cock lowered his tail and began to pick grass.

"He didn't have to come here in the first place," she repeated, emphasizing each word.

The old man smiled absently. "He came to redeem us," he said and blandly reached for her hand and shook it and said he must go.

The peacock, which opens the story, has another symbolic value besides representing the Transfiguration. It is traditional symbol of pride, and in this story the bird represents the last real token of the old Judge, Mrs. McIntyre's first husband, who was responsible for phrases like "One fellow's misery is the other fellow's gain," and "The devil you know is better than the devil you don't."

The Judge was right, of course, and if his sayings had been followed seriously the operation of the farm might have continued. Mr. Guizac's misery, the humility of his situation, is all to Mrs. McIntyre's gain, though she fails to recognize this, even after it is too late. The "devil you don't know" is always some form of pride. Mrs. Shortley's apocalyptic visions all relate to what she thinks is the devil, but what destroys her is not the Displaced Person but her own insufferable pride. The same blindness finally takes hold of Mrs. McIntyre. She thinks that Mr. Guizac ought to be grateful and she fails to reflect that it is she who should be thankful for such a godsend as the Polish family.

The Displaced Person eventually succeeds, through no fault of his own, in displacing everyone else. Mrs. McIntyre's practicality leads her to reversal of values, and her entire existence is based upon her ego. Her constant complaint is that there are too many extra people in the world, and when she has to explain what is responsible for this superfluity, she tries to blame it on the egoism of others:

"How come they so many extra?" he asked.

"People are selfish," she said. "They have too many children. There's no sense in it any more."

The old Negro Mrs. McIntyre is talking with understands exactly what is wrong with her; in response, he quotes the Judge on the unknown devil, only to have her rebuke him in practical terms. "The Judge has long since ceased to pay the bills around here."

Mrs. McIntyre, with her limited view of reality, cannot see beyond her own selfishness into the problems of others, and when the one incident does occur which changes her life forever, she no longer feels that she is in control of the facts around her. After Mr. Guizac has been crushed to death by the tractor, she returns to find the priest giving extreme unction to the dying man:

She only stared at him for she was too shocked by her experience to be quite herself. Her mind was not taking hold of all that was happening. She felt she was in some foreign country where the people bent over the body natives, and she watched like a stranger while the dead man was carried away in the ambulance.

She has been conquered by her own pride, and the triumph of the peacock and the priest in the end is perhaps also the triumph of the Christ who brought a sword and not peace into the world. Mr. Guizac's loss of life has been her gain; we know that she is eventually going to find salvation.

There is much to be explored in the short fiction of Flannery O'Connor; her finesse, her craftsmanship, her style, all these are worthy of the closest attention. Still, we fail to see her distinction and her achievement among her contemporaries if we do not recognize the mythico-typical aspect of her fictional world. Miss O'Connor has not left us a great deal, but what she did write has substance and profundity. It is a tribute to her depth as an artist that she revived some of the oldest types and situations and gave them new expression and new flesh. When we look back for insights into the real world which we shared with her, we shall find that Flannery O'Connor has delved very deeply indeed into its structure.

Wise Blood: *Hope In The City Of The Profane*

Yet dearly I love You, and would be loved fain,
But am betrothed unto Your enemy.

John Donne, Holy Sonnets 14

Two quotations provide at once a focus and an easy entrance into the world of Flannery O'Connor's profoundly religious imagination. Robert Fitzgerald, writing in the *Sewanee Review* for the summer issue of 1962, says of Miss O'Connor's fiction:

. . . the displacement of persons, or, better, of the human person displaced . . . has been Flannery O'Connor's essential subject She sees the South as populated by displaced persons, . . . But it is not a sectional or regional condition; it is a religious condition, common to North and South alike, common indeed to the world we live in . . . The stories not only imply, they as good as state again and again, that estrangement from Christian plenitude is estrangement from the true country of man.

The second statement was made by the author herself:

I don't think you should write something as long as a novel around anything that is not of the gravest concern to you and everybody else, and for me this is always the conflict between an attraction for the Holy and the disbelief in it that we breathe in with the air of the times.

It is this conflict concerning the Holy that is at the center of *Wise Blood*. In this novel the secular and the Holy do battle over the soul of its protagonist whose fate is enveloped and given crucial context by the larger struggle between a city enthralled by Satan, and the Lord it has rejected. The novel is really two separate stories which are held in thematic unity by means of this common center of tension.

One of the stories depicts the flight of Hazel Motes from Jesus and ends with his return to Grace; the other is the story of Enoch Emery, the misfit—it ends as it began.

The progress of Hazel Motes is marked clearly by his own words: "I AM clean," he says to a waitress in a diner; "I AM clean," he says to an owl in the city zoo; "I'm not clean," he replies to his landlady when she asks him why he has bound his chest with barbed wire. For Enoch Emery, however, there is no progress at all. The end of his tale shows him as he was in the beginning—still looking for someone to shake his hand. Yet dissimilar as these two narratives are, they reinforce, and together constitute, the peculiar "world" of the novel.

Flannery O'Connor's novels are somewhat shorter in length than most

modern novels but they are richer than most in texture. She is the kind of writer whom Percy Lubbock has called, after the distinction he makes in his *The Craft of Fiction*, a "scenic" writer—one who depends on dramatic scenes rather than panoramic "pictorial" effects to develop his story. Individual words always must do more work for the scenic than for the pictorial writer because the scenic novelist does not have habitually take the reader away from the strategic window where he views the action of the narrative. But Miss O'Connor's language is much more opaque even than that of other scenic writers. Hers is a dense, finely woven matrix of connotations that operates on several levels; its density seems often as complex as the language of a poem. One can see this complexity at work in almost any scene.

In the pivotal scene of *Wise Blood*, for instance, it is apparent that the language itself functions as part of the action. A close scrutiny of this action will provide some insight into the novelist's craft and at the same time provides a focal point for illuminating the conflict of the protagonist.

Hazel Motes has been in Taulkinham two days. He has shared "the friendliest bed in town" with Mrs. Leora Watts, whose name he found in the men's room of the train terminal, and has just that morning bought himself an Essex automobile, second-hand. He has met a country preacher, Asa Hawks, who pretends blindness in order to beg, and his fifteen-year-old daughter, Sabbath Lily, whom Hazel later decides to seduce. He has also encountered Enoch Emery, who guards a gate at the City Zoo and whose "wise blood" has told him that morning that the person to whom he could show his "mystery" is coming that day. In the afternoon Hazel drives to the zoo to get Asa Hawks' address from Enoch Emery. From some bushes beside a public pool, Enoch has been covertly observing a woman who now gets out of the pool, sits in front of Hazel with her straps down, and grins up at him. Enoch joins Hazel and tells him that he will give him the address as soon as he takes Hazel to see the "mystery" that is in "the center of the park"—"the heart of the city." Before they go there, however, they must follow certain ritual practices that Enoch observes by the way of prologue to his daily visits to the shrine of mystery. They must proceed first to the "FROSTY BOTTLE" hot-dog stand—Enoch never undertakes anything extraordinary without first fortifying himself with a "chocolate malted milk-shake"—and then must tour the zoo in order to curse the animals. At the "FROSTY BOTTLE" a waitress named Maude, who "drank whiskey all day from a fruit jar under the counter," praises Hazel because he looks like a "clean" boy and asks him why he wants to fool with "a son

of a bitch" like Enoch Emery. Hazel startles the waitress by shouting twice into her face, "I AM clean." Afterwards, in the zoo he says to an owl, "I AM clean." The two young men notice that the woman from the swimming pool with her two little boys is following them. Enoch rushes Hazel to the place where his "mystery" is—the "MVSEVM." In the epiphany that follows, Miss O'Connor unveils the sources of turmoil that struggle for dominance in the soul of Hazel Motes:

The two of them stood there, Enoch rigid and Hazel Motes bent slightly forward. There were three bowls and a row of blunt weapons and a man in the case. It was the man Enoch was looking at. He was about three feet long. He was naked and a dried yellow color and his eyes were drawn almost shut as if a giant block of steel were falling down on top of him . . . All he [Enoch] could tell was that Hazel Motes's eyes were on the shrunken man. He was bent forward so that his face was reflected on the glass top of the case. The reflection was pale and the eyes were like two clean bullet holes . . . The woman with the two little boys came in the door. She had one by each hand, and she was grinning. Hazel Motes had not raised his eyes from the shrunken man. The woman came toward them. She stopped on the other side of the case and looked down into it and the reflection of her face appeared grinning on the glass, over Hazel Motes . . . When Hazel saw her face on the glass, his neck jerked back and he made a noise. It might have come from the man inside the case. In a second Enoch knew that it had. "Wait," he screamed, and tore out of the room after Hazel Motes.

Two images stand out dramatically in this scene: the shrunken body and the grinning face of the woman from the swimming pool reflected alongside Hazel's in the glass. The connotations of these images are dark mirrors reflecting the powerful forces in Hazel's tortured mind which have impelled him in his flight from Jesus. The images have extension into Hazel's life prior to this scene and continue throughout the novel to reappear at crucial moments.

No less than five coffins appear in the first twenty-five pages of *Wise Blood*. Hazel has seen his father, his mother, his two brothers, his grandfather—a circuit preacher who "had ridden over three counties with Jesus hidden in his head like a stinger"—has seen all of them lowered into their graves where they "didn't make a move." Hazel remembers these deaths on his ride to Taulkinham in a Pullman berth which seems to him also like a coffin. He awakes from a dream of his mother's death shouting "Jesus, Jesus," and calls for the porter to let him out; but the porter only says "Jesus has been a long time gone."

Hazel sees therefore in the glass case in the "MVSEVM" not merely the shrunken corpse of an unknown Arab but the bodies of his entire

family and, by extension, he sees in his face reflected over them the presage of his own death. Yet there is another image superimposed on that of the shriveled man, one that is still more terrible for Hazel Motes: he sees in the glass beside his own, and grinning up at him from the depths of the "coffin" the face of Woman—the face which has become for Hazel the dread visage of sin. To understand the full import of this image one must, as in the previous case, retrace its occurrence throughout the narrative. The most significant event of Hazel's childhood occurred when he was ten years old. The author relates it, as a flashback, while Hazel is for the second night in the friendly bed of Mrs. Leora Watts. His father had taken him to a carnival in a nearby town where there was a tent which advertised a "SINsational" and "EXclusive" show. Mr. Motes had sent his son to see the monkeys and then had ducked inside the tent, but Hazel had come back and conned the barker into letting him in. Inside the tent he saw a naked woman grinning and squirming in a box lined with black cloth. From the rear of the crowd he heard his father comment: "Had one of them ther built into ever' casket, be a heap ready to go sooner." When Hazel had gotten home he was confronted by his mother, who made him painfully aware of the "nameless unplaced guilt" that was in him. The next day he had put rocks in his shoes and and had walked in them for a mile and a half to repent for his sin.

It is the face he had seen in the "Coffin" at the local carnival, the face of Mrs. Leora Watts, whom he has had in lust for two nights, the face of Sabbath Hawks whom he intends to seduce, the actual face of the leering woman from the swimming pool, and the symbolic face of sin in his soul that Hazel sees in the glass beside his own.

Through scenes such as this one Miss O'Connor achieves the power and compactness which marks her novels. Almost every word is freighted with several levels of meaning, and the connotations that accrue to the images employed in such scenes are, in a special sense, "agonic," that is, the images not only operate vertically to give different levels of meaning; they also work horizontally by making elaborate liasons with prior actions and by building an intricate dramatic context for the action that follows. The scene at the Taulkingham Zoo dramatizes the conflict that tortures Hazel Motes; it is more difficult to understand the source of this conflict.

Hazel once heard his grandfather preach a sermon in Eastrod, Tennessee. The old man had pointed to his grandson in the crowd and had said that the boy was redeemed and that Jesus would never leave him: "What did the sinner think there was to be gained?" the preacher had shouted from his pulpit on the nose of a Ford automobile, "Jesus would have him

in the end." Hazel had thought of Jesus as "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." He became convinced that "the way to avoid Jesus was to avoid sin." He would be a preacher like his grandfather.

But Hazel Motes is drafted into the army during the Second World War, and when he returns to Eastrod, he has been halfway around the world and has left his soul and Jesus, so he tells himself, somewhere in the sands of North Africa. He is still determined to be a preacher, but the church he will hawk from the nose of his "high, rat-colored" Essex is the "church without Christ" whose sole teaching is that the way to truth is through blasphemy and whose only truth is "that there is no truth."

Once he has been displaced from the close-knit agrarian community that has nurtured his religious beliefs, Hazel's faith appears to be rootless. It seems to wither like the seed which falls on stony ground when it is no longer supported by the vital traditionalism provided by his family. Yet Hazel's attempt to reject Jesus is too frantic to be successful, and though he claims to have left Christ somewhere in the Sahara, he finds Him in a place still less congenial to the Christian: he returns to Jesus in Taulkinham, Tennessee.

On a symbolic level Miss O'Connor uses Hazel's eyes to create a powerful, insistent correlative for this drama of this flight from grace, and it is on the same image that she focuses at the end of the book to show that grace has caught him. *Wise Blood* begins and ends with a scene in which the author renders the visions of two middle-aged women as they look into the eyes of Hazel Motes. In the first of these scenes as the novel begins, Mrs. Wally Bee Hitchcock is facing the protagonist in a section of a passenger car on the train to Taulkinham. She wants to see what Hazel's suit has cost him—for the price tag is still stapled on the sleeve of his "glare-blue" coat—but she finds herself instead squinting into his eyes: "They were the color of pecan shells, and set in deep sockets . . . their settings were so deep that they seemed to her, almost like passages leading somewhere and she leaned half-way across the space that separated the two seats, trying to see into them." We are not told what Mrs. Hitchcock saw in those "passages." But later, in the "MVSEVM" scene, Hazel's eyes are said to appear to Enoch Emery like "two clean bullet holes."

Hazel Motes is spiritually blind and his eyes reflect the void in his soul. By the end of the novel, however, he has acquired vision by successive

recognitions of the counterfeit in the world of Taulkinham and finally, in himself. He discovers that Asa Hawks is neither blind nor a true believer in the Christ he preaches; he discovers that Sabbath Hawks, whom he intends to seduce as a confirmation of his disbelief, is already corrupted beyond any possibility of further dissolution—she, in fact, seduces *him*—and, after encountering Hoover Shoats, a mercenary promoter who wants to cash in on the profit potential of the Prophet of the “new Jesus,” Hazel is shocked into the realization that even his new church of disbelief can be perverted and exploited in the same way that Asa Hawks exploits Jesus.

In order for Hazel Motes to recognize the falsity in himself, Miss O'Connor introduces into the story a typical feature in the tradition of the grotesque. Hazel's “double” appears in the person of Solace Layfield, a consumptive derelict whom Shoats has contrived to make in the image of the Prophet of the Church Without Christ. Layfield has the same gaunt features, wears the same fierce, crushed hat and “glare-blue” suit, drives the same “high, rat-colored” Essex, and from its hood in front of theatres preaches the same “Church” as Hazel. Yet the “hired Prophet” is somewhat more successful than the “true” one who teaches that “It don't cost you any money to know the truth,” for Shoats and his cohort gather enough converts to realize on their second night out a profit of fifteen dollars and thirty-five cents. The ironic implication is, of course, that the people of Taulkinham, if not given a lie, will buy one.

The process of infinite fragmentation which must be the plague of those who hold that the only truth is that there is no truth, a process which Dostoevsky shows with all the terrors of its implications in the grotesque vision of Raskolnikov in Siberia, has begun its inevitable course. Hazel's reaction to the fragmentation is the same as Dostoevsky foresaw for the relativists in Raskolnikov's dream: “If you don't hunt it down and kill it,” Hazel says, “it'll hunt you down and kill you.” When he catches his double on a lonely road outside of town, the first thing Hazel does is ram Layfield's car into a ditch. He asks the hired Prophet “What you keep a thing like that on the road for?” Layfield might very well have returned the question, since his car was the twin of Hazel's. The true Prophet next makes the pretender take off all his clothes for he feels he must destroy all the forged appurtenances that contribute to this parody of himself. He then runs him down with the Essex, but before the man dies Hazel overhears Layfield confess his sins and pray to Jesus for help. The counterfeit Prophet has a reality he can hold to at the

moment of death which the true Prophet of the Church Without Christ cannot offer to his communicants or participate in himself.

A change begins to take place in Hazel's soul after his crime. He decides to leave Taulkinham and carry his new gospel to another town. He does not yet see that the teaching he is carrying with him is as false as the city he is leaving behind but he seems to feel it, for while he is getting his car checked he preaches to the attendant:

He said it was not right to believe anything you couldn't see or hold in your hands or test with your teeth. He said he had only a few days ago believed in blasphemy as the way to salvation, but that you couldn't even believe in that because then you were believing in something to blaspheme.

But his actions belie his words: "He began to curse and blaspheme Jesus in a quiet, intense way but with such conviction that the boy paused from his work to listen."

The decisive moment in this progress towards self-realization occurs when a highway patrolman stops Hazel three miles outside the city and having made him get out of the Essex, pushes it over a high embankment because he considers it a safety hazard. The car had been for Hazel Motes the assurance of his modernity and the main bulwark for his conviction of self-sufficiency. It was the first thing he had bought when he came to the city because he wanted to repudiate his rural heritage by acquiring the mobility the machine would provide: "I knew when I first saw it that it was the car for me," Hazel says, "and since I've had it, I've had a place to be that I can always get way in." Only a short time before the car met with destruction he had told the boy at the service station: "Nobody with a good car needed to worry about anything." In a grotesque and hilarious distortion of the biblical parallel the noisy destruction of the "rat-colored machine" affects the mind of the secular Prophet in the same way that the whisper of Yahweh in the desert moved the soul of Elias. Like Elias, Hazel returns to the city with a new mission and a transformed spirit. He confirms his vision of faith by blinding himself with lime. But Hazel's new mission is not that of a preacher in the ordinary sense. Now that he is no longer spiritually blind, he returns to Taulkinham in order to testify by his life to the truth he has found: he becomes a glimmer of light in the dark city.

In the concluding paragraphs of the novel another middle-aged woman, Mrs. Flood, looks into the eyes of Hazel Motes and in her mind the epiphany takes place which embodies the ultimate resolution of Hazel's conflict and gives the final meaning to his story.

Mrs. Flood is a typical citizen of Taulkinham who thinks the ways of her tenant, Mr. Motes, a bit outlandish at best and more likely downright "abnormal," the most damning word in her vocabulary. She enjoys sitting with Hazel on the front porch of her roominghouse because she needs someone she can talk to. But it worries the landlady that her boarder rarely answers her questions. It worries her that he puts rocks in his shoes, and wraps his chest with barbed wire. When she questions him about it, he only replies, "I'm not clean." It worries her that he throws part of his monthly welfare check in the wastebasket; it worries Mrs. Flood that Mr. Motes does not want to marry her; but most of all it worries the landlady that she often "Finds herself leaning forward, staring into his face as if she expected to see something she hadn't seen before." Mrs. Flood suspects that she is in some way being cheated: "She didn't like the thought that something was being put over her head. She liked the clear light of day. She liked to see things." Yet Mr. Motes tells her that he hopes the dead are blind because "If there's no bottom in your eyes, they hold more."

Mrs. Flood is shown pondering what it is like inside the mind of Mr. Motes. It seems to her as if the whole black world is inside his head. "How would he know," she wonders, "if time was going backwards or forwards or if he was going with it? She imagined it was like you were walking in a tunnel and all you could see was a pin point of light; she couldn't think of it all without that. She saw it as some kind of star, like the star on Christmas cards. She saw him going backwards to Bethlehem and she had to laugh."

When the landlady presses Hazel one morning on the subject of marriage, he leaves the house abruptly and goes out in the winter rain. Two rookie policemen find him the next day lying half dead from exposure in a drainage ditch, and one of them dispatches him neatly with a single tap of his new billy-club. They bring him home to Mrs. Flood who looks for the last time into the scorched sockets that were his eyes and experiences a strange transfiguration:

She leaned closer and closer into his face, trying to see how she had been cheated or what had cheated her, but she couldn't see anything. She shut her eyes and saw the pin point of light but so far away that she could not hold it steady in her mind. She felt as if she were blocked at the entrance of something. She sat staring with her eyes shut, into his eyes, and felt as if she had finally got to the beginning of something she couldn't begin, and she saw him moving farther and farther away, farther and farther into the darkness until he was the pin point of life.

Mrs. Flood, the perfect disciple for the former prophet of the "Church Without Christ," has experienced, however mutely, the action of grace, and has seen in the blank "passages" of the dead man's eyes a faint glimmer of the promise of salvation.

The movement of *Wise Blood* affirms the triumph of the "wild ragged figure" over the fugitive, for Hazel Motes' act of self-immolation in blinding himself after his crime is followed by repentance and a new life for him in which he gives up the light of the city and moves "off into the dark" of a humble faith. He is clearly one of the Elect, and though he tries to repudiate it, the burden of Christ's calling remains with him. By the end of the novel when he is able to say, "I'm not clean," he has accepted the awful yoke of the Saviour's love and the uncertainty of having to follow His way.

Hazel Motes, the Prophet, had another disciple in Enoch Emery, the protagonist of another story in *Wise Blood*. Enoch's father was an ex-convict who had once given his son, upon his return from prison, a tricked-up box of peanut brittle which contained a coiled steel spring that had leaped out and broken off the ends of Enoch's two front teeth. In spite of this experience, which is about all we are told of Enoch's early life, the boy persists in having an obsession for gadgets and machines. He first meets Hazel Motes in a crowd which has assembled to watch a huckster sell automatic potato peelers on a Taulkinham street corner; he wants to buy one even though he never eats at home and could not have any use for it. But Enoch did learn from his father always to follow his "wise blood" which tells him what he must do without his needing to think about it. This blood insists that he must follow Hazel Motes, though Hazel, for his part, wants nothing to do with Enoch and injures him physically on two occasions. Enoch is knocked unconscious by the prophet after they leave the museum, but when he comes to he realizes "that whatever was expected of him was only just bginning." To ingratiate himself with the Prophet, he steals the shrunken mummy from the glass case in the park museum and gives it to Hazel who had told him he was looking for "a new jesus." Enoch proposes that the mummy be the "new jesus" but Hazel, who deals only in abstractions, smashes it against a wall. Having been rejected by his master, Enoch attempts to find his place in the city through another effort of accommodation, and again his vehicle is the gimmick. Enoch Emery's story, like Hazel's, ends in the realm of the grotesque, but his final condition is pathetic rather than triumphant. He has seen a man in a gorilla costume

make live appearances at neighborhood theatres where, as the movie monster "Gonga" he shakes the hand of anyone brave enough to come near him. Enoch resolves to rob "Gonga" of his costume and thereby acquire by fraud the stature that he has been denied by the city. He is successful in the first design, but the result of his change of identity is at once comic and pathetic, for we see him left standing alone on a height overlooking Taulkinham, his gorilla arm extended in greeting to a couple of lovers who are hurrying away from him as fast as they can go.

Enoch Emery, the "displaced person" from the country fails in his attempt to assimilate himself to the city simply because, unlike Hoover Shoats, he has not the facility nor the cynicism necessary to insinuate himself into its secular rhythms. He has not yet acquired enough sophistication to channel the promptings of his "wise blood" into really effective modes for manipulating people.

How then does the story of Enoch Emery relate to the story of Hazel Motes? One critic has proposed that the key to understanding the meaning of Enoch's story lies in realizing that Enoch's exchange of identity with the gorilla is symbolically the fruit of Hazel's teaching as preacher for the "Church Without Christ"; the follower who tries to live by the word of the secular prophet instead of the word of Christ must ultimately exchange his human nature for that of the beast. There is a further relationship, however, between the two stories in that Enoch's tale reinforces Hazel's in communicating the central theme of the novel. The plight of modern man in a city that is prepossessed with secular values—a world betrothed to Satan in his characteristically modern guises of hypocrisy and mediocrity is the dominant concern of *Wise Blood*.

The fate of the disciple of Hazel Motes is little different from that of the other characters in *Wise Blood* whose souls are choked in the jargon and gadgetry of Taulkinham. This is the city where, in the author's grotesque vision, the vendor "serves" the popcorn machine and the movie marquees cause the moon to look "pale and insignificant" over the city. Enoch Emery spends most of his spare time in theatre balconies; and Hazel Motes, as the prophet of a secular church, preaches from the nose of his car under the glare of the marquees. The stand of the hawker of potato-peeler, who also works by the light of the neon, is called ironically, his "altar." Taulkinham is depicted not as a city of God—nor even as a city of men—but as a bland congeries of individuals in community only insofar as they share a common topography, a common language of easy clichés, and the oppressive stigma of being normed toward the lowest

common denominator of mediocrity in their actions. Mrs. Flood can tell Hazel that being a saint is "something people have quit doing . . . like walling up cats." "It's just not normal," she tells him with the smug finality that only the unexamined cliché can provide.

Man has always considered his city as himself "writ large." For Plato the well-ordered *polis* was a magnification of the well-ordered soul; for Milton, "A Commonwealth ought to be but as one huge Christian personage, one mighty growth, and stature of an honest man." Taulkinham is shown as a city reflecting the mediocrity and disintegration of personal integrity that characterize the persons who live in a totally secular city. Its inhabitants, who lack all sense of responsibility toward God, are likewise shown bereft of any sense of obligation towards their neighbors. The relation between customer and merchant is undermined by duplicity and exploitation; the denizens of this profane city are shoddy in their work. The trades of Taulkinham are represented by the dishonest used-car salesman, the landlady who steals from her tenant, the mechanic who skimps on his work, the waitress who drinks on the job. The lax state of the law is represented by the two bullish cops who murder Hazel Motes. Appropriately, the only persons who seem to be "good" at their work are the man who sells the gadgets on the street-corner and Hoover Shoats, who is the purveyor of a lie.

As Atlanta, in Flannery O'Connor's best short story, "The Artificial Nigger," so Taulkinham is at once a foreboding barrier to the compact and whole sensibility of her country-bred protagonists and a stern sieve through which Christ's grace can filter, if at all, only as a tiny pinpoint of light, dwarfed by the blatancy of neon. In Taulkinham there is a bleak commingling of bodies but no communion of souls; like the town of her other novel, *The Violent Bear It Away*, it is "the dark city where the children of God lay sleeping." Yet in the final analysis, Miss O'Connor shows, in the persons of Hazel Motes and Mrs. Flood, that even the people of this "dark city" are potential receptacles of grace and that even the most petty soul can be awakened when someone has been found to be a bearer of light. She sees the dreary consequences of man's alienation from Christ in the modern, secular community and delineates two responses to it. Enoch Emery and Hazel Motes are indeed both misfits; but while the one must remain outside his adopted city or somehow transform his entire sensibility in order to accommodate himself to it, the other is able, after he has plumbed to the very depths of the society's ethos and found it false, to make of his life a Christian response to this hypocrisy and thereby give hope that the profane city may be delivered.



Raskolnikov, Peter Bilheimer



The Hitchhiker, Peter Bilheimer



Headful of Numbers, Lyle Novinski



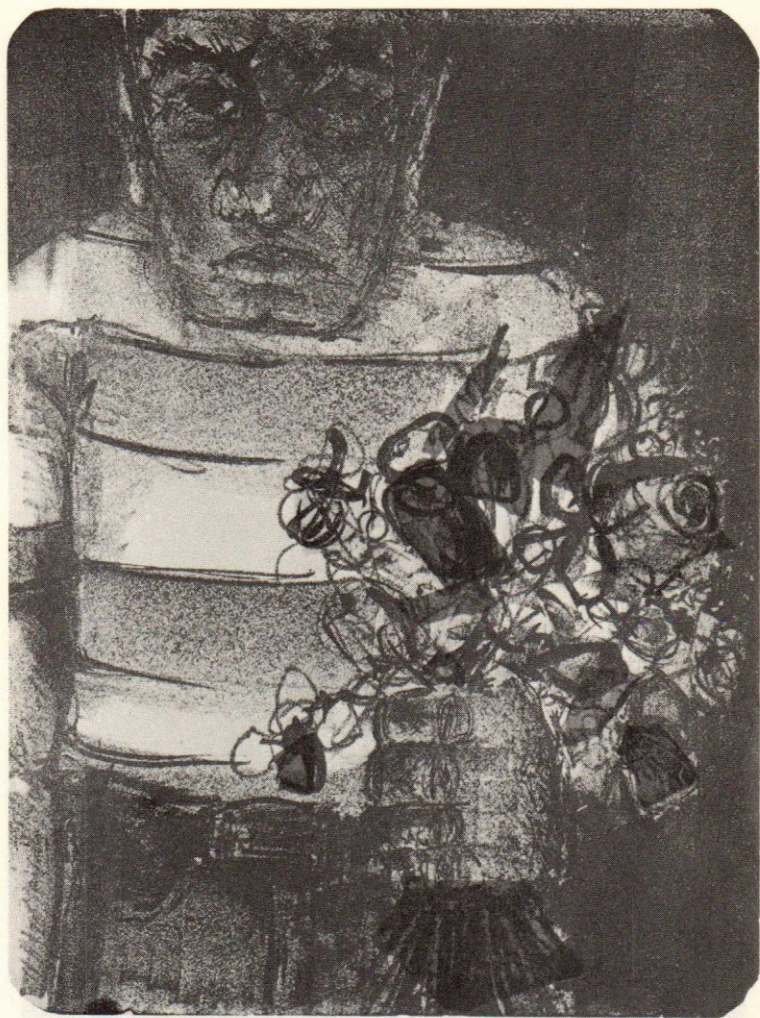
Figure In Thought, Lyle Novinski



Couple, Martha Greer



Days End, Arnold Favela



Boy With Flowers, Carol McGinnis

Litigation at Burning Bush

for Flannery O'Connor

No eye has seen nor ear heard, without
a careful trying, what binds a loose array
into a body — what holds a bunch of trees
in orchardship when planter's hands aren't there.

A tourist will not see, with peach production
tables, how a flow not sap nor blood
has run its red clay course and reared what were
a family, but for genes. But one within
might sense that bond, more of bowels than brains,
that pulls a people from a land and gives
a left hand pain when the distant right is hurt.

Concurrent then, we grieve; and we demand
of God a careful justice (hidden, if need be)
in pruning out his young and Southern seed trees.

Pecans and a City Park

He'd seen big trees before, and lived and climbed
among them. He was a country boy, here
to let his papa see an important brother.
He'd seen big trees before.

But not like these.

Not just like these. He couldn't think a name
for such a stand of trees, all fixed trim
and stiff around a fountain. A few had leaves
he didn't know — a few. But most he knew;
but mostly didn't know such nice spacing
in a toadstool circle big enough for giant
faeries' dances. And there were oak and spruce
instead of toadstools guarding, instead of dirt,
a fountain and flowers. Sweetgum, too, pecan
(but none with webworm leggings at the crotch)
and sun pulling up the heavy air
through winking sky-holes in the trees' big heads.
He'd climbed big trees before.

A lot like these.

He'd climbed a lot of trees. And now he topped
a lowly branch; and, dizzyed on the sharp
nosey bite of pecan air, he pushed the limbs
toward the ground as fast as hands could grab,
and opened the bushy head, all its sky-holes,
into sun. The boy, climber of trees,
sat mighty high and spat into the fountain,
then closed the top and pushed the limbs back up.
He'd climbed big trees before.

But not like this.
He'd never landed before and found his spittle
buried in such parlor-tidy grounds
and in a pool with goldfish holding up
the water that showed him, climber of trees.

But black,
with ashes smeared beside his mouth. He turned
the filthy mirror to his back and saw
the sooty markings on his hands, and legs,
and legging his denimed crotch. He'd never gotten
dirty in a tree before.

Not black
and soap and water dirty. Young and loud
he cursed that old pecan a violent curse
of blight, and summerfrost, and webworms. He'd never
cursed a tree before — a boy's curse.

Indian Summer: An Epilogue

Now summer's wax has dribbled from the leaves
and every dawn combs in the aging
grey to heads of clouds. Who yet conceives,
though winds have scarce begun their raging,

that autumn, come so late, so soon must yield
its riddling leaves to winter's cracking
cold? And that the greenness in the field
distills so quick, as if the wracking

breath of north had pricked it with a chill
we never caught. The summer fever
lingered like a pain that could not kill,
and autumn was a warm deceiver.

The leaves are huddling brown and lying dumb;
The sky is like an ancient lover
of the storm that we, already numb,
have met and suffered, under cover.

"...he too is thy son."

(Genesis: 21,13)

Ninety years of patient waiting
breaks. The timelier blood that bore decries
the rightful womb, and Sarah's hate
sends child and slave-wife flying
to the wild heat, bating
breath and grating dry
the spewing winds that blow the gate
of Eden slamming to an infant's crying.

When the world was sweat and tears,
a sky was filled with Hagar's fears.

Breath of sand exhales a sweeping
wind, and plundering air pits the rift
scion in the seed, and deep,
the roots clutch still the shifting
bed. The pocked unsleeping
weeds dread grains that sift
and winnow long before the reap
and shudder in the long night's lifting.

When the world was waste and dearth,
the slave-mother cursed the night of birth.

Lost, a renegade huddles the cloaking
dark. The sandhills poorly made his bed;
night blanketed his hollow choke.
The dawnstars drift, the redding
sun plows clouds in poking
light, straining with the dead
to grasp a memory in the smoke:
The stormborn child of Hagar's wedding.

When the world was green and swell,
what became of Ishmael?

Poets and Resurrection

How can they say in song
the joyful earth breeds oaks
from graves and wheat from wrong
weeding, and flesh that soaks
in death can rise and girth
itself in clean spiced shrouds?
Words have no cause for mirth
if ignorance beclouds
the smell of deadened souls
with frankincense and myrrh.
Soft herbs hide earthworms' tolls
of green body, now blur
of rank rot. Why, pray,
don't poets say *decay*?

Two Stage Worlds

If what you ask is puppet play: a dance
which dangles light in motion Eve-prescribed
to tempt me to a role of plucked romance
by rote actors in gold costumes, described
in their harsh footlight-tarnished terms as Fun's
measured curtain acts, moneyed shows of grace;
then find another stage—with painted suns
for scenery. Go dance with its masked face.

The sun-graced stage on which I play is cracked
with earthly apple trees: in ripeness rise
their fruits. The gingham dress in which I act
is floured for I am baking apple pies.
If you like apples more than gilded trance
then ask again. I solemnly will dance.

Foibles And Fantasies

A review of Auberon Waugh: *The Foxglove Saga* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961) and *Path of Dalliance* (Simon and Schuster, 1964).

When Auberon Waugh's first novel, *The Foxglove Saga*, was published in 1961, critics and novelists alike accorded it widespread and often extravagant praise. Mr. Waugh's novels are undoubtedly imitative of the style and vision of his famous father; and indeed seem to invite the inevitable comparison. Nevertheless, it is perhaps a trifle overly enthusiastic to assert that the son has equalled the father in a single step. Auberon Waugh's writing is bold, often witty, and frequently brilliant; but it is also often structurally deficient and technically unpolished. A somewhat remarkable fact is that his second novel is inferior to his first.

In both *The Foxglove Saga* and the later *Path of Dalliance* Mr. Waugh attacks the foibles and fantasies of his contemporaries in a powerful comedy of manners; and although his approach is subtle and often subdued, his attitude is satirical and scornful rather than sympathetic. Throughout both novels he demonstrates the incapacity of human beings to understand the situation and the people surrounding them. His characters tend to interpret everything in terms of their own personality, and they exhibit an unfaltering ability to think highly of themselves in whatever circumstances. Mr. Waugh's characters are earmarked by a unique combination of naivete and bravado, and they function more as symbolic exemplifications of the human condition than as actual individuals. Despite the intensity of their respective idiosyncrasies, all of his characters appear as more or less inert beings. They are acted upon by circumstances rather than acting themselves, and they all seem to be the victims of a harsh and ironic fate that bars them from accomplishing anything that is substantial. In the *Path of Dalliance*, for example, even after Jamey Sligger resorts to stealing to procure a wireless for his convict brother, it is somehow inevitable, in context, that the set be smashed in the mail. Jamey's mother is similarly unsuccessful. When she becomes a candidate for political office, her defeat is so conclusive that her returns are not even recorded. When she attempts to have a love affair with one of her older son's acquaintances, she never manages, despite all her absurd attempts, to compel the liaison beyond the stage in which her lover is painfully aware of the most uncomfortable manner she has of sitting on his knee.

Mr. Waugh treats all his characters in a bizarre fashion which transcends the pathetic and approaches the realm of the grotesque. In both novels there is no real plot development or technical precision. Indeed,

they are nothing more than a tissue of loosely connected occurrences. It is almost impossible to determine any definite causal relationship between the events that take place, for Mr. Waugh manipulates his characters to such an extent that whatever progression does occur is quite arbitrary and more the result of a *deus ex machina* causality than a logical, effective one. His characters die, become insane, or meet similarly drastic ends merely, it seems, because Mr. Waugh has decided that they shall, and not because there is anything essential or innate in their personalities that would provoke such an event. In a sense, his novels are never really concluded, for it is almost as if, having decided that he has provided sufficient examples of the fact that mortals are indeed fools, Mr. Waugh suddenly rests his case. He himself dismissed the conclusion of *The Foxglove Saga* with the remark that "The end is all very sad for Mummy, but probably the best thing in the long run." The last sentences of *Path of Dalliance* are similarly blasé in the sense of total inconsequence which they convey:

They told Jamey at breakfast. He said he was sorry to hear that Brother Richard had passed away, but he secretly thought he could manage without him now. Brother Angelus O'Reefe was in tears over his coffee, and even Brigadier Gangadden looked thoughtful and pulled at his mustache. Above them, the great bell of Cleeve Abbey boomed out over the fields, and some jackdaws, always dislodged by the noise, flew around the tower waiting for it to stop before they could resume their previous occupations.

Although Mr. Waugh's novels often show marks of immature craftsmanship, they are rendered exciting by the characters he creates. The fact that they are extremely manipulated and that their actions are futile is in keeping with the atmosphere he strives to create. In both *The Foxglove Saga* and *Path of Dalliance*, he presents characters in a grotesque exaggeration that is at times almost macabre. *The Foxglove Saga* is the story of a young English schoolboy, Martin Foxglove, who, halfway through the novel, graduates from Cleeve and joins the Airborne Commandos (familiarily known as the Pigs); the novel continues until his twenty-first birthday and concludes shortly thereafter, allowing only a little further time for his mother to go insane and die. At the end, young Martin, "one of Nature's bloody darlings," has not changed much at all, but in the course of the novel, Mr. Waugh introduces a strange assemblage of odd persons, and it is these characters that contribute most of the bite and brilliance to the work.

There is, for instance, Mrs. Foxglove, Martin's mother, who is a supreme characterization of the moral and social hypocrite. She inflicts her good works on others, whether they want them or not, (she makes a habit of visiting one of her neighbors, for example, to see how her blindness is coming along), so she can preserve the "expensive odor of sanctity"

she presents to the world at large. She very carefully and secretly records each of her good deeds in a special notebook under the appropriate headings ("Clothe the naked" — buying a new coat for Martin), so that, after her death, everyone can discover how holy she had been. The monk Brother Aloysius writes a quite successful book about St. Peter's pug dog and St. Paul's pet pekinese and their eventual marriage and family, even though he had been somewhat uncertain as to whether or not the love scenes would pass the censor. Kelly, one of Martin's classmates, becomes so distraught when another of the students catches pneumonia that he carves the sick boy's name all over himself; as a result, although the ill student soon recovers, Kelly dies of gas gangrene. The most grotesque character of all is the monster Mongol child, Tarquin, who, when he was still a baby, scratched out his mother's eyes and drove her insane. (No less than four of the characters in the novel are unceremoniously committed to insane asylums). Mrs. Foxglove, who is bribed into adopting the child, with his one blue eye and one brown and the masses of red hair on his legs, keeps him locked in an upstairs room untended, until he dies with a sudden unexplained plop and is hurriedly and secretly buried. Throughout the book, with characterizations such as these, Mr. Waugh strikes out with a subtle but severe savagery at love, religion, virtue, education, military service, the family, and all else generally held sacred. His attacks are always uncomplimentary, often funny, and certainly effective. The entire novel is, in fact, a process of reducing the sublime to the ridiculous, and a disquieting but brilliant amusing sense of the grotesque is established, despite the fact that the novel is somewhat a structural hodge-podge.

The same aura of the grotesque and the implications of severe social satire are also found in Mr. Waugh's *Path of Dalliance*. In many ways, this novel is a continuation of the previous one. The overall atmosphere and theme are very much alike, and the major characters are, like Martin Foxglove, ex-students of Cleeve. Guy Frazer-Robinson and Jamey Sligger have both come to Oxford (where "people have been committing, among other things, suicide") after graduating from the Catholic school, and the path of dalliance which both follow is crowded with the same sort of grotesquely exaggerated personifications. One of the first persons whom the two boys meet after they have arrived at the university is Anne Etherington, whose sole accomplishment is that she is the secretary of the Inter-University Students Union and Food Officer of St. Rachel's Junior Common Room. Anne is a romantic, frustrated girl with the nervous habit of "blowing bubbles," and by the end of the first part of the novel she

has committed suicide, presumably because Jamey refused to see her one afternoon. One of the most blatant examples of Mr. Waugh's ridicule is the conversations he records between the esteemed Mr. Price-Williams, one of the tutors, and his wife, the proctor of one of the women's colleges:

"I'se a great fierce wuff-wuff." Mr. Price-Williams got on his hands and knees and said, "Wuff."

"Look, wuff-wuff has had kittens." Mrs. Price-Williams fetched a small Teddy Bear from the drawer where it was kept for these occasions, and placed it under her husband. "Kitten has been naughty," said Mrs. Price-Williams. "Papa's not pleased. Wuff."

"Say you're sorry kitten."

Jamey's mother is afflicted with the same sort of insane naivete as were many of the characters in *The Foxglove Saga*. She believes the reason that her older son is a convict is that she had allowed him to have an electric fire in his room as a youth. To reward herself for all her maternal efforts on behalf of such an undeserving son, she buys herself a measuring tape, which, by measuring certain parts of animals, gives the "dead weight, disembowled, in kilos," which she puts to great use in measuring both her window seat and her sons.

The latter part of the *Path of Dalliance* is noticeably less vivid and exciting than the first and lapses from the grotesque to the merely absurd. This portion of the novel is concerned chiefly with Jamey Sligger and his experience, in the world after he is forced to leave Oxford, and here the characterization is notably weaker, almost as if Mr. Waugh had tired of his people and their activities. Like *The Foxglove Saga*, the *Path of Dalliance* ends rather inconsequentially. In their last conversation in the novel, Jamey Sligger and Frazer-Robinson discuss their current state of affairs quite calmly:

"There doesn't seem much doing for a bachelor these days." Guy spoke as if he had been a bachelor at many other stages of history.

"I expect you're right," said Jamey, and they both shook their wise old heads over their glasses.

Although even here Mr. Waugh is aiming a subtle lampoon at his main characters, he nevertheless leaves the impression that they will both manage to assume rather painlessly the mediocrity and bravado possessed by the masses of humanity.

Mr. Waugh's novels, then, are not exceptional in the story which they develop or even in the manner in which they are told. What is important or memorable about them is the wit and insight with which he manages to devastate all the pretensions, fantasies, and idiosyncrasies of human

kind by exploiting and exaggerating them to the point of grotesqueness. Within the scope of his novels, nothing is sacred to Mr. Waugh, and he delights in toppling both personal and public pedestals. In fact, he does this so successfully that he provokes his reader to a willing suspension of disbelief, so that one reads his novels with delight while realizing that his characters are deliberate exaggerations. All of his characters are memorable and remain vividly amusing even in retrospect. Because of this, Mr. Waugh makes one willing to accept and appreciate his terms, and to forgive him for his neglect of many conventional norms in the art of great fiction.