VISION IMAGERY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO STRUCTURE IN THE NOVELS OF FLANNERY O'CONNOR

THESIS

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By

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An investigation of the prominence of vision imagery in the two novels of Flannery O'Connor, *Wise Blood* and *The Violent Bear It Away*, reveals the importance of vision to the themes and structures of the novels. Seeing truth in order to fulfill one's human vocation is a central concern in O'Connor's fiction. The realization or non-realization of truth by the characters is conveyed by vision imagery. O'Connor's Southern and Catholic heritage is the background of her concern for vision as an integral part of her artistic theory. An analysis of vision imagery in each novel shows how the themes are developed and how the structures relate to such imagery. Each novel progresses according to the main character's clarity of sight. Contradictory patterns occur when the character's sight is not true.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION -- IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING

FLANNERY O'CONNOR'S LITERARY BACKGROUND

"The two circumstances that have given character to my own writing have been those of being Southern and being Catholic" (9, p. 196). Any understanding of Flannery O'Connor's fiction must begin with a serious consideration of her seemingly simple biographical statement. "Being Southern" is much more than a matter of geography for the Southern author. Implicit in the declaration is a depth of cultural content unavailable to authors and readers outside Southern boundaries. And "being Catholic," although often just a statement of religious denomination, is not simply that to Flannery O'Connor. To her it was a vocation to live, with an essential influence on everything she wrote. She insisted on both the Southernness and the Catholicity of her person and fiction repeatedly in her explanatory prose writings, as collected in Mystery and Manners (9). Yet, paradoxically, O'Connor's Southern-Catholic vision continues to alienate members of both groups, as well as other readers.

All novelists, it seems, must try to convey a vision of reality to their readers, or run the risk of failing in their art. The reality anyone sees, novelist or not,
ultimately depends on what he believes is true. Flannery O'Connor's intention was not to proselytize, but to emphasize the importance of belief and the role it played in fiction writing: "Your beliefs will be the light by which you see, but they will not be what you see and they will not be a substitute for seeing" (9, p. 91). O'Connor would have agreed that the important thing for the reader to grasp is a truth vital to him, not necessarily the truth the author perceives. She acknowledges her agreement with Joseph Conrad's stated aim of writing: "My task... is, before all, to make you see. That -- and no more, and it is everything. If I succeed, you shall find there, according to your deserts, encouragement, consolation, fear, charm, all you demand -- and, perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask" (9, p. 80).

In O'Connor fiction, mystery and reality are wedded through revelation. Through her life, Flannery O'Connor wedded her Southern perspective as a native Georgian with her view of the mystery of Divine presence in creation in order to create stories that strike "like an indefensible blow in the dark" (6, p. 243), as William Goyen has described them. This is the first idea about O'Connor that will be explained as information for understanding the concept of vision in her fiction. From her background emerged her notion that seeing revelation is necessary for the sake
of redemption. O'Connor vividly and concretely "incarnates" mystery in her two novels, *Wise Blood* and *The Violent Bear It Away*, and two collections of short stories, *A Good Man Is Hard To Find* and *Everything That Rises Must Converge*. Sight images and symbols seem to carry much of the weight of O'Connor's meaning in her fiction, in conjunction with the emphasis she places on the importance of seeing by belief. The controlling idea of this thesis is that the theme of vision is the ruling concern of all of O'Connor's fiction. This being so, O'Connor depends heavily on visual imagery and symbols to carry meaning. The imagery and symbols show us that O'Connor characters are what they see, and this in turn determines the plot and structure of her stories. *Wise Blood* and *The Violent Bear It Away*, being the most extensive works, are analyzed here because they show the most thorough treatment of this thesis. An explanation of the literary theory behind these works is given in Chapter Two. In Chapters Three and Four, vision imagery in the two novels is shown and discussed as prominent. In the final chapter, the relationship between vision imagery and structure in the two novels is examined to show how the two work together to produce thematic unity.
Southern Heritage

The religious orientation of Flannery O'Connor's fiction is not out of place either in the tradition of American literature or in the Southern setting. From its earliest days in the North and the South, American writing has been God-preoccupied. C. Vann Woodward explains that this condition originated with the two prominent moral traditions of early America, New England Calvinism and Virginia humanism of the Jeffersonian school. While they differed upon theology, Calvinists and humanists agreed that their country was "'God's American Israel,' called out of a wicked and corrupt old world and set apart by Providence to create a new humanity and restore man's lost innocence" (12, p. 66). Life in the new Eden tended to create and unite Americans in what Woodward calls "illusions of innocence and virtue" (12, p. 66) until the disruption of the Civil War. With the Northern conquest, the South fell from its share in the innocence and, in a sense, was "expelled from the Garden." From this time onward, Southern history took a distinctive turn away from the history of the rest of the nation, bearing its onus of defeat. As C. Vann Woodward has pointed out, the South had to learn to live with humiliating circumstances it had vowed never to accept. In America, the South alone suffered poverty, submission, and military defeat. In Wood-
ward's judgement, "Nothing about this history was conducive to the theory that the South was the darling of divine providence" (12, p. 65).

If American could not help seeing the mystery of Divine election in their history, inevitably Southerners could not help seeing the mystery of primeval Fall in their departure from it. This sense of loss and limitation, of poverty reaching beyond itself for mercy, O'Connor recognized as part of her cultural inheritance:

We have gone into the modern world with an inburnt knowledge of human limitations and with a sense of mystery which could not have developed in our first sense of innocence -- as it has not sufficiently developed in the rest of our country.

Not every lost war would have this effect on every society, but we were doubly blessed, not only in our Fall, but in having the means to interpret it. Behind our own history, deepening it at every point, has been another history. Mencken called the South the Bible Belt, in scorn and thus in incredible ignorance. In the South, we have, in however attenuated a form, a vision of Moses' face as he pulverized our idols (9, p. 59).

This religiously reinforced history into which O'Connor was physically born, conjoined with her Catholic spiritual birth "into the life and death of Jesus Christ," illuminates both what she saw and what she inherited to create her artistic vision.

O'Connor maintained that for the Southerner belief is still believable (9, p. 203), and the world is still a place of mystery. According to Richard Weaver, Southern piety is based on the acceptance of mystery in nature.
Nature is God-given and inscrutable; it is not to be manipulated or conquered. Nature is regarded as providential in Southern piety, even in its darker aspects (11, p. 20). Cleanth Brooks' term "Christian synthesis" probably best describes this Southern cultural outlook: "a view of life embodying the idea of history on the one hand and the sacramental attitude towards life on the other" (2, p. 52). "Christian synthesis" describes exactly the intersection of place and religion in O'Connor's literary theory. As she said,

The Catholic novelist in the South will bolster the South's best traditions, for they are the same as his own. And the South will perhaps lead him to be less timid as a novelist, more respectful of the concrete, more trustful of the blind imagination.

The opportunities for the potential Catholic writer in the South are so great as to be intimidating. He lives in a region where there is a thriving literary tradition, and this is always an advantage to the writer, who is initially inspired less by life than by the work of his predecessors. He lives in a region which is struggling, in both good ways and bad, to preserve its identity, and this is an advantage, for his dramatic need is to know manners under stress. He lives in the Bible Belt. . . . He has also here a good view of the modern world. A half-hour's drive in this region will take him from places where the life has a distinctly Old Testament flavor to places where the life might be considered post-Christian. Yet all these varied situations can be seen in one glance and heard in one conversation (9, pp. 208-209).

Christian Beliefs

If Flannery O'Connor writes from such a religious point of view, it seems necessary to ascertain the particular ways religion slanted her vision. To say that O'Connor
was a Catholic does not really provide specific answers, for many doctrines, distortions and degrees of fidelity may be implied in that label.

O'Connor had a very specific credo supporting her artistry: "I am no disbeliever in spiritual purpose and no vague believer. I see from the standpoint of Christian orthodoxy. This means for me that the meaning of life is centered in our Redemption by Christ and that what I see in the world I see in relation to that" (9, p. 32). In spite of her declaration, O'Connor's brand of Catholicism has been called "unorthodox" by more than one critic (1, p. 159), primarily because of her use of "freaks," fanaticism and violence. All are extremes of one sort or another, it is true, but O'Connor addresses a reading audience that seems to have forgotten the extremism upon which Christian faith is founded — the radicality of the Scriptures: from the faith of an Abraham about to murder his only son to the bloody trek of God's Son up Calvary to undergo a criminal's violent death.

O'Connor's characters have often been called "grotesques," meaning that they are caricatures of realistic humans, given to bizarre, deviant behavior, such as fanaticism. In fact, these "grotesques," at least in part, represent people O'Connor actually knew in her Georgia experiences. Her Georgia contemporaries were originally Scotch-Irish who settled in the Southern Piedmont region
of Virginia, the Carolinas, Tennessee and Georgia. As C. Hugh Holman relates, these settlers were poor, harsh, and impulsive people. They made their own laws and had their own brand of simplistic Calvinism. They were noted, says Holman, for such extremes as social "crudity... brutal fights, animal cruelty, and folk hilarity" (7, p. 178). O'Connor portrayed this kind of fanaticism in her stories because she felt that much "orthodox" religion had become polite to the point of draining all human faith and passion from Christian belief. Consequently, she sought to restore what she called the element of "backwoods prophets and shouting fundamentalists" (9, p. 207). The Southern grotesque is quite at home in a world of moral concern, for he is a unique figure on the modern scene where all the other faces in the crowd wear masks of moral indifference. The moral man is grotesque because he is different. He is the strange one because he is committed to truth, either by pursuing it or trying to escape it. Because of his strangeness, O'Connor uses the grotesque character to represent man's essential estrangement, as she states:

To be able to recognize a freak, you have to have some conception of the whole man, and in the South the general conception of man is still, in the main, theological. I think it is safe to say that while the South is hardly Christ-centered, it is most certainly Christ-haunted. The Southerner, who isn't convinced of it, is very much afraid that he may have been formed in the image and likeness of God (9, pp. 44-45).
The "whole man" O'Connor speaks of is that model human, Christ. Robert Drake has said that Christ is the main character in all O'Connor fiction (3, p. 17). If this is true, it should be understood in the full Scriptural sense of what it means to be Christian. As St. Paul explains it, the Christian's life is Christ's presence within him: "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. This life that I live now, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave his life for me" (5, Gal. 2:20).

The fact of the Incarnation has made Christ immanent in creation, and this is the hope of mankind, fallen through Original Sin and tending to be self-seeking rather than God-seeking as the result. This belief has two consequences for O'Connor fiction. First, it is the theological justification for her use of nature for the religious imagery and symbolism which abound in her works. O'Connor vision is the same as St. Paul's: "What men can know about God is plain to them. Ever since God created the world, his invisible qualities, both his eternal power and his divine nature, have been clearly seen. Men can perceive them in the things that God has made" (Rom. 1:18-20). Second, the belief in Christ's immanence in creation implies that good and evil coexist. None of O'Connor's characters is totally evil or irredeemable; Christ's saving presence sustains all.

The typical O'Connor character is the self-righteous, self-centered person who has insight forced on him by the course
of events. The events and the insights may be painful, even evil, but they free the character for a new way of life. Even the ultimate event of death is not a total evil. Ruth M. Vande Kieft remarks that "in Miss O'Connor's fiction, the religious vision is markedly apocalyptic. According to this vision, everything in life leads to death, and death is revelation" (10, p. 345). Revelation redeems death from tragedy by being a form of grace -- the active power of a loving God. Death was of great importance to O'Connor: "Death has always been brother to my imagination. I can't imagine a story that doesn't end in it or its foreshadowings" (8, p. 35).

A final belief of O'Connor's must be cited for it is the clue to her consistent use of irony. Salvation is gratuitous; it cannot be achieved by one's own efforts. For the most part, O'Connor's characters do not realize this and do not understand man's position before God. Since the Divine always has the last word -- and sometimes a few more than that -- ironic surprises occur to shed light on a character's situation and reverse his attitudes. O'Connor's characters are usually stopped short by their poverty or their inability to succeed where they think success is to be found. Of O'Connor's fiction, Robert Fitzgerald says, "We are shown that vices are fathered by our heroism, virtues are forced upon us by our impudent crimes, and that neither fear nor courage saves us" (4, p. xxiii).
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CHAPTER II

IMPORTANCE OF THE CONCEPT OF VISION

The fictional world of Flannery O'Connor is located in rural or small-city Georgia or Tennessee. It is peopled by a diverse and generally bizarre population of small-minded and shabbyhearted humans. What they do in O'Connor's fiction is not nearly as important as what they do not do or do not see or both. And more important are the surprising things that happen to them without their desire or expectation -- blows from the fist of Fate. Thereby is shown what they really are, their essential lacks, their essential poverty of being.

Moving among these typical characters and subjected to the same shocks of existence are the Jesus-obsessed, either because they love him or hate him or are "alright" with him. Even the oblivious are Jesus-oblivious. The characters stand or fall by their visible response to Fate's question, "Who do you say I am?" (Mark 8:31), for Fate's name is Jesus Christ. Whatever the response, according to Jean Marie Kann, a vision is always given:
This revelation is actually more devastating than the physical violence which preceded it. In the wake of the revelation a sense of mystery lives on -- the mystery -- the mystery of human nature, its context and complexities. It is the ability to evoke this mystery that gives Miss O'Connor's stories their depth and power.

Always the mystery is in terms of the real. The violence is born of the clash of illusion with reality. This reality is not only that of perceptible fact; it. . . reaches up to heaven and down to hell (6, p. 247).

"Revelation," "mystery," "reality" are of key importance in the fictional vocabulary of Flannery O'Connor. They encircle the characters with a literal deadly intensity and must be dealt with on their own terms. The characters' success in harmonizing with this trinity depends upon how well they are able to perceive its existence. If they cannot see (and most cannot), they literally turn in circles -- or are turned around in circles -- because they cannot see well enough to find the right direction. No matter where they happen to be going, the characters' goal is faith in the Transcendent, for as O'Connor has written of her stories, "belief. . . is the engine that makes perception operate" (10, p. 109). The characters need to see their true condition before God and their need for salvation to stop the turning and enable the circle to close.

The Author as Prophet

O'Connor's vision of Divine and mysterious presence in creation included herself. She believed that she
wrote by the presence of "a gift" which was "a considerable responsibility. It is mystery in itself, something gratuitous and wholly undeserved, something whose real uses will probably always remain hidden" (10, p. 81). The writer whose vocation is to serve eternal verities and to make his vision intelligible has a special title in O'Connor terminology, as she explains:

What one sees one is given by circumstances and by the nature of one's particular kind of perception. . . . His kind of vision is propjetic vision. Prophecy, which is dependent on the imaginative and not the moral faculty, need not be a matter of predicting the future. The prophet is a realist of distances, and it is this kind of realism that goes into great novels (10, p. 179).

Being a "realist of distances" means taking what one sees and connecting it with that point at the far end of vision. The practical means of composing a story in this circumstance is not so much a matter of conscious technique as a conscious attention to the inner nature of a story's material working itself out (10, p. 67). O'Connor believed "if it's a good story, it's as much a revelation to you [the author] as it is to the reader" (10, p. 102).

An illustration of the "method" used in this kind of fiction-writing is the development of her story "Good Country People": 
When I started to write that story, I didn't know there was going to be a Ph.D. with a wooden leg in it. I merely found myself one morning writing about two women I knew, and before I realized it, I had equipped one of them with a wooden leg. As the story progressed, I brought in the Bible salesman, but I had no idea what I was going to do with him. I didn't know he was going to steal that wooden leg until ten or twelve lines before he did it, but when I found out that this was going to happen, I realized that it was inevitable (10, p. 100).

Details tend to accumulate meaning within the process of the story as it unfolds. In "Good Country People," as O'Connor explains, "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 the wooden leg. Now of course this is never stated" (10, p. 99). The reader's mind is led from its look at the concrete into its own mysterious region.

"Revelation" is derived from the Latin "revelare" meaning to "unveil" (1, p. 603). A revelation is something which is exposed or brought to view, something which has been hidden and is made clear. Another definition is "a manifestation of divine will or truth" (1, p. 603). No matter how the meaning of the word is stated, to O'Connor both meanings are compatible in expressing her idea that creation is not a process imposed on reality by the mind of the creator, be he Divine creator or human author. Creation is seeing or showing what has been there all along, but for some reason has been hidden from view. Creation is
apprehending and expressing the Reality in the giveness of What-Is. If a writer is any good, O'Connor states, "what he makes will have its source in a realm much larger than that which his conscious mind can encompass" (10, p. 83).

The process of revelation happens first to the writer, and the writer's task is to bring revelation into view for the reader. The kind of vision the writer needs to have, according to O'Connor is "anagogical vision" which is able to perceive multiple levels of reality in an image or situation (10, p. 72). Vision, then, is the central concept around which O'Connor's theory of fiction-writing revolves: a vision enlightened by faith. For O'Connor this means, as she explains, a vision of great depth:

If the writer believes that our life is and will remain essentially mysterious, if he looks upon us as beings existing in a created order to whose laws we freely respond, then what he sees on the surface will be of interest to him only as he can go through it to an experience of mystery itself. His kind of fiction will always be pushing its own limits outward towards the limits of mystery, because for this kind of writer, the meaning of a story does not begin except at a depth where adequate motivation and adequate psychology and the various determinations have been exhausted (10, pp. 41-42).

O'Connor was well aware of the difficult position she was in with such a theory. The empirical mind of modern man is bound to balk at characters who, as she says, are "forced out to meet evil and grace and who act on a trust beyond themselves -- whether they know very
"My subject in fiction is the action of grace in a territory largely held by the devil" (10, p. 118). The devil's evil presence is most often portrayed through the characters in O'Connor's fiction. His presence is marked by violence, yet, mysteriously, as Louise Y. Gosset says, this violence often turns to a character's good and provides the opening for crucial self-knowledge leading to conversion (2, p. 79). O'Connor felt she had to use violence to get across what she saw (10, p. 185), one of those things being the radicality of Christ's demands upon those who follow after him. There is no mistaking the violence in his own words: "If anyone wants to follow after me, he must forget himself, carry his cross, and come with me. For whoever wants to save his own life will lose it" (Mark 8:34-35). Traumas in the lives of O'Connor's characters are severe in proportion as their lives are estranged from the Divine. Trauma is the lever that raises her characters to true sight. In Wise Blood a series of traumatic experiences, culminating in murder and the loss of a precious car, precipitate conversion for Haze Motes. Tarwater, in The Violent Bear It Away, also commits a murder and is violated by a sodomist's rape before he comes to self-knowledge and conversion. "With the serious writer," O'Connor explains, "violence is never and end in itself. It is the extreme situation that best reveals what we are essentially, . . . Violence is a force which can be used for good or evil,
and among other things taken by it is the kingdom of heaven" (10, p. 113).

O'Connor's Story Form

Thomas M. Lorch argues that O'Connor used allegory as her characteristic story form (8, pp. 69-70), and some critics see a close relationship to Hawthorne (3, p. 395). But O'Connor denied writing allegory. "There are not enough common beliefs to make this a fit age for allegory, and as for anagogical realities, they don't exist at all for the general reader or are taken by him to be knowable by sensation" (10, p. 158).

O'Connor certainly differs from other allegorists in that her characters are too vivid, too realistically drawn to represent personified abstractions. But a statement of Edwin Honig's on allegory echoes many of O'Connor's on the challenges of her writing: "Melville's problem, like Hawthorne's, was to find a method whereby a vigorous and authentic authority could be created in fiction. For him, as for his predecessors, the challenge was to map out the relation of the unknown country of allegory to the known countries and conditions of contemporary actuality" (5, pp. 102-103). O'Connor frequently states that she must distort and exaggerate to command attention and to make her beliefs intelligible to readers unacquainted with them. She seems to suggest that she is relying on a "vigorous and
clearly what it is they act upon or not. To the modern mind, these characters and their creator, are typical Don Quixotes, tilting at what is not there" (10, p. 42). The necessity of facing the modern mind, one's audience, with a private vision is precisely the difficulty for the writer O'Connor describes. The solution for O'Connor seemed to be in the use of distortion, extremes, caricatures. This was the way to arrest and direct the attention of the modern reader (10, pp. 97-98).

Distortion is the real amplifier of meaning in O'Connor fiction. As Gilbert H. Muller testifies, there is a direct relationship between "action, conflict, and suspense, and the level of meaning engendered by it" (9, p. 17). O'Connor clarifies this by speaking of her novel The Violent Bear It Away:

When I write a novel in which the central action is a baptism, I am very well aware that for a majority of my readers, baptism is a meaningless rite, and so in my novel I have to see that this baptism carries enough awe and mystery to jar the reader into some kind of emotional recognition of its significance. To this end I have to bend the whole novel -- its language, its structure, its action. I have to make the reader feel, in his bones, if nowhere else, that something is going on here that counts . . . This is not the kind of distortion that destroys; it is the kind of distortion that reveals, or should reveal (1, p. 162).

The grotesque character, discussed in chapter one, is one means of distortion characteristic of the O'Connor story. Another is the use of violence. O'Connor's object is to show the threat to Divine presence in the world:
authentic authority" and "common beliefs," trying to make them palatable to her contemporaries. Unconsciously, perhaps, O'Connor drew the structures and imagery of her fiction from the authority of her strong Catholic beliefs. She is much like Hawthorne as Henry James described him: "Hawthorne is perpetually looking for images which shall place themselves in picturesque correspondence with the spiritual facts with which he is concerned" (7, p. 181).

O'Connor was surely writing allegory -- although it was her own particular brand -- if allegory is considered in C. Hugh Holman's terms: "A form of extended metaphor in which objects, persons, and actions in a narrative, either in prose or in verse, are equated with meanings that lie outside the narrative itself" (4, p. 13). Meanings or beliefs outside O'Connor's narratives -- some of them quite esoteric to the general reading public -- do control those narratives. An O'Connor reader must be prepared to apprehend and concede the existence of the devil, the efficacy of grace, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the importance of faith over reason, and others. Dogma is present in her fiction, as she states, as "assumptions" which "form its skeleton" (10, p. 197). Consequently, she says, her fiction
cannot see man as determined; it cannot see him as totally depraved. It will see him as incomplete in himself, as prone to evil, but as redeemable when his own efforts are assisted by grace. And it will see this grace as working through nature, but as entirely transcending it, so that a door is always open to possibility and the unexpected. . . . Its center of meaning will be Christ; its center of destruction will be the devil (10, pp. 196-197).

O'Connor's belief about the human condition -- man's fall and his redemption by Christ -- repeats itself from story to story as a mythic framework. This is the essential structure of both Wise Blood and The Violent Bear It Away. The Violent Bear It Away cannot be fully understood unless the meaning of Baptism is clear, because this rite is the central concern of the novel. The O'Connor reader needs to know the Scriptural basis of the rite's importance: "When we were baptized into union with Christ Jesus, we were baptized into union with his death. . . . we were buried with him and shared his death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, so also we might live a new life" (Rom. 6:3-4).

In reference to both novels, an O'Connor reader should know of the spiritual doctrines of St. John of the Cross and other mystics who experienced a "dark night of the soul" relationship with God and taught that the more intense the relationship with God, the darker and harder will be the spiritual journey leading to it. The journey requires a progressive death to self and ties in with the meaning of death in Christian theology: the advent of union with God.
which is life's fulfillment. O'Connor sends Haze Motes and young Tarwater on this very journey in their respective novels, and the structure of each novel develops from it.

Finally, it is most helpful for the reader to be acquainted with the works of the theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who elaborates on the Biblical letters of St. Paul and insists upon the coexistence of Christ with the universe and the necessity of spiritual vision to comprehend it. Almost all of O'Connor's stories illustrate this idea. In *Wise Blood* and *The Violent Bear It Away* the concept of vision dominates through theme and imagery. Analysis of both novels proves the interrelationship of imagery and structure, for only vision can pierce the darkness and show the way to go.
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CHAPTER III

VISION IMAGERY IN WISE BLOOD

The characters in Wise Blood are defined and judged by the quality of their sight and what it leads them to do. Plot sequence in the novel is determined by what the main character, Haze Motes, is looking for. The guiding theme is Haze's gradual discovery of spiritual sight. Surface reality in the novel only suggests what really needs to be seen. The tension between appearance and reality in Wise Blood is bridged by vision imagery and symbols. Descriptions of eyes and faces, eyeglasses, types of vision or lack of it, mirrors and windows for looking into or out of, sights seen by characters — both in reality and in their imaginations — all convey the novel's meaning.

The first chapter of Wise Blood actually contains the whole novel in brief and is analyzed first in some detail to show the relationship of sight imagery and theme. After chapter one, the novel moves in two directions. One is the direction Haze consciously chooses to pursue in order to live out his belief in nothing; the other direction is subconscious — coming from the depths of Haze's own mind or from the revelations of reality or both. The
sight imagery in both of these directions is thematically important to the meaning of the whole novel.

Dimensions of Wise Blood: First Chapter

The first sentence of Wise Blood describes Haze Motes in terms of sight and shows immediately that he is confused about where he is going and what he wants to do. He is in a train "sitting at a forward angle" and "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" (4, p. 9). His ambivalence and a certain desperation are unmistakable.

Mrs. Wally Bee Hitchcock, sitting across from him, questions Haze concerning the loveliness of the time of day, and he gives her as much attention as she deserves: "He looked at her a second" (4, p. 9). He is more preoccupied with his own vision, and "stared down the length of the car again" (4, p. 9). When the woman turns to see what interests Haze so, "all she saw was a child peering around one of the sections, and farther up at the end of the car, the porter opening the closet where the sheets were kept" (4, p. 9).

Mrs. Hitchcock asks Haze if he is going home. When he does not answer, she decides by looking at Haze's duffel bag that he is. She wants to see what Haze's "glaring-blue" suit had cost, "but finds herself squinting at his eyes, trying to look into them" (4, p. 9). Once Mrs. Hitchcock
sees that the suit cost $11.98 she is satisfied:

She felt that that placed him and looked at his face again as if she were fortified against it now. He had a nose like a shrike's bill and a long vertical crease on either side of his mouth; his hair looked as if it had been permanently flattened under the heavy hat, but his eyes were what held her attention the longest. Their settings were so deep that they seemed to her almost like passages leading somewhere and she leaned halfway across the space that separated the two seats, trying to see into them (4, pp. 9-10).

This introductory incident does more than set the scene for Wise Blood. Haze Motes and Mrs. Hitchcock, seen against the background information given in paragraphs one and two, can be judged, even at this early stage, by their visual capacity, the objects of their vision, and their manner of visualizing. Haze "looks" and "stares" -- both connote a search for some sort of knowledge. Looking, though, is more casual than staring. Staring would seem to be a harder kind of looking, a more powerful, longer looking, as if the seeker is astonished or very much involved personally in what he is seeing. Staring demands. It implies a type of violence, a desire to wrest meaning from its object. Mrs. Hitchcock is described as seeing or "wanting to see" or "squinting." Seeing is the goal of looking -- to see is to have perceived the total picture, to have knowledge or to realize something. Squinting, though, is done to shield the eyes from too bright a light, or to narrow vision to bring something into focus. It might also accompany a
facial contortion expressing powerful emotion. When Mrs. Hitchcock "sees" the child and the porter Haze is "staring" at, she believes she sees everything there is to see. She wants "to see" the price on the suit Haze is wearing. Once she knows the figures she believes she knows all she needs to know. By her standards, Haze's place in the universe has been established. Before seeing the price tag, Mrs. Hitchcock, distracted by Haze's eyes, "squints" trying to "see" them, perhaps hoping to reduce their mystery immediately.

This first scene introduces the novel's primary tensions in terms of sight imagery. Throughout the novel Haze is in conflict with the type of person Mrs. Hitchcock is because of their different ways of seeing. Mrs. Hitchcock views things superficially, in terms of their monetary value. As far as she can see, the surface meaning is the whole meaning. She senses mystery in Haze's eyes, but is intimidated by it. She sees a child, a porter, a price tag, and an odd man. Haze, however, tends to look at things staringly -- until they yield a deeper meaning. As implied, his capacity for seeing is immense and he looks for something commensurate to his vision. Mrs. Hitchcock places Haze by the price of his suit, but Haze is looking for "a place to be" (4, p. 43).

Haze's "glaring-blue" suit probably refers to its hurting brightness; however, no light comes from Haze's eyes. Haze's appearance represents a second conflict in
Wise Blood. His hat is a preacher's hat and his suit has a strange brightness (4, p. 9). But as we find out later, Haze has a firm belief in nothing. Since light is both the method and goal of vision, it represents apprehension of truth when seen in a character's eyes. Haze's lightless eyes state his spiritual condition, but his clothes speak a conflicting message. Haze's total appearance shows his true orientation, and at the same time displays his self-estrangement. A similar irony lies in Haze's Name. Both first and last name recall faulty conditions of sight. The novel's first scene depicts Haze as earnestly searching, yet his name conveys the same truth about him that his lightless eyes do. Although he looks, he is unable to see. His vision is hazy; he is lost in a fog — perhaps because of the unrecognized "motes" in the inner eye of his spiritual vision.

Haze is on a train journey at the beginning of Wise Blood. When that journey ends, it is replaced by another, through Taulkinham for a place to stay. That one is replaced by another, and the novel continues in this way. Each means of transportation has its attending driver or "guide" who knows where the conveyance is going, and whose job it is to care for the travellers. The role of "guide" each time is one of speaking some truth intended to point out to Haze the direction he should take. The first such guide is the train porter whom Haze feels compelled to "go
When Haze tells the porter he is from Eastrod,

'That isn't on this line,' the porter said.
'You on the wrong train.'
'Going to the city,' Haze said. 'I said I was raised in Eastrod.'
The porter didn't say anything.
'Eastrod,' Haze said, louder.
The porter jerked the shade down. 'You want your berth made up now, or what are you standing there for?' he asked.
'Eastrod,' Haze said. 'Near Melsy' (4, p. 10).

What seems to be indifference is actually hard, cold truth. Haze is on the wrong train because he is going to the city. The city will take him farther away from where he should be — Eastrod, as is symbolized in a dream-vision shortly to come. When Haze tells the porter he was raised in Eastrod, the porter ignores the statement. In fact, Haze has not been "raised" at all yet, in the sense of rebirth; spiritually, he is a dead man. The pulling of the shades and the question about wanting his "berth made up now" take on ominous overtones in light of Haze's condition. Sleep in his berth at night takes on the meaning of being entombed before a rebirth. In short, the porter is saying that if Haze continues to move in his present direction, a type of death-before-life is sure to follow. The porter implies that Haze has not yet been born when he asks if he wants his "berth made up now." In answer to what he is standing there for, Haze repeats "Eastrod," trying to make the porter aware of his hometown's name. Actually, Eastrod
is what Haze wants, but he does not see it. Eastrod is somehow connected with the birth that should have taken place much earlier.

Haze persists in shadowing the porter, trying to tell him he is someone Haze knows from Eastrod, but the porter denies it. At the end of the chapter, Haze, sick from being enclosed in the upper berth,

saw the porter at the other end of the car, a white shape in the darkness, standing there watching him and not moving.

'I'm sick!' he called. 'I can't be closed up in this thing. Get me out!'
The porter stood watching him and didn't move.

'Jesus,' Haze said, 'Jesus.'
The porter didn't move. 'Jesus been a long time gone,' he said in a sour triumphant voice (4, p. 19).

The porter distances himself from what he sees and is unwilling to help. The porter is a salvation-figure to Haze, taken for Christ as the above passage has been worded to mean. Haze is established as a subconscious Jesus-seeker, who mistakenly sees saviors where there are none. This first case of mistaken identity marks Haze as having a "mote" in his inner eye.

The "Jesus been a long time gone" line corresponds to the child seen previously. This "peering" child at the other end of the car might be Haze's youthful self, which he sees at the other end of his life, the "peering" indicating that a searching quality is part of his personality. He sees himself again as a child in a dream in the upper berth. He first recalls "watching" his grandfather's
coffin "from a distance," then his father's burial. He recalls Eastrod as a place where everyone is gone or dead, leaving it deserted. The image of his grandfather is buried in his mind. Haze recalls his boyhood sight of the old man preaching from the hood of a car. This whole childhood remembrance is of sin and death, but even so "Where he wanted to stay was in Eastrod with his two eyes open, and his hands always handling the familiar thing, his feet on the known track, and his tongue not too loose" (4, p. 16).

Through his induction into the army, Haze lost contact with Eastrod. In so doing, he also lost contact with the childhood in which sin, death and Jesus were all connected. Of greater importance, he lost contact with himself: "He had all the time he could want to study his soul in and assure himself that it was not there" (4, p. 18). With the belief that he has no soul, Haze returns to Eastrod after the army, but not surprisingly, finds nothing to see. He lost the means of seeing Eastrod's significance when he began to believe in nothing. The whole tenor of the dream, though, contradicts what Haze says on the train: "You might as well go one place as another" (4, p. 11). His subconscious desires show that he only wants to go to Eastrod.

Eastrod is certainly not portrayed as a Garden-before-the-Fall symbol because all that Haze recalls of it is death and his grandfather's preaching about Jesus and sin. Haze's preoccupation with Eastrod may signify a regretted
escape from death. He recalls many deaths that occurred there, but he was not one of those so afflicted. In fact, he is the only member of his family to survive. He has not experienced death; he has only watched it happen to others. Perhaps this is meant to suggest that he cannot die; death in its real sense can only happen to those who believe in Christ.

Another significance of Eastrod for Haze is its association with his grandfather. Even though the grandfather raves about Haze's sinfulness, the old man raves more about Jesus' willingness to save him:

Did they know that even for that boy there . . . Jesus would die ten million deaths before he would let him lose his soul. He would chase him over the waters of sin! Did they doubt Jesus could walk on the waters of sin! That boy had been redeemed and Jesus wasn't going to leave him ever. Jesus would never let him forget he was redeemed. . . . Jesus would have him in the end (4, p. 16).

Presumably, since the image of his grandfather preaching from the hood of a car subconsciously motivated Haze's manner of preaching in the novel, salvation by Jesus remained in his subconscious mind, too. The real meaning of Eastrod, then, is the human condition. This condition is defined by the state of Original Sin and its punishment, death; but it is also defined by the state of Redemption by Jesus. All three of these are inescapable and they haunt Haze. The name "Eastrod" seems to be suggested by the Biblical story of the Fall in *Genesis*: when God sent Adam
and Eve out of the Garden, "at the east of the Garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which he turned every which way, to guard the way to the tree of life" (Gen. 3:24). The Cain and Abel story also clarifies the name. After Cain killed his brother, reports Gen. 4:16, Cain "went away from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, east of Eden" (3, pp. 3, 4). In Wise Blood Haze seemingly tries to kill the pesky Enoch and does kill Solace Layfield, both "brother" figures. O'Connor may have used "rod" as a punishment image-word, rhyming it with "Nod" to form the last syllable of Eastrod.

Haze's visit back to Eastrod after the army service, also seen in his dream-vision, was made in the dark -- literally and figuratively. Haze arrives at his family home at night. Since Haze is the last surviving Motes, the house might symbolize him: "as dark as the night and open to it . . . the fence around it had partly fallen and . . . weeds were growing through the porch floor. . . it was only a shell, . . . there was nothing here but the skeleton of a house" (4, p. 18). At the beginning of chapter one, it should be recalled, Haze is described in similar fashion: "The outline of a skull under his skin was plain and insistent" (4, p. 9).
In the course of Haze's dream about post-army Eastrod, Haze, his mother, sin, birth, death and need for salvation all merge. Haze falls asleep in his mother's room, the kitchen. A board falls on his head and cuts his face. The only furniture left in the house is a chifforobe Haze's mother had bought for thirty dollars. He claims it as his own and ties it down, also thinking that if his mother "came looking any time of the night, she would 'see' and rest, knowing that it was guarded." Haze believes "She would come with that look on her face, unrested and looking" (4, p. 19). Towards the end of the dream, Haze's sleep and the coffin closing on his mother merge into the same image: "but it was falling dark on top of her, closing down all the time. From inside he saw it closing, coming closer and closer down and cutting off the light in the room. He opened his eyes and saw it closing..." (4, p. 19). But it does not fall shut; Haze's head lunges out of the enclosed berth just in time.

Haze's sleep in his mother's kitchen in Eastrod could symbolize his wait for rebirth in the place where he was once promised that "Jesus would have him in the end." The chifforobe Haze's mother bought for thirty dollars might be a variation of the Judas' betrayal story. Haze's mother is not portrayed as an evil character, though she is a forbidding one. She is strict and puritannical, anxious about Haze's spiritual integrity:
His mother was standing by the washpot in the yard, looking at him, when he got home. She wore black all the time and her dresses were longer than other women's. She was standing there straight, looking at him. He moved behind a tree and got out of her view, but in a few minutes, he could feel her watching him through the tree. He saw the lowered place and the casket again and a thin woman in the casket who was too long for it. Her head stuck up at one end and her knees were raised to make her fit. She had a cross-shaped face and hair pulled close to her head (4, p. 38).

Seen here, Haze's mother is identified with Christ through the description of her face and position in the coffin; at the same time her identification with death is clear. In the dream-vision in chapter one, she is identified with Christ through her coming and looking any time of the night. In the gospels the Christian is warned to be on his guard, for he is told through parables that Christ could come looking for his readiness at any time (Luke 12:35-40; Mark 13:32-37; Matt. 25:1-13). In the quotation from Wise Blood above, Haze is identified with the tree of the cross -- for he hides behind it to escape punishment. His mother is to come after him with a stick, representing an agent of punishment (4, pp. 38-39).

Haze's mother is an ambiguous figure. She may represent the whole history of sin and death in the world. According to the Genesis account, sin came into existence through woman. Nothing stands between the Original Sin and the full onslaught of punishment except the Cross. Ultimately, a woman, Christ's mother, was responsible for
the birth of Redemption into the world. Since sin is the cause of death, and death is also the means of Redemption, Haze's mother can represent the whole cycle. This idea brings the massive-looking chifforobe bought for thirty dollars into better focus. Woman was a "traitor" in the sense of bringing sin into the world, but if it were not for sin, there would have been no Redemption. Redemption would have been superfluous. So the chifforobe is a Sin-bought-Christ image; therefore, the most important thing Haze's mother had owned. She hadn't "bought herself anything big again" (4, p. 16).

If the chifforobe is a Christ-symbol hidden in the darkness of the family home, it must mean that Christ is hidden in the darkness of Haze's mind: "he saw Jesus move from tree to tree in the back of his mind, a wild ragged figure motioning him to turn around and come off into the darkness where he was not sure of his footing" (4, p. 16). Christ is Haze's simply by inheritance because he is his mother's child. In the dream Haze secures the chifforobe by tying its legs and securing it to the floorboards. He leaves notes in the drawers claiming it for himself. So Haze has accepted Christ somewhere in his mind or spirit already. Christ is moored there ready to be claimed by Haze when he returns to "Eastrod" -- the true place of the human condition.
The board that falls on Haze's face and cuts his forehead might represent crucifixion, this incident being Haze's baptism into suffering and death, and an indication that Jesus would "never let him forget he was redeemed" and was chasing him "over waters of sin" (4, p. 16). It might also be the "sign of Cain" put on Haze's forehead as it was on Cain's as a mark of the Lord's protection against final damnation to the powers of evil (3, Gen. 4:15). The Lord is like Haze's mother, "unrested and looking," "no more satisfied dead than alive" (4, p. 16), trying to prod Haze into new life.

The train berth where Haze's dream occurs is a multi-levelled symbol showing the essential actions of the whole novel:

Haze laughed. The porter jerked the ladder off suddenly with a wrench of his arm that sent the boy clutching at the blanket into the berth. He lay on his stomach for a few minutes and didn't move. After awhile he turned and found the light and looked around him. There was no window. He was closed up in the thing except for a little space over the curtain. The top of the berth was low and curved over. He lay down and noticed that the curved top looked as if it were not quite closed; it looked as if it were closing. He lay there for awhile, not moving. There was something in his throat like a sponge with an egg taste; he didn't want to turn over for fear it would move. He wanted the light off. He reached up and snapped it and the darkness sank down on him and then faded a little with light from the aisle that came in through the foot of space not closed. He wanted it all dark, he didn't want it diluted. He heard the porter's footsteps coming down the aisle... brushing against the green curtains and fading up the other way out of hearing (4, pp. 14-15).
The berth and the dream it provokes can mean several things in the context of *Wise Blood*. Haze finds a type of light when he sees that he has no soul, and there is nothing to believe in. He finds a light, but there is "no window" — nothing to see with this light. He is "closed up" in his new belief as he is in the berth, which is described as a coffin and meant to resemble one. Feeling a sickness, he tries to get rid of the little light that is left, thinking this will help. He does not succeed in getting rid of all of it, though: this light he cannot put out is his subconscious clinging to Eastrod and all it represents. Haze's fate is to lie in a half-sleep (half-death) and listen to the fading footsteps of the Eastrod-porter, memories of the past when he did believe. From this, the dream recounting the history of death in Haze's family is born.

Another interpretation could be made in reference to Haze's former Christian beliefs. Death is a "rebirth" into eternal life, but caused by sin. Haze's laughing at the porter is his laughing at death with its connection to sin. (Sin does not exist in Haze's new belief.) Consequently, Haze suffers the irony of belief in nothing — he is catapulted into a coffin-like symbol of death while he is still alive. There is not much light and no window to see out of. From somewhere in his being, though, is "a foot of space" not closed where real light seeps in. Haze
wants this light off, so he can have undiluted darkness, or disbelief. Since Haze's berth is the upper rather than the lower one, he symbolically is undergoing a higher birth, or rebirth. He struggles against having light as he struggles against the rebirth, but he does not succeed against either one. Haze's rebirth is foreshadowed near the end of chapter one: "He sprang up between the crack and wedged his shoulders and head through it and hung there, dizzy, with the dim light of the train slowly showing the rug below" (4, p. 19).

The "berth" signifies on many levels: resistance to death as futile; the inability of man to save himself from death; the state of despair of one without belief; Haze's spiritual birth into death by denying belief in Jesus; Haze's birth into death as a Christian; the fact that one cannot look outside oneself to come to terms with reality, but must look within.

Haze's Conscious Direction

Consciously hunting "a place to be," Haze arrives in Taulkinham, the scene of the rest of the novel. He begins to see "signs and lights... Most of them were electric and moved up and down frantically" (4, p. 20). The multiplicity and the gyrations of man-made lights rigorously try to fill the void left when Haze put out the One Light he had. Now his satisfaction will be found in
lesser lights -- the first being Mrs. Leora Watts, her name indicating her artificiality in comparison to the Light Haze had. In the first meeting with the owner "of the friendliest bed in town," Haze approaches furtively by looking in the window (4, p. 21): "He put his eye to a convenient crack in the shade, and found himself looking directly at a large white knee. . . . The door to the left was cracked and let out a narrow shaft of light. He moved into the light and looked through the crack" (4, p. 22). Haze reverses the normal procedure of looking out of a window to see the moonlight, by looking in a window at a knee. Haze's conscious choices are already causing him to travel in a contradictory direction. Haze looks through a crack and light comes through a crack, indicating Haze is constricting his vision by the course he is taking.

Once inside, Haze stares at Mrs. Watts and she at him, signifying long reaches for knowledge on the part of both. Characteristically, Haze replies to any such direct look by denying that he is what he looks like, or with some statement disassociating himself from Jesus and Redemption: "What I mean to have you know is: I'm no goddam preacher" (4, p. 23). The cab driver, who took Haze to Mrs. Watts, persisted in calling Haze a preacher. Haze's hat looks like a preacher's hat, and in O'Connor's fiction a character's hat is meant to symbolize his true vocation, according to Sr. Kathleen Feeley (2, p. 23). The cab driver is like the
porter in trying to set Haze straight: "It ain't only the hat... It's a look in your face somewheres" (4, p. 21).

Mrs. Watts reply to Haze's statement is made with the eyes: "She had a bold steady penetrating stare" (4, p. 22). In O'Connor fiction, the only power as strong as the power of good is its exact opposite, the power of evil, and its face is the only one to whom Haze declares his commitment. Actually, evil is the only presence capable of vying with Haze for the possession of his soul. The looks of evil characters are always "stares" which characterize the violent nature of evil: Mrs. Watts' eyes "took everything in whole, like quicksand" (4, p. 37).

Affirming sin by trying to prove there is none, Haze earnestly takes up sex with Mrs. Watts. In so doing, the symbolic hat is displaced: "The black hat sat squarely on his head. He came in with it on and when it knocked the electric light bulb that hung from the ceiling, he took it off... She reached for his hat... 'That Jesus-seeing hat'... and put it on her head" (4, p. 37). Watts, the sex-symbol, replaces Jesus, and Haze "jumped for the electric light cord and took his clothes off in the dark" (4, p. 37). This darkness and nakedness leads immediately into the dream-vision which recounts Haze's birth into personal sin as a child. The occasion was a carnival, and Haze wanted to follow his father into an "adults only" sideshow tent. Haze explains to the Barker that he has already
"seen" the pop and the monkeys, and he is ready for something more. Inside is a woman squirming in a black-lined box. This is Haze's sexual initiation, and the image of woman-sin-death is reinforced once more (4, pp. 37-38). The dream-vision gives greater significance to Haze's sexual acts with Mrs. Watts than they might otherwise have. Haze seems to be demonstrating his belief that he can erase the history of sin by immersing himself in woman-sin-death: a kind of Redemption in reverse.

Haze is a failure as a passionate lover, so his reverse Redemption fails to satisfy him. The idea of getting a car hits him with a sudden impact and seems to rob his experience with Mrs. Watts of all its glow: "He got out of Mrs. Watts' bed early in the morning before any light came in the room... he didn't even look at her" (4, p. 40). The experience, though, has apparently been soul-shattering, as is indicated by Haze's face: it "had a fragile look as if it might have been broken and stuck together again, or like a gun no one knows is loaded" (4, p. 40).

The used-car lot Haze investigates has the look of forbidden territory, judging by the appearance of the attendant: "A white boy was sitting on a gasoline can in front of the office. He had the look of being there to keep people out. He wore a black raincoat and his face was partly hidden under a leather cap. There was a cigarette hanging out of one corner of his mouth and the ash on it
was about an inch long" (4, pp. 44-45). This sinister presence is in the same category as the porter and the cab driver. His look of being there to keep people out, should be taken as an ominous warning, but Haze ignores it. The blackness of the attendant's apparel and the fact that the "two window glasses made him a yellow color and distorted his shape" (4, p. 41) make him a demonic sort of being. The yellow color and the distorted shape were previously mentioned in connection with Mrs. Watts: "he looked into the yellowish mirror and watched Mrs. Watts, slightly distorted" (4, p. 22). Since a mirror reflects an honest image, it can be taken as a conscience-symbol showing the presence of evil.

When Haze takes a test drive in the car, the demonic presence sits "hunched up in the back on the two-by-four, cursing" (4, p. 43), as if to signify that the car will have its own personal devil. Besides being a warning of danger, the attendant may be taken as a mirror-image of Haze. Smoking while sitting on a gasoline can represents the same kind of dangerous position Haze is in. He may momentarily explode in a flash of light, too, as the earlier description of his face indicates. Haze also is becoming steadily more shrouded in darkness, shrunken (the attendant is two heads shorter than his father), and is definitely in a hellish area.
Haze transfers the meaning of home from Mrs. Watts' place to the car. "I wanted this car mostly to be a house for me," he explains to the lot owner. "I ain't got any place to be" (4, p. 43. From this time on, the car becomes a house and just about everything else to Haze: companion, pulpit, religion, freedom, and escape. But the fact that the car is "rat-colored," bought at a lot fronted by a sign reading "SLADE'S FOR THE LATEST" and surrounded by deserted warehouses and buildings with "black empty windows" (4, pp. 40, 41, 42) makes the car a death symbol -- a coffin on wheels driven by a living dead man. Consonant with this is the feeling Haze has as he takes the first drive: "He had the feeling that everything he saw was a broken-off piece of some giant blank thing that he had forgotten happened to him" (4, p. 44).

The car takes Haze past a religious sign reading "WOE TO THE BLASPHEMER AND WHOREMONGER! WILL HELL SWALLOW YOU UP?" Haze is both of these, but he does not read the large, screaming letters. Instead "his eyes turned toward the two words at the bottom of the sign. They said in smaller letters, 'Jesus saves'" (4, pp. 44-45). Haze is so taken with this sign that he does not hear the horn blowing behind him. When Haze turns from the sign toward the driver, his face no longer has a "broken" look; it is "placid-looking." This driver is also a truth-sayer and tries to set Haze straight about his car which is block-
ing the way: "Will you get your goddam outhouse off the middle of the road?" (4, p. 45).

Haze's Subconscious Direction

The subconscious route Haze follows begins with his strange fascination with the "blind" preacher Asa Hawks. Haze is arrested by the sight of Hawks and his "child" while listening to a salesman selling a potato-peeling gimmick. Haze has eyes only for the false preacher and ignores the salesman. Haze tears up the tract about Jesus that he is handed. "Then he looked up and saw the blind man's child not three feet away, watching him. Her mouth was open and her eyes glittered on him like two chips of green bottle glass. . . . 'I seen you,' she said" (4, pp. 26-27). This "child" will be instrumental in the course Haze follows later on. Her eyes betray her malevolence: their glittering quality, the chipped-ness or brokenness of them, their resemblance to cheap glass. She has seen Haze in the act of denying Jesus. She is one of those characters able to apprehend what sort of man Haze is.

Although he tears up the tract, the sight of the blind man causes Haze to follow him. The blind man acts as some kind of magnetic light, drawing Haze on. His fascination with Hawks causes him to become "blind to the world" and its lesser lights:
When Haze started across the street, Enoch yelled, 'Don't you see the streetlight! That means you got to wait!' A cop blew a whistle and a car blasted its horn and stopped short. Haze went on across keeping his eyes on the blind man in the middle of the block. The policeman kept on blowing his whistle. He crossed the street to where Haze was and stopped him.

'You know what that little thing hanging up there is for?' he asked, pointing to the traffic light over the intersection.
'I didn't see it,' Haze said (4, p. 28).

Haze first encounters Hawks by trying to see: "He came up to where the blind man was without saying anything and stood leaning forward in front of him as if he were trying to see through the black glasses" (4, p. 31). To cover his real intentions, Haze accuses Hawks' daughter of giving him "her fast eye" to which the girl protests. Hawks, though a fraud, speaks the truth to the girl: "He followed me. . . Nobody would follow you. I can hear the urge for Jesus in his voice" (4, p. 31). The girl does have a "fast eye" in reference to the haste with which she can size up an advantageous situation — Haze. The "me, not you" that her father speaks will be Haze's conflict for the rest of the novel.

After just one meeting with Hawks, Haze is obsessed with him. After Haze sees the sign saying "Jesus saves," he turns his car around and heads for the City Park and Enoch, who knows the blind man's address. Haze is forced to suffer through Enoch's daily ritual in the park before he can learn the address. Although Haze does not realize
it, the "liturgy" he is going through with Enoch is important as a prelude to a revelation to come. The first stop is the "FROSTY BOTTLE" where a waitress "with a once-white uniform clotted with brown stains" serves them (4, p. 51). The apron seems to be a visual reproduction of her soul. At any rate, she stares at Haze as Mrs. Watts and Hawks' child have done, and elicits from him the same kind of declaration he gives on such occasions: "He leaned on his hands over the counter until his face was just a foot from hers. She turned around and stared at him. . . . 'I AM clean,' Haze said" (4, p. 53). Haze's next encounter is in the zoo. Haze stops suddenly before a cage that seems to be empty. It takes Enoch some time to discover by "squinting" what Haze is staring at. "That ain't nothing but a hoot owl," short-sighted Enoch complains. "'I AM clean,' Haze said to the eye. He said it just the way he said it to the woman in the FROSTY BOTTLE. The eye shut softly and the owl turned its face to the wall" (4, p. 55). Haze makes the same confession to the woman, representing sinfulness, and the owl, that according to Sr. Kathleen Feeley, represents "the all-seeing eye of God" (1, p. 67). Both the woman and the owl acknowledge the lie in characteristic ways. "Why should I give a goddam what you are!" is characteristic of evil; the silent head-turning of the owl is the disavowal of Haze's rejected God (4, p. 53).
The museum, the last stop, suggests death with everything that Haze and Enoch see. "They went inside a dark hall... There was nothing in the hall but two urns and an old man asleep in a straight chair against the wall... he looked like a dried spider stuck there" (4, p. 56). They enter a dark room "full of glass cases." Enoch's revelation is a man, a mummy, "about three feet long. He was naked and a dried yellow color and his eyes were drawn almost shut as if a giant steel block were falling down on top of him" (4, p. 57). Enoch tells Haze to "see" that the man "was once as tall as you or me." Haze's eyes are indeed on the man "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" (4, p. 57).

Since Haze's reflection is seen on top of the shrunken man's figure, he probably sees himself in the dried-up mummy and it makes a violent impression. The "two clean bullet holes" may represent not only his shock, but his two "blasphemies" on the way to the museum. Denying the truth of oneself leads to the house of death. In this episode Haze has confronted both good and evil on the way to the end of his journey. He gives neither one the correct answer, and there is not a third inquirer. The fate of the man who believes in nothing is symbolized in the shrunken, yellow man. The two lies are "two clean bullet holes" further shrinking Haze's humanity.
Death is not hopeless in O'Connor's view, but it is in Haze's. He sees clearly in the museum what belief in nothing makes of man. As he says himself in preaching the Church Without Christ: "what's dead stays that way" (4, p. 60). Haze remains before the glass case until a "grinning" woman appears and looks in it, "the reflection of her face appeared grinning in the glass over Hazel Motes's" (4, p. 57). Apparently, she thinks the mummy is ludicrous -- or is simply laughing about its nakedness. "She snickered and put two fingers over her teeth. . . . When Haze 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" (4, p. 57).

Haze sees not only the destined state of man who believes in nothing, he sees the personified effects of evil and death in a world without redemption where man has no hope and no dignity. To the "grinning" woman, the mummy is an incongruous image of man -- one that has nothing to do with her, otherwise she would not be laughing. As for Enoch, he seems to be warped in the other direction, reverencing the image of evil and death, which ultimately is himself.

The revelation of the mummy compels Haze to seek the blind man in earnest. He uses Hawks' child as an excuse to try to peer again into the blind man's eyes. "'I thought if your girl wanted to give me so much eye, I
might return her some of it." He wasn't looking at the girl; he was staring at the black glasses. . . " (4, p. 61). Hawks' enthusiasm for the sight of Haze has diminished as much as Haze's for Hawks has increased. "His look was not the same as it had been two nights before; it was sour and unfriendly. . . " (4, p. 61). Sabbath Hawks, though, reveals her designs on Haze after he has gone. His appeal for her is in his eyes: "I like his eyes," she observed, "They don't look like they see what he's looking at but they keep on looking. . . . I never seen a boy that I like the looks of any better" (4, pp. 62, 63).

The tensions between Haze and the Hawkses continue to build as the novel progresses. Haze wants a woman he can teach something to, and decides that Sabbath is the one. Instead, Sabbath tries to seduce Haze one day in the country. Haze is unyielding, though, and when Sabbath lifts his hat from his eyes at one point "they stared straight upward" (4, p. 69) as if to indicate where his heart really is. "A blinding white cloud" (4, p. 67) hovers about Haze during this incident and imposes its presence during the conversation about Sabbath's "daddy blinding himself" (4, p. 67). Haze and Sabbath pay no attention to the "blinding" cloud, and it finally turns into a "bird with long thin wings" and disappears "in the opposite direction" (4, p. 71). This act is reminiscent
of the owl that turned its face to the wall -- as if once more Haze has been scrutinized and found wanting.

Chapter nine of Wise Blood marks the point where Haze's movement into his true vocation becomes intensified. Haze wants to emulate and even outdo the blind man in the number of disciples he can gather. He finally attracts one: Onnie Jay Holy. As Holy stands listening to Haze's preaching, he conveys to Haze his understanding of the Church without Christ with his eyes: "Every time Haze looked at him, the man winked." Holy looked like "an ex-preacher turned cowboy, or an ex-cowboy turned mortician. He was not handsome but under his smile, there was an honest look that fitted into his face like a set of false teeth" (4, p. 81). "He had a winning smile and it was evident that he didn't think he was any better than anybody else even though he was" (4, p. 84). Holy is a mirror-image of Haze. Haze is also an "ex-" by reason of his alienation from himself and his vocation. Haze's death-in-life state complements the "mortician" in Holy. Discrepancy between looks and reality is as much apparent in Haze as in Holy. Holy recognizes Haze as one of his own kind; Holy is another evil force gifted with true sight.

Holy testifies to Haze's preaching, promotes a religion of sweetness and sentimentality, and then makes a pitch for money. As he listens to Holy, "Haze's face under the white hat began to take on a look of fierceness" (4, p. 84).
Influenced by this saccharine Anti-Christ, the fierceness of his vocation, symbolized by the hat, transfers to his face, which symbolizes the reality of his being. Not until someone begins to preach what he perceives Haze is saying, does Haze realize what is going on. Holy preaches religion with a hook, which provokes the truth from Haze: "Listen!" Haze shouted. "It don't cost you any money to know the truth! You can't know it for money!" (4, p. 85).

After the encounter with the false preacher, Haze starts to spend the night in his car, and has another dream:

He dreamed he was not dead but only buried. He was not waiting on the Judgement because there was no Judgement, he was waiting on nothing. Various eyes looked through the black oval window at his situation, some with considerable reverence, like the boy from the zoo, and some only to see what they could see. There were three women with paper sacks who looked at him critically as if he were something -- a piece of fish -- they might buy, but they passed on after a minute. . . . Then a woman with two little boys on either side of her stopped and looked in, grinning. After a second, she pushed the boys away and indicated she would climb in and keep him company for awhile, but she couldn't get through the glass and finally she went off. All this time Haze was bent on getting out but since there was no use to try, he didn't make any move one way or another. He kept expecting Hawks to appear at the oval window with a wrench, but the blind man didn't come (4, pp. 88-89).

Like his other dreams, this one defines Haze's situation. Believing in nothing precludes death and judgement because they belong to the economy of Redemption. Haze is a living dead man encoffined in his car because he has
taken it as his salvation. It amounts to nothing so "there was no use to try" to get out. Behind the oval window, Haze is on display just as the shrunken man is, a symbol of sin-ridden man. The three women with sacks seem to be looking for a good piece of fish, a Christ-symbol, so they have good reason to walk away. The grinning woman, however, wants to join Haze. The fact that she cannot get through the glass signifies the place of sex-salvation in Haze's life. It does not fulfill him. He sees Hawks as the only savior, but Hawks does not come -- cannot come -- because of his falsity.

After his dream, Haze again tries to reverse the movement of salvation: since his savior does not come to him, Haze goes to his "savior". He has to pick the lock of the blind man's room: "his heart was palpitating as if he had run all the way here from a great distance" (4, p. 89). Haze sees what he has come for. The truth about Haze's failed-prophet Christ figure robs Haze of his own face, his own being: "Haze's expression seemed to open onto a deeper blankness and reflect something and then close again. 'Now you can get out,' Hawks said (4, p. 89). Haze finally sees that Hawks is a man who has blinded himself from the Divine:

He had preached for an hour on the blindness of Paul, working himself up until he saw himself struck blind by a Divine flash of lightning and, with courage enough, then, he had thrust his hands into the bucket of wet lime and streaked them down his face; but he hadn't been able to let any of it get into his eyes. (4, p. 65).
Hawks remembers his moment of pride as being "possessed" by "many devils." It was the crisis in his own search for salvation. At the moment he realizes his evil, it is struck down. The devils "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" (4, p. 65).

Hiding his failure under false pretenses, Hawks consciously avoids what Haze subconsciously yearns for. The two share blindness, but of a different order. Resolution of the tension between these two types of blindness is one of the goals of Wise Blood.

Seeing the truth about Hawks is a second revelation to Haze. The first, in the museum, showed Haze an abominable image of himself. From that sight, Haze goes to Hawks seeking, subconsciously, the means of salvation from such a horror. Haze's obsession, like Enoch's for the mummy, made a holy object of a false god. Haze is now free to realize that fixing one's salvation in what is human is a travesty, as Hawks and the mummy are travesties of Redemption. "Now you can get out" might mean that Haze is now free to leave all pretensions. As Henry Taylor notes, Hawks is a father-figure to Haze, inspiring him, teaching him and then sending him out on his own (5, p. 336).
Haze returns to his preaching after the Hawks' revelation, and is again confronted by a mirror-image:

He was preaching with such concentration that he didn't notice a high rat-colored car that had been driven around the block three times already, while the two men in it hunted a place to park... he didn't see Hoover Shoats and a man in a glare-blue suit and white hat get out of it, but after a few seconds his head turned that way and he saw the man in the glare-blue suit and white hat go up on it. He was so struck with how gaunt and thin he looked in the illusion that he stopped preaching. He had never pictured himself that way before. The man he saw was hollow-chested and carried his neck thrust forward and his arms down by his side; he stood there as if he were waiting for some signal he might not catch (4, p. 91).

Preceding this apparition, Haze was preaching about conscience as a "trick": "it's no more than your face in the mirror" (4, pp. 90-91). This is an overt clue to the interpretation of mirror imagery in Wise Blood. When Haze's mirror-image appears, Haze takes him quite seriously. To see your face in a mirror is to see yourself as you truly are.

The sickliness Haze detects in Layfield's figure as reflecting his own worsens when he returns to his room and finds Sabbath Hawks in his bed. With Hawks' image destroyed, Haze is vulnerable and no longer resists Sabbath. The last image in the chapter shows the woman-sin symbol in control: "her hand came up behind his head and snatched the hat off and sent it flying across the room in the dark" (4, p. 93).
Thanks only to Enoch and the "new Jesus," Haze is jolted out of Sabbath's clutches. When Enoch hears Haze asking for the new Jesus one day in his preaching, he is inspired to resurrect his treasure from the museum case. When he takes the mummy to Haze's apartment, "Haze was lying on his cot with a washrag over his eyes; the exposed part of his face was ashen and set in a grimace, as if he were in some permanent pain. Sabbath Hawks was sitting at the table by the window, studying herself in her pocket mirror" (4, p. 99). The morning-after scene is the spectacle of sin admiring herself, while her conquest languishes on the cot, suffering her effects. The washrag signifies the need of the eyes to be bathed clean, the soul to be made whole. Haze resembles Hawks more than ever in this scene, for Hawks had lain in a similar way earlier. Haze is in the process of rejecting his true vocation now, as Hawks did earlier. Sabbath makes this clear: "He's not really sick, she said to herself. . . . he just ain't used to me yet" (4, p. 100).

Sabbath is the first one to see the "new Jesus." Representing man in Haze's belief, resurrection has done the "new Jesus" more harm than good: "Two days out of the glass case had not improved the new Jesus' condition. One side of his face had been partly mashed in and on the other side, his eyelid had split and a pale dust was seeping out of it" (4, p. 100). Sabbath recognizes the univer-
sal sinner in him: "She had never known anyone who looked
like him before, but there was something about him of
everyone she had ever known, as if they had been rolled
into one person and killed and shrunk and dried" (4, p. 100).

Sabbath is the only one who would think the shrunken
man "right cute." She pretends to be his mother, which
symbolically she is, and shows him to Haze, for he is his
"daddy." Previous to Sabbath’s entrance with the "child
of their sin," Haze puts on his mother’s glasses, which
he has always kept:

There was a small white-framed mirror hung on the
back of the door and he made his way to it and
looked at himself. His blurred face was dark with
excitement and the lines of it were deep and
crooked. The little silver-rimmed glasses gave him
a look of deflected sharpness, as if they were hid-
ing some dishonest plan that would show in his
naked eyes (4, pp. 101-102).

Haze’s earlier remark about conscience being "your
face in the mirror" makes this scene an examination of con-
science. Haze has worn these glasses before: to read his
mother’s Bible and to try to stare down his tempters when
he was in the army. But they have never been of much use.
They tired his eyes when he read the Bible, so that he
had to stop; and apparently they tired his voice when he
explained that he would not go to a brothel, for his voice
broke (4, p. 17). The fact that the glasses are silver-
rimmed and were his mother’s hint at their meaning. The
woman-sin image is recalled again. Haze’s mother paid
thirty dollars for the chifforobe Christ-symbol; Judas earned thirty silver pieces for him. The silver-rimmed sight is the sin-brought-Redemption vision which causes Haze to stop reading the Bible, stop resisting his tempters, and stop seeing the dishonesty his "naked eyes" would show. The unbeliever cannot see with these glasses.

Haze sees a final vision with the glasses that is worse than the first:

two more faces floated into the line of his vision;

... The smaller dark one, just under the other, only squinted as if it were trying to identify an old friend who was going to kill it.

Haze stood motionless... his head was thrust forward as if he had to use his whole face to see with. He was about four feet from them but they seemed to be just under his eyes (4, p, 102).

The grotesquerie of the whole history of sin is reflected in Sabbath and her "baby." The glasses make them close, large and hideous. Haze seizes his self-image and flings it outside. This episode is also a mirror of that earlier scene when Haze learns the truth about Hawks. Haze is a distortion in the sight of Hawks because he wants to believe. But like the mummy, Haze is a grotesque to begin with because his search for belief is so perverse. Hawks, the fake whose inner vision is unfocused, consequently rejects Haze as Haze does the "new jesus."

Destruction of the mummy and the murder of his "twin," Solace Layfield, which follows shortly after, represents Haze's desperate desire to free himself of belief. He
will not believe in the image of unredeemed, sinful man or in the false image of himself believing in nothing. To complete his freedom from the necessity of believing, Haze turns to his car as the way out. When the car is serviced before the intended trip, the attendant again tells Haze it is of no use -- the car will not last. Haze pays no attention. He ignores all the warnings but the last one. This time the "messenger," though familiar, has distinct celestial qualities. He is a patrolman with "a red pleasant face and eyes the color of fresh ice." The patrolman has no legal reason for stopping Haze. He only tells him, "I just don't like your face." The patrolman gets Haze to comply with his command to drive to the top of the hill nearby by appealing to the sense of sight:

'I want you to see the view from up there, puttiest view you ever did see.' . . . 'Now turn it facing the embankment,' the patrolman called. 'You'll be able to see better thataway.' Haze turned it facing the embankment. 'Now maybe you'd better get out,' the cop said. 'I think you could see it better if you was out (4, p. 113).

The patrolman pushes Haze's car over the embankment. Feeling the cold shock of losing the only thing that still meant anything to him, Haze turns his attention to the view. "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 grey sky that went on, depth after depth, into space" (4, p. 114).
At this sight, the tensions in the novel are resolved. Haze's conscious and subconscious directions merge. He walks back into town and blinds himself. His reasons are not stated, but Haze's resemblance to Hawks is clear enough for the reader to understand that "he saw himself standing there as he was. He fancied Jesus... was standing there, too, beckoning to him;..." (4, p. 65). This time the call is answered. Hawks is Haze's mirror-image just as Onnie Jay Holy, Solace Layfield, and the mummy are. Until Haze is intercepted by grace in the form of the patrolman, he is a fake -- a blind man who sees. Haze's fascination with Hawks is actually a subconscious fascination with himself as his belief in nothing has made him. The disillusionment with Hawks, the treachery of Holy, the disgust over Solace Layfield and the mummy gradually reveal his falsity to his conscience. He sees his own face in all these "mirrors," and sees it as it truly is. His choice of the car as a way out is no way out. When he has no direction left, Divine assistance intervenes.

Haze's act of blinding himself is a forceful symbol of repentence and its effects. He literally abjures his former inner blindness by transferring it to the physical level. As paradoxical as the Christian maxim of saving one's life by losing it, Haze saves his sight by putting it out: "The blind man had the look of seeing something. His face had a peculiar pushing look, as if it were going
forward after something it could just distinguish in the distance. Even when he was sitting motionless in his chair, his face had the look of straining toward something" (4, p. 116-117).

For all practical purposes, Haze behaves like a dead man. He ignores his landlady, who cannot understand why he does the things he does, telling her, "You can't see" (4, p. 21). The landlady becomes the disciple Haze had longed for before. The less she sees, the more attention she pays to Haze: "Watching his face became a habit with her; she wanted to penetrate the darkness behind it and see for herself what was there" (4, p. 123). In the end, the landlady is still watching Haze's eyes:

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 into the darkness until he was the pin point of light (4, p. 126).

O'Connor ends Wise Blood with a mirror-image scene. The landlady's fascination with Haze's blindness parallels Haze's previous fascination with Hawks. This time, though, the outcome will no doubt be different. "His blindness has nothing to do with his sins or his parents' sins. He is blind so that God's power might be seen at work in him" (John 9:3-4).


CHAPTER IV

VISION IMAGERY IN THE VIOLENT BEAR IT AWAY

The Violent Bear It Away was written later than Wise Blood and shows a development in O'Connor's talent that makes it, in some respects, quite different from Wise Blood. The protagonist, Tarwater, is younger than Haze Motes; nevertheless, his foundation is what Haze reaches only at the conclusion of Wise Blood. Haze's great accomplishment is to realize his Christian and human condition. In The Violent Tarwater tries desperately to escape this condition which he fully realizes is his.

In Wise Blood the God identified as Jesus seems more vague than the one who haunts Tarwater. Haze's conversion is to the fact of God's existence; Tarwater's is to the specifically New Testament Jesus Christ and a sense of mission in his name. This is emphasized by much imagery referring to Baptism, the Eucharist, and the Crucifixion. Tarwater's conversion process is very much bound to the world of nature; Haze's comes to him through the city, with the exception of his last "vision," which takes place in the country.

In both novels the main character has a foil who shares the narrative with him almost equally, but a comparison of these sets of characters shows Wise Blood to be much more
allegorical than *The Violent*. Rayber and Tarwater are both rounded, fleshed-out characters with internal conflicts, the potential of either accepting or rejecting faith, and a complex development of personality. *The Violent* shows the struggles of these two realistic human beings much more vividly than Haze's interior struggle is portrayed in *Wise Blood*. Little of Haze's struggle is disclosed to the reader. He is more sketchily drawn than *The Violent*'s characters: he is more shaped by incidents than shaper of them; the results of his decisions are seen, but not his process of reaching them. As for Enoch, Haze's foil, he is almost too moronic to be accepted as realistic at all. His presence in the novel seems justifiable only to represent an idea: secular man is a fool when he takes materialism as his god. Haze's search for salvation in *Wise Blood* can be analyzed and interpreted without much reference to Enoch. He lives on a crude, instinctive level; furthermore, he has no effect on Haze, except as an annoyance. This is not true of Rayber in *The Violent*. Rayber is a very plausible savior; he shares significant likenesses with Tarwater, and is strongly swayed in the same direction of faith. He has a definite effect on Tarwater, forcing him into extremes of behavior.

The vision imagery in *Wise Blood* and *The Violent* Bear *It Away*, on the other hand, is very similar. Such sight words as "staring," "looking," "watching," have the same meaning in both books. Windows, mirrors and eyeglasses
have approximately the same meanings also. Mirror-image characters and scenes are used again. It is still fundamental that a person is what is eyes and the look of his face tell of him.

Besides similar vision imagery, Wise Blood and The Violent have two other motifs in common. O'Connor repeats the motif of search for true belief as motivated by the psychological effect of a family relationship. In Wise Blood, Haze's grandfather is the subconscious motivater; in The Violent old Tarwater similarly affects Rayber and young Tarwater. The two novels also have a thematic antithesis in common. Wise Blood treats faith versus materialism; Haze representing the former, Enoch the latter. The Violent treats faith versus rationalism with Rayber and Tarwater much alike until a certain point when the two definitely make opposite decisions.

Characters Described by Vision Imagery

The dominating character of The Violent, old Tarwater, shows his characteristic bluntness and determination in his appearance: "He was a bull-like old man with a short head set directly into his shoulders and silver protruding eyes that looked like two fish straining to get out of a net of red threads" (1, p. 309). "Silver" in The Violent can be interpreted much as it is in Wise Blood, silver being Judas' payment for the sin of betrayal which
bought the Redemption of the cross. Silver is appropriate as a color for the true Christian who, prophet or not, never loses the distinction of being a sinner redeemed by Christ. "Protruding" and "straining" can represent the old man's eagerness to reach his goal of eternal enjoyment of the bread of life. The fish is a Christian symbol, and restraint by red threads can be taken as "captivity" in a life of suffering which has the sign of the cross as its center.

The old man's death at the breakfast table, which begins the novel, suggests that he achieves his goal of eternally eating the bread of life. The integrity of his life and death is captured in the image of his remaining "exactly as he was, perfectly balanced" on his chair (1, p. 309). At the same time the old man's death in Christ is meant to impress upon Tarwater that he is to live the same, as he was instructed: "His eyes, dead silver, were focussed on the boy across from him" (1, p. 309). Tarwater continues to eat at the table "of the bread of life" as if to indicate that this is the proper thing to do in the face of death. However, he feels a "sullen embarrassment as if he were in the presence of a new personality and couldn't think of anything to say. Finally he said in a querulous voice, 'Just hold your horses. I already told you I would do it right.' The voice sounded like a stranger's voice, as if the death had changed him in-
stead of his great-uncle" (1, p. 309). Both the "new personality" and Tarwater's feeling of change attest to the old man's spiritual resurrection, which will influence the whole novel. Tarwater feels this strongly later, at Ray- ber's house:

In his mind's eye, he saw the old man, a dark shape standing behind the corner of the house, restraining his wheezing breath while he waited impatiently for him to baptize the dim-witted child. . . . There was a wedge-shaped gash in his new uncle's ear. The sight of it brought old Tarwater so close that the boy thought he could hear him laugh. With a terrible clarity he saw that the schoolteacher was no more than a decoy the old man had set up to lure him to the city to do his unfinished business (1, p. 356).

Old Tarwater makes his presence felt most strongly, not in his young nephew, but in his great-nephew, Bishop, who resembles the old man. One of the most evocative of these descriptions is the following: "The child had on a black cowboy hat and he was gaping over the top of a trashbasket that he clasped to his stomach. He kept a rock in it" (1, p. 365). It is the old man born to new life, clasping his concern with death in his hands. At death the old man had been wearing a "putty-colored" hat, faded from years of use. The "gaping" look is the look of astonishment on old Tarwater's face. The trashbasket with the rock in it represents the coffin holding old Tarwater, described as a "rock-like" figure. Holding the trashbasket to his stomach, Bishop's figure connects the relationship between death and the bread of life.
Bishop is a stunning revelation, even to old Tarwater, when the old man first sees him:

The little boy somewhat resembled the old Tarwater except for his eyes which were grey like the old man's but clear, as if the other side of them went down and down into two pools of light. It was plain to look at him that he did not have any sense. The old man had been so shocked at the likeness and the unlikeness that the time he and Tarwater had gone there, he had only stood in the door, staring at the little boy and rolling his tongue around the outside of his mouth as if he had no sense himself (1, p. 316).

In a number of descriptions, O'Connor seems to make a God-figure of Bishop. His complete innocence by reason of the inability to sin is shown in his eyes; and in this instance, old Tarwater, struck and staring at this vision is rendered to look like Bishop, instead of vice versa. Bishop has no "sense" and old Tarwater's commitment as God's prophet seems senseless.

Noticeably, whenever Rayber's residence is approached, Bishop is usually the one to answer, in the sense of giving a revelation of himself. In doing this he ironically, but truthfully, shows Tarwater how wrong his expectations are:

He knew by some obscure instinct that the door was going to open and reveal his destiny. In his mind's eye, he saw the schoolteacher about to appear in it, lean and evil, waiting to engage whom the Lord would send to conquer him. The boy clamped his teeth together to keep them from chattering. The door opened.

A small pink-faced boy stood in it with his mouth hung in a silly smile. He had white hair and a knobby forehead. He wore steel-rimmed spectacles and had pale silver eyes like the old man's except that they were clear and empty (1, pp. 321-322).
At the sight of the visitors in front of him, Bishop closes the door "almost shut, hiding himself all but one spectacled eye" (1, p. 322). Bishop's one eye is reminiscent of the orb of the sun, used in *The Violent* as a God-symbol. Old Tarwater had mentioned to his nephew that his vocation has meant being "torn by the Lord's eye" (1, p. 314). The resemblance of Bishop's one eye seen at the partially closed door to the orb of the sun and the eye of the Lord reinforces the God-symbolism of Bishop.

Rayber's image is recalled many times before he appears in *The Violent*. Old Tarwater remembers when he first kidnapped him to bring him to Powderhead, and again at the age of fourteen when he returns to curse the old man. The childhood incidents placed side by side, show the two opposite and struggling sides of Rayber's character. Old Tarwater is responsible for one:

In four days the old man taught him what was necessary to know and baptized him. He made him understand that his true father was the Lord and not the simpleton in town and that he would have to lead a secret life in the Lord until the day came when he could bring the rest of the family around to repentence (1, p. 341).

Before this, Rayber was a thin boy "with a boney pale face and a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles that were always falling down his nose" (1, p. 341). Rayber had an unhealthy appearance before his contact with old Tarwater. The "gold-rimmed" spectacles may indicate Rayber's preciousness in the sight of the Lord; at the
same time, the glasses may represent his rationalistic vision, for he still wears them (although a different pair) as an adult confirmed in rationalism. The glasses always falling down his youthful nose indicates that the rationalism does not really fit him, as a child or as an adult, for even in his maturity, Rayber's rationalism keeps falling away from him, although he tries to prevent it.

O'Connor relates Rayber's immersion in the facts of his Redemption with his immersion in nature until they seem to be identical, and the result is a physical change in Rayber:

Since this was the first time anybody bothered to tell these facts to the schoolteacher, he could not hear too much of them, and as he had never seen woods before or been in a boat or caught a fish or walked on roads that were not paved, they did all those things too and, his uncle said, he even allowed him to plow. His sallow face had become bright in four days (1, p. 341).

Rayber's father is responsible for the other side of Rayber's struggle. He takes Rayber back from old Tarwater, and it is not precisely his antagonism to belief, but his indifference, that sets Rayber on his future course: "His mother wants him back, Mason. I don't know why. For my part you could have him but you know how she is" (1, p. 380). The news that Rayber has been born again does not excite his father one way or the other: "Glad you got him fixed up, Mason," he said. "One more bath won't hurt the bugger" (1, p. 381).
When Rayber left Powderhead with his father "The light had left his eyes. He had gone but the old man insisted that he had been able to tell by the look on his face that he would never be the same boy again" (1, p. 342).

After the cursing incident when Rayber is fourteen, old Tarwater does not see him again until he is twenty-four. At that time Rayber is not yet set in his ways. Old Tarwater can tell this because "his expression hadn't even set on his face yet" (1, p. 344). But Rayber's future course plainly shows. His glasses are now black-rimmed and stay in place. Rayber's nose had gotten big enough to hold the glasses in place, but "the size of his eyes had shrunk because his face had grown but it was the same face alright. You could see behind it to what he wanted to say" (1, p. 344). The rationalism in Rayber becomes more massive as he matures; his capacity for the intake of light shrinks in inverse proportion.

When young Tarwater first sees Rayber again after old Tarwater's death, Rayber's eyes are very menacing: "The boy found himself scrutinized by two small drill-like eyes set in the depths of twin glass caverns" (1, p. 255). Rayber's eyes have a threatening quality now and they have retreated so far into rationalism as to be seen in twin "glass caverns." Rayber is incredulous that old Tarwater is dead: "He caught Tarwater abruptly by the arms and stared into his face. In the depths of his eyes, the boy,
shocked, saw an instant's stricken look, plain and awful. It vanished at once" (1, p. 355). Rayber's display of sorrow, masked almost immediately, shows the disharmony in his personality, based on a leaning towards his old uncle which he tries to repress. At times "a rush of longing to have the old man's eyes -- insane, fish-colored, violent with their impossible vision of a world transfigured -- turned on him again. The longing was like an undertow in his blood dragging him backwards to what he knew to be madness" (1, p. 372).

In terms of imagery, young Tarwater is described as someone who has no substantial shape or coloring from babyhood on: "wizened, grey-faced, scrawny" is his original appearance (1, p. 346). His unwholesome appearance is not changed at the time of his uncle's death. His face is "pale" (1, p. 312), "His cheekbones protruded, narrow and thin like the arms of a cross, and the hollows under them had an ancient look as if the child's skeleton beneath were as old as the world" (1, p. 331). Tarwater, not yet come to true life, is described as sickly and death-like. An unmistakable crucifixion image is stamped on his face. Ignorance of the Christian condition marked in his very flesh partly defines Tarwater's spiritual blindness.

When Rayber sees Tarwater for the first time, he is "white, drawn by some unfathomable hunger and pride" (1, p. 364). From all the descriptions, Tarwater seems
to be the most desperate and tormented character, the one least in possession of his being and most likely to become anything at all.

The Conflicts as Expressed Through Vision Imagery

Although old Tarwater is dead by the time The Violent Bear It Away begins, he controls the novel. He is the one who poses the major conflicts his nephews suffer. The old man lived an ascetic life as a seeming fanatic in the country—far removed from corrupted city ways. Old Tarwater, like the New Testament John the Baptist, shows the necessity of living a certain violence contradictory to the comfortable ways of society in order to seize the kingdom of heaven.

In young Tarwater's remembrance, old Tarwater lives the sign of the cross with deadly seriousness and preaches it to his young nephew. He explains that he had been called in his youth to serve the Lord by prophesying in the city. He proclaims God's destiny for the city in terms of vision imagery: "the world would see the sun burst in blood and fire" (1, p. 306). However, his vision is countered by the Lord's:

While he raged and waited, the sun rose every morning calm and contained in itself, as if not only the world, but the Lord himself had failed to hear the prophet's message. It rose and set, rose and set on a world turned from green to white... and green to white again. It rose and set and he despaired of the Lord's listening (1, p. 306).
Waiting was the first lesson old Tarwater learned from the Lord. Finally, his prophecy comes true:

Then one morning he saw to his joy a finger of fire coming out of it and before he could turn, before he could shout, the finger had touched him and the destruction he had been waiting for had fallen in his own brain and his own body. His blood had been burned dry and not the blood of the world (1, p. 306).

Old Tarwater's second lesson was the Cross, the Christian's participation in the Redemption of Christ. Listening to all this, young Tarwater both hears and does not hear. To him the Cross is a mistake and avoidable: "The boy, who had ideas of his own, listened with an impatient conviction that he would not make any mistakes himself when the time came and the Lord called him" (1, p. 306).

Several conflicts in The Violent are expressed in these differing views. Old Tarwater was freed to really serve the Lord as a prophet when he saw the difference between expected vision and actual vision: the Lord does not reveal himself to man as man prescribes, and there can be no spectators on the hill of Calvary. Young Tarwater is not yet free to serve as a prophet because his vision is clouded with pride in being chosen and the certainty that he will know what to do when the time comes. Tarwater is sure he will not call down erroneous visions, yet he is already deluded by one. One of the conflicts of The Violent is Tarwater's conviction that he is indeed "THE
PROPHET" raised up to "BURN... EYES CLEAN" (1, p. 348) without having to have his own eyes burned clean first.

Tarwater's belief in the Lord depends upon the sensational and spectacular -- his being born in a wreck, beholding a burning bush, the sight of power and glory.

At times old Tarwater would look the way his nephew thought he should after intensive sessions with the Lord:

He would look as if he had been wrestling with a wildcat, as if his head were still full of the visions he had seen in his eyes, wheels of light and strange beasts with long wings of fire and four heads turned to the four points of the universe. These were the times when Tarwater knew that when he was called he would say, 'Here I am, Lord, ready!' (1, pp. 307-308).

But other sights the boy refuses: "At other times when there was no fire in his uncle's eyes and he spoke only of the sweat and the stink of the cross, of being born again to die... the boy would let his mind wander off to other subjects" (1, p. 308). The cross has no visual appeal, no apocalyptic fire, so the boy considers it unworthy of his sight and, therefore, of his life. Tarwater sees that the Lord's servant is in for a bad time, but what he cannot see is the advantage of having the Lord himself:

No matter how little they had now, his uncle said, their reward in the end was the Lord Jesus himself, the bread of life!

The boy would have a hideous vision of himself sitting forever with his great uncle on a green bank, full and sick, staring at a broken fish and a multiplied loaf (1, p. 340).
Tarwater's sense of sight is dislocated. He looks for wonders in the heavens, and overlooks the process of Redemption going on before his face on earth. He sees no mystery in the "ordinary;" he separates the Divine and the natural in his mind, and, therefore, is not able to see the one through the other. What is more, because of his blindness he wants to skip over the process of the cross in his own life, a denial of the human condition bound to the reality of Christ. Tarwater expects to remain as he is and still have a capacity for the Lord.

Tarwater expects the call of the Lord to come to him immediately from the midst of an apocalyptic vision when his uncle dies. Disillusionment is Tarwater's lot from the first, and the beginning of his journey in darkness. He is chagrined to realize as he digs his uncle's grave, that the Lord "ain't even noticed me yet" (1, p. 317). The Lord is nowhere around as far as Tarwater can see; but in his pride he is aware of a new voice, a "stranger's voice." This disembodied voice counsels him continually through the first chapter on the foolishness of everything his uncle had ever told him. Tarwater cannot discern whether this stranger is friend or foe: he cannot see his face:
He didn't search out the stranger's face but he knew by now that it was a sharp and friendly and wise face, shadowed under a stiff broad-rimmed panama hat that obscured the color of his eyes. He had lost his dislike for the thought of the voice. . . . He began to feel that he was only just now meeting himself, as if as long as his uncle had lived, he had been deprived of his own acquaintance (1, p. 324).

The obscurity of the "stranger's" face and eyes and Tarwater's new feeling about himself fairly well indicate that Tarwater is meeting evil in himself for the first time and not recognizing it. Tarwater does not know himself, much less his ability to entertain evil. What Tarwater learns from now on will be learned from a descent into his darker self.

One of the "insights" the stranger tries to force upon Tarwater is the foolishness of waiting around for the Lord to reveal himself in his own good time and way. Everything, the stranger asserts, works out quickly before one's eyes. Before each day's sunset, all things right or wrong work out one way or the other (1, p. 330).

The sun has set and nothing has happened. Tarwater is unwilling to wait. Digging his uncle's grave is crucifying work and Tarwater cannot complete it. Disgruntled, Tarwater decides to work the thing out his way and thus creates his own vision: he sets fire to the shack where he supposes his uncle's body is.
He glanced over his shoulder and saw that the pink moon had dropped through the roof of the shack and was bursting and he began to run, forced on through the woods by two bulging silver eyes that grew in immense astonishment in the center of the fire behind him. He could hear it moving up through the black night like a whirling chariot (1, p. 332).

This self-created vision, actually a blasphemy, is much the same as old Tarwater's original one in which he predicted the sun would burst "in blood and fire." Young Tarwater is even more presumptuous than his great uncle and more likely to suffer his blood being burnt dry.

Tarwater's spiritual conflict is also expressed by the way he sees and does not see nature. As Miles Orvell notes, nature in this novel is not merely setting, but an active part of the spiritual process (2, p. 114). Specifically, the sun takes the role of the brilliant but silent presence of the Lord Tarwater waits to hear. The constant repetition of tree imagery emphasizes the ubiquitous presence of the cross that Tarwater would like to avoid. Taken together, they comprise the whole reality of Tarwater's Christian condition, the glory of the sun inseparable from the pain of the cross. The sun is present over Powderhead the whole time Tarwater is digging the old man's grave, and during the time the boy is getting drunk at the still. The sun is there in rebuttal to Tarwater's remark about the Lord not noticing him: "The sun had slipped over the blue line of the trees and circled by a haze of
yellow was moving slowly across the sky" (1, p. 317). As soon as Tarwater starts drinking, "The sun appeared, a furious white, edging its way secretly behind the tops of the trees that rose over the hiding place" (1, p. 329).

Old Tarwater earlier made it clear to the boy that it was important to regard the sun's light and he set its influence in opposition to Rayber's: "When I'm gone, you'll be much better off in these woods by yourself with just as much light as the sun wants to let in than you'll be in the city with him" (1, p. 317). Tarwater disregards this by leaving. He flees from the clearing into the darkness of night, literally and symbolically, meeting his second devilish counselor, Meeks. But as he cannot hide from the sun at the still, so he cannot escape God in the city. The last awareness he has before entering Rayber's house is of the light of the sky:

He did not look up at the sky but he was unpleasantly aware of the stars. They seemed to be holes in his skull through which some remote unmoving light was watching him. It was as if he were alone in the presence of an immense silent eye (1, p. 354).

In a similar way, Tarwater avoids the sight of the trees around Powderhead. "'Jesus is the bread of life,' the old man said. The boy, disconcerted, would look off into the distance over the dark blue treeline where the world stretched out, hidden and at its ease" (1, p. 315). Tarwater's dislocated vision overlooks the trees, express-
ing his wish to overlook the process of Redemption by the Christian's assumption of the tree of the cross.

When Tarwater sets fire to the shack, he does not see that it resembles a cross: "standing gaunt-black and tall in the middle of the clearing" (1, p. 332). Tarwater's burning of the shack symbolically represents his blind attempt to obliterate the Christian Redemption. The impossibility of actually doing this, though, is marked by the continued vigil of the trees over Tarwater as he rides away from Powderhead with Meeks. They are "watched on either side by a dark wall of trees" (1, p. 333).

Tarwater's conflict with faith and his essential blindness to his Christian destiny are not resolved by commitment in the opposite direction -- confirmed rationalism. Tarwater fears being engulfed by this as much as he fears giving himself up to faith. Since rationalism is the ideal Rayber strives for, he is almost always portrayed as sinister. On the way into town with Meeks, Tarwater tries to recall Rayber's image. The memory, interspersed with Meeks' remarks, gives Rayber an especially fiendish quality:

What he could not picture were the eyes behind the glasses. He had no memory of them and there was every kind of contradiction in the rubble of his great uncle's descriptions. . . . The boy kept trying to find eyes that fit mouth, nose that fit chin, but every time he thought he had a face put together, it fell apart and he had to begin a new one (1, p. 336).
Tarwater's inability to put Rayber's face together shows his inability to make sense of the man, as well as emphasizing Tarwater's inability to visualize properly or to hold on to any belief securely. The rift in his own being made it impossible for him to see the "stranger's" face previously, for the malevolent stranger is himself. His inability to see Rayber's face stems from the same difficulty. Ironically, Rayber's being is as fragmented as Tarwater's conception of his face. "Rubble" is an apt description of the image Rayber presents.

Meeks surprises Tarwater by dropping him off at Rayber's house when they reach the city. In its sudden intrusion, the house appears as a revelation reflecting its owner: "The boy grabbed the edge of the window with both hands and stared out at what appeared to be only a black shape crouched in a greater darkness a little distance away" (I, p. 353). Rayber inserts himself into this darkness, and Tarwater sees his fears confirmed. He is confronted by the "two small drill-like eyes set in the depths of twin glass caverns" (I, p. 255).

Although Tarwater fears Rayber, the boy Bishop is an even greater problem to him. Tarwater expects a struggle with a clearly delineated evil in the person of the schoolteacher, but his real adversary is Bishop. Because he is retarded, Bishop cannot reveal himself and so remains a troubling mystery for his father and cousin. In an early
memory of Bishop's appearance at the door of his house, Tarwater takes the stance that is to typify him: "a tremendous indignation seized Tarwater. He eyed the small face peering from the crack. He searched his mind fiercely for the right word to hurl at it. Finally he said in a slow emphatic voice, 'Before you was here, I was here'" (1, p. 322). Tarwater improvises on Jesus' "Before Abraham was born, 'I am!"' (John 8:58), showing his defiance. Tarwater has always prided himself in being chosen by the Lord from the beginning, but as yet nothing has happened to prove this. Tarwater is well aware of the significance of Bishop's resemblance to his old uncle. Bishop, though much younger and an "idiot," has been made a prophet before Tarwater, usurping Tarwater's rights. The beginning of Tarwater's gift of true sight may lie in this recognition of the Lord's revelation in the ordinary rather than extraordinary.

Bishop is not like other mortals. He demands nothing, says nothing -- he is simply there. His attitude is shown in his eyes and face, and in his genuinely friendly manner. His preference is for Tarwater, no matter how often or how abruptly he is rebuffed. He doesn't have the "sense" to stop making friendly advances to Tarwater: "He was always creeping up on him to touch him and when the boy was aware of his being near, he would draw himself up like a snake ready to strike and hiss, 'Git!' and Bishop would
scurry off to watch him again from behind the nearest piece of furniture" (1, p. 371). Clearly, the unflagging love of God for Tarwater never abandons him; it is the love of the fully trusting child, undaunted and more ancient than the beginning of time: Bishop "stood there, dim and ancient, like a child who had been a child for centuries" (1, p. 357) and his presence never fails to have effect:

Tarwater clenched his fists. He stood like one condemned, waiting at the spot of execution. Then the revelation came, silent, implacable, direct as a bullet. He did not look into the eyes of any fiery beast or see a burning bush. He only knew with a certainty sunk in despair, that he was expected to baptize the child he saw and begin the life his great-uncle had prepared him for. He knew that he was called to be a prophet and that the ways of his prophecy would not be remarkable. His black pupils, glassy and still, reflected depth on depth his own stricken image of himself, trudging into the distance in the bleeding stinking mad shadow of Jesus (1, p. 357).

Bishop's peculiar omnipotence affects his father also. Rayber has managed to bring all his other "problems" under control, but not Bishop. "He had only learned to live with it and he had learned too that he could not live without it" (1, p. 371).

Unlike his son, Rayber talks constantly, emphasizing his reliance on rational argument. He is opposed (rationally, at least) to faith and love. Consequently, he tries to save Tarwater from the contamination of his great-uncle's influence by every rational means he can devise and the
promise of every advantage modern society can give. This is Rayber's "evil," his total dependence on all things rational and material. In this he is antithetical to the Divine purpose for both Tarwater and himself.

Rayber and Tarwater as Mirror Images

Rayber and Tarwater, with many things in common, provide clues for the interpretation of each other's character. The two look enough alike to be father and son (1, p. 363). Both are nephews of a prophet, both spent time at Powderhead being instructed in the Christian life. Most important of all, both have been "born again," an irreversible fact. On the negative side, both suffer from self-estrangement shown by dislocated sight.

Rayber's adult conflict of reason versus love begins with his uncle and his kidnapping. Rayber discovers someone who cares enough about him to seize him and see that he is born again. An unwanted child, he is never able to forget this. Being born again is tied to the discovery of love, and when the belief in one dies, the other dies with it. Rayber turned from the Lord's way, and from his family's also. Since each is hostile to the other, Rayber rejects both and picks up "worse ways." Rayber's renunciation is as violent as old Tarwater's: he chooses the course of living inhumanly, by repressing all emotions, all desires. Love is a useless sham, he supposes, because being born again
did not appear to mean anything in the "real world."
Rayber does not realize that the surges of love he feels for old Tarwater and Bishop are the evidence of "being born again."

Old Tarwater maintains that Rayber's "words are one thing and his actions and the look on his face another" (1, p. 346); and from what the old man goes on to say, it is Rayber's "look," if anything, that is true, not his words. Rayber is a man broken in two, his mind and his intuition and feelings at war with one another. Since nothing in Rayber's environment elicits love once his father takes him from Powderhead, he smothers the love of his uncle by rationalizing it away. The trouble is, Rayber's love does not go away. As old Tarwater relates: "He hadn't thought about caring when the other three were wiped out but when he thought of me going, it was like losing somebody for the first time. . . . He loved me like a daddy and he was ashamed of it!" (1, p. 345). Old Tarwater is the only one Rayber cared about before Bishop was born; he neither professes love nor recognizes love in any others. When young Tarwater's father confronts Rayber after the accident in which Tarwater's mother is killed, Rayber fails even to recognize humanity in the boy's eyes: "He had felt they were not entirely human eyes. They were the eyes of repentance and lacked all dignity. The boy had looked at
him for what seemed to be an age but perhaps was only a second, then he had turned without a word and left and killed himself" (1, p. 364).

As Rayber's love for old Tarwater does not fade, neither does his belief. The old man baptizes Tarwater when Rayber's back is turned. When Rayber discovers it, he "looked hacked. . . 'He's been born again and there ain't a thing you can do about it,' and then he had seen the rage rise in his nephew's face and had seen him try to conceal it" (1, p. 346). If being born again means nothing to Rayber, he would not be so opposed to it. He would react as his father did, with indifference.

As time goes on, the more Rayber tries to beat down the love and belief within him, the stronger they become and the more they elude him. Along with them, goes Rayber's contact with himself. Neither Tarwater nor Rayber sees his own face.

As Rayber is portrayed, God does not seem to desert him. First, Rayber has a son he cannot possibly harm with his stunted humanity. "He did not believe that he himself was formed in the image and likeness of God but that Bishop was he had no doubt" (1, p. 372). And second, Rayber does feel love for Bishop, although he fears its irrationality:
It was not the kind that could be used for the child's improvement or his own. It was love without reason, love for something futureless, love that appeared to exist only to be itself, imperious and all-demanding, the kind that would cause him to make a fool of himself in an instant. And it only began with Bishop. It began with Bishop and then like an avalanche covered everything his reason hated (1, p. 372).

Bishop is as much Rayber's God-symbol as Tarwater's, and like Tarwater, it is pride that keeps Rayber from yielding. Bishop, because of his affliction, is one of the distorted burdens of the sin-laden world. As such, he is Rayber's bond with the death of Christ:

He sat down on the bench and stretched his legs in front of him. He suffered Bishop to climb into his lap. . . . The little boy's white head fitted under his chin. Above it Rayber looked at nothing in particular. . . . Without warning his hated love gripped him and held him in a vise. He should have known better than to let the child onto his lap.

His forehead became beady with sweat; he looked as if he might have been nailed to the bench. He knew that if he could conquer this pain, face it, and with a supreme effort of his will refuse to feel it, he would be a free man. He held Bishop rigidly. Although the child started the pain, he also limited it, contained it (1, p. 388).

Tarwater struggles with Christian vocation in Bishop, and Rayber struggles with it in both Bishop and Tarwater. Each one is attempting to make his vocation serve himself. Each tries to make vocation reasonable. Rayber wants to be a savior to Tarwater, but whether that will help the boy is doubtful: "'Now you belong to someone who can help you and understand you.' His eyes were alight with pleasure. 'It's not too late for me to make a man of you!' . . . He
gazed through the actual insignificant boy before him to an image he held fully developed in his mind" (1, p. 357). Tarwater recognizes that Rayber is trying to be the Lord and resists him. The resistance simply makes the force of the past stronger for Rayber: he had never, "even when old Tarwater lived under his roof, been so conscious of the old man's presence" (1, p. 369).

Rayber is proud of the fact that he has "saved" himself, and is convinced he can do the same for Tarwater. But the main reason for Tarwater's resentment is that Rayber did not save him when he needed it -- he did not come after him when old Tarwater kidnapped him. Rayber did make one attempt at rescue, but he did not care to make a second try after old Tarwater shot his ear. This seeming lack of interest on Rayber's part makes him suspect to Tarwater. He does not trust Rayber. He sees the crux of his problem: without love, one cannot act. Ultimately, this is why Rayber cannot save:

'I'm no fool. I don't believe in senseless sacrifice. A dead man is not going to do you any good, don't you know that? Now I can do something for you. Now I can make up for all the time we've lost. I can help correct what he's done to you, help you correct it yourself.' He kept hold of the fist all the while it was being drawn insistently back. 'This is our problem together,' he said, seeing himself so clearly in the face before him that he might have been beseeching his own image (1, p. 367).

Tarwater's tendencies to rationalism are with him when he comes to Rayber's: "My great-uncle learnt me everything
but first I have to find out how much of it is true" (1, p. 350). Rayber's desire to make him into a self-image compels Tarwater to turn from rationalism; at the same time he resists Bishop because of what he suggests. For awhile Tarwater hangs nowhere, fighting both sides. Tarwater shows no signs of yielding to either until the night he journeys out to the Carmodys' revival. On this occasion, Rayber and Tarwater exchange places briefly; Rayber is drawn towards faith, Tarwater towards confirmed rationalism. Rayber follows after Tarwater in the dark, making every effort to keep him in sight by the dim street lights. Symbolically, it becomes Rayber's spiritual odyssey, the theme announced by the Carmody child as Rayber listens at the window where the revival takes place: "Jesus said suffer the little children to come unto him and forbid them not and maybe it was because he knew that it would be the little children that would call others to him" (1, p. 379).

Rayber is greatly affected by the sight of Lucette. For one thing, she awakens a flood of emotion within him: "His pity encompassed all exploited children. . . Tarwater exploited by the old man, this child exploited by parents, Bishop exploited by the very fact that he was alive" (1, p. 383). Interspersed in Lucette's revival sermon is Rayber's vision of himself rescuing all the "exploited"
children in the world and fleeing with them to some "en-
closed garden" where he could flood their minds with the
truths of the real world (1, p. 384). Even though Rayber
feels "caught up" in Lucette's "look, held there before the
judgement seat of her eyes" (1, p. 383), he does not
realize he is an unsaved savior having false visions.

She stopped a little distance from the end of
the stage and stood silent, her whole attention
directed across the room to his face on the ledge.
Her eyes were large and dark and fierce. He felt
that in the space between them, their spirits
had broken the bonds of age and ignorance and
were mingling in some unheard knowledge of each
other. . . . she shrieked, 'I see a damned soul
before my eye! I see a dead man Jesus hasn't
raised. His head is in the window but his ear
is deaf to the holy Word!'

Rayber's head, as if it had been struck by
an invisible bolt, dropped from the ledge. He
crouched on the ground, his furious spectacled
eyes glittering from the shrubbery (1, p. 385).

Instead of seeing the truth of what Lucette says, Rayber's
eyes and position in the description show his denial and
descent from his Divinely-destined state. Rayber can only
hear with aid -- his hearing aid -- which he turns on or
off at will. Symbolically, this is Rayber's selective
deafness to truth. Sight and hearing must function normal-
ly for spoken truth to be understood or "seen." Rayber
sees a child, but does not hear what she says. Lucette,
another child God-symbol, correctly points out Rayber's
disjunction of sight and hearing, the fragmentation that
prevents him from being a whole man who could see that the
children are meant to save him, not vice versa.
When Tarwater emerges from hearing Lucette preach and sees his uncle, "The sight of Rayber seemed to afford him relief amounting to rescue" (1, p. 385). For the first time he looks to Rayber for reassurance from the irrationality of faith. Rayber, characteristically blind, "glared into his face. Through his fury he could not see that for the first time the boy's eyes were submissive" (1, p. 385). The boy is effectively rebuffed and Rayber loses his chance to save.

Rayber is a much more complex character than some critics credit him with being. He has been interpreted as "evil" because he has repressed so much in his nature and disciplined himself to total rationalism. He has also been viewed as Tarwater's personal devil, as if he were entrenched in evil as a permanent certainty from the beginning. Rayber cannot be interpreted so simplistically. Not only are there good qualities in him, but many unincorporated feelings as well, threatening the delicate rationalistic structure he has erected. He goes through as much of a faith struggle as Tarwater; in fact, each precipitates the struggle of the other into greater intensity. Rayber's rationalism is his "devil," as Tarwater's "stranger" is his. Rayber is, after all, the father of Bishop, who is a God-symbol. O'Connor seems to use a Joycean epiphany in another scene with Bishop where she repeats crucifixion imagery in relationship to Rayber.
Tarwater hits Bishop and the little boy scrambles onto his father's back:

... he righted the child on his back and tried to slide him off but the child hung on, thrusting his head against his father's neck and never taking his eyes off Tarwater.

The boy had a vision of the schoolteacher and his child as inseparably joined. The schoolteacher's face was red and pained. The child might have been a deformed part of himself that had been accidentally revealed (1, p. 358).

In a real sense, Rayber feels Christianity as a weight, and tries to get rid of it, as he does Bishop. Tarwater sees the two as "inseparably joined." Rayber considers the tendency toward belief in himself to be a deformity and does try to hide it -- in vain.

O'Connor seems to appeal to the reader to have less sympathy with Tarwater than with Rayber. Tarwater has a variety of unpleasant traits. When old Tarwater tells the story of Rayber and himself as young children, the boy challenges him on almost every point, skeptically and cynically. O'Connor shows us a Tarwater afflicted with rationalistic tendencies long before he is in a position to be influenced by Rayber. When old Tarwater dies, young Tarwater displays no emotion, except annoyance at having to bury the old man. Tarwater's initial outlook seems unexplainable, whereas Rayber's was much influenced by his father.

The bulk of The Violent is concerned with Rayber and Tarwater's pursuit-escape of Divine Truth in their lives.
 Appropriately, O'Connor draws several images which contain in themselves a summary of the paradoxical relationship of Rayber and Tarwater. One of these is Rayber's mental replay of a walk with Bishop and Tarwater through the city in order that Tarwater may see the wonders of modern society. The journey shows Rayber's frustration:

It would not have been so tiring if he had not had Bishop. The child dragged backwards on his hand, always attracted by something they had already seen and passed. . . . Whereas Tarwater was always slightly in advance of them, pushing forward on the scent of something. . . searching for whatever it was that appeared just beyond his vision (1, p. 369).

Rayber is the most uncomfortable of the three. His confirmed rationalistic bias is pulled in two directions at once by the irrational forces the two boys represent. Tarwater's vision is simpler since he is not confirmed in rationalism as yet. He is much more swayed by old Tarwater's influence than Rayber's, so he pursues the Lord's vision he waits for, trying to move toward it instead of standing still and looking around him. If Tarwater did turn around, he would see Bishop at the end of the line dragging backwards, attempting to take both Tarwater and his father back to the truth of their remote past.

Redemption and Refusal Through Vision

Hoping to make Tarwater face his obsession and so be cured, Rayber plans to take the boy to Powderhead. Unable to go straight there without subterfuge, Rayber takes the
boys to stay at nearby Cherokee Lodge, on the pretext that this excursion is to be a fishing trip. At the lodge, events so happen as to force Rayber and Tarwater's conflicts to a conclusion.

Two journeys are taken at this point in the novel, one by Rayber and one by Tarwater. They mirror each other in several ways. The main resemblance is that each one is taken in relation to Bishop and is tied to the resolution of a faith struggle.

Rayber starts off to "go for a ride," and Bishop is the only one of the two boys who takes up the invitation. In the car Rayber feels "a sinister pull on his consciousness, the familiar undertow of expectation, as if he were still a child waiting on Christ" (1, p. 411). Without his intending it, Rayber finds himself on the familiar road to Powderhead: "the embankments on either side had the look of forming an entrance to a region he would enter at his peril" (1, p. 411). Rayber thinks of "crossing" the field to Powderhead with distaste, but he takes the road there "defiantly" anyway. Bishop, meanwhile, "jumped up and down, squealing and making unintelligible noises of delight" (1, p. 411).

When the car stops, Bishop hurries to some nearby blackberry bushes. Rayber picks one for the child, but Bishop hands it back, as if it might contain the knowledge of good and evil. This fruit is for his father, not for
him. Rayber, however, flings the berry away and turns to the forest. He remembers the property he sees is his:

His trees stood rising above him, majestic and aloof, as if they belonged to an order that had never budged from its first allegiance in the days of creation. His heart began to beat frantically. Quickly he reduced the whole wood in probable board feet into a college education for the boy. His spirits lifted (1, p. 412).

Rayber goes on to find the opening from which he can see the house. He dreads going there without Tarwater and plans to make a return trip the next day. Evidently, Rayber really cannot act. Unconsciously, he needs Tarwater -- the one who can act -- along with him before he makes the trip. Rayber finally finds the spot for his view:

The forked tree was familiar to him or seemed to be. He put his hand on one trunk, leaned forward and looked out. His gaze moved quickly and unseeing across the field and stopped abruptly where the house had been. Two chimneys stood there, separated by a black space of rubble. ... a vision of the old man, farther away in time, rose before him. He saw him standing on the edge of the yard, one hand lifted in astounded greeting, while he stood a little way off in the field, his fists clenched, trying to shout, trying to make his adolescent fury come out in clear sensible words. ... He then... had turned and run, carrying away nothing but the registered change in the old man's expression, the sudden drop into some mysterious misery, which afterwards he had never been able to get out of his mind. He saw it as he stared at the denuded chimneys (1, pp. 412-413).

Rayber, too, has committed a blasphemy against Divine Love. He only sees it in this perspective from the vantage point of the "forked tree" which seems intended to resemble a cross. The two chimneys separated by a
black space become what he and Tarwater have done in their individual ways to the Redemption scene. Rayber sees a representation of the hill of Calvary on which the cross of the Savior has been blackened out, leaving only a heap of rubble. The rejected Redemption is substituted by "rubble" in Rayber's life: the confusion constantly expressed in his mind and the trash old Tarwater sees in his house when he goes back to visit. All that remains now are the "crosses" of the two thieves, Tarwater and Rayber perhaps, representing suffering without purpose, without Redemption. Meaninglessness. Rayber has created it; it need not be there. His guilt has been dragging him backwards all these years.

Rayber looks down to see the old man looking up at him in Bishop's face. Bishop wants to see what his father is looking at, so Rayber lifts the boy up to the tree of "the cross":

The empty gray eyes seemed to Rayber to reflect the ravaged scene across the field. The little boy turned his head after a moment and gazed instead at him. A dreaded sense of loss came over him. He knew that he could not remain here an instant longer. He turned with the child and went quickly back through the woods the way he had come (1, p. 413).

Rayber refuses Bishop's power to draw him to repentance.

Back at the lodge, Rayber renews his harangue about Tarwater's obsession of baptizing Bishop:
Baptism is an empty act, ... If there's any way to be born again, it's a way that you accomplish yourself, an understanding about yourself that you reach after a long time, perhaps a long effort. It's nothing you get from above by spilling a little water and a few words (1, p. 418).

As Rayber's sight and hearing are divorced, so is act and process in his understanding of Baptism. The "understanding about yourself" reached after long time and effort is the result of Baptism's on-going process in the Christian life. The Baptismal act is the symbol of the reality whose completion is accomplished by the daily cross. In Rayber's life, the surging love he feels is the Baptismal process at work, the process he tries to "tame."

The pressure of Rayber's words causes Tarwater to act. "You can't just say NO," Tarwater has affirmed earlier, "You got to do NO. You got to show it. You got to show you mean it by doing it" (1, p. 397). Tarwater, like Haze Motes, is determined to choose a course of negation. In defying Rayber, however, Tarwater inadvertently opts for God because Rayber has become directly opposed to Him. Tarwater demonstrated this when he registered at the lodge. He did not write Rayber's address as his own, but "Powderhead, Tennessee," adding after it, in reference to Rayber: "NOT HIS SON" (1, p. 397).

Defiantly, Tarwater takes Bishop out onto the lake, and, apparently, in the act of baptizing him, drowns him. This scene is not visualized for the reader. It is
sensed, heard and felt through Rayber, waiting in his room back in the lodge.

Rayber's room becomes a replica of his soul on the day of Bishop's drowning. The room grows dimmer as the day wears on, for Bishop, Rayber's only hope for recognizing the Divine, is about to leave him. Rayber feels a strange sense of waiting as if for all "the world to be turned into a burnt spot between two chimneys" (1, p. 421). "He watched idly as a round red moon rose in the lower corner of his window. It might have been the sun rising on the upside-down half of the world" (1, p. 421). Following this sight, Rayber sees an upsidedown picture of what he will do with Tarwater when he returns. He plans to tell him he must cooperate or Rayber will abandon him. As if to signify what will happen to this plan, Rayber falls asleep, an image of death. When he awakes, he is sent to the window by the sight of the moon. "The moon, travelling toward the middle of the window had lost its color. He sat up in surprise as if it were a face looking in on him, a pale messenger, breathlessly arrived" (1, p. 422).

The moon urgently seems to point out something Rayber cannot see. Bishop is about to be drowned, but with his hearing aid off, Rayber cannot perceive anything. He only "sees" when it is too late. When he turns the hearing aid on, he hears Bishop bellow. Within Rayber a forced self-constraint begins:
The machine made the sounds seem to come from inside him as if something in him were tearing itself free. He clenched his teeth. The muscles in his face contracted and revealed lines of pain beneath harder than bone. He set his jaw. No cry must escape him. The one thing he knew, the one thing he was certain of was that no cry must escape him (1, p. 422).

Rayber always realized what would happen to him if anything took Bishop away. "Then the whole world would become his idiot child" (1, p. 410). He has to prevent this. The only way to stave off this intolerable love is to "anesthetize his life" by resisting all feeling and think— with redoubled effort. (1, p. 410). He had always disciplined himself against the time when he might start to lose his balance. Then he could "lurch towards emptiness and fall on the side of his choice" (1, p. 373). When he realizes what has happened to Bishop, he waits for the crushing pain to begin so he can ignore it, but no pain comes. Rayber has already "anesthetized" his life. There is nothing but nothing. Standing at the window, which characteristically gives a view of reality, Rayber perceives that his soul is empty; he shatters. "He stood light-headed at the window and it was not until he realized there would be no pain that he collapsed" (1, p. 423). Rayber's soul becomes the "burnt spot" of Powderhead created by his blasphemy against love.

Jarwater, beside himself after the drowning, heads for Powderhead. He has begun a descent into hell within himself. Figuratively, he drowned himself along with
Bishop, "as if his gaze had slipped and fallen into the center of the child's eyes, and was still falling down and down and down" (1, p. 396). He hitches a ride in a truck vaguely resembling Jonah's whale, "huge and skeletal" (1, p. 427). Upon entering it, Tarwater descends into the darkness of his soul. He relives the trauma of the drowning. Rayber's sleep before the drowning of Bishop foreshadows the death of his soul; in the belly of the truck Tarwater is unable to sleep, a sign of life:

His eyes were open wide without the least look of sleep in them. They seemed not to be able to close but to be open forever on some sight that would never leave them. Presently they closed but his body did not relax. He sat rigidly upright, a still alert expression on his face as if under the closed lids an inner eye were watching him, piercing out the truth in the distortion of his dream (1, p. 431).

Tarwater sees in his mind's eye not only Bishop but the stranger, now called "friend," at the scene of the drowning. Now Tarwater can see the "friend's" eyes quite clearly. "They were violet-colored, very close and intense, and fixed on him with a peculiar look of hunger and attraction. He turned his head away, unsettled by their attention" (1, p. 431). Tarwater then recalls himself preparing to retrieve a hat Bishop had thrown overboard. "The sky was dotted with fixed tranquil eyes like the spread tail of some celestial night bird. While he stood there gazing, for the moment lost, the child in the boat stood up, caught him around the neck and climbed onto his back" (1, p. 432).
Bishop's familiar action makes Tarwater his spiritual father and Bishop Tarwater's cross at the same time. Birth and death in Christ are united together as Tarwater gazes at the "celestial" sky. At that moment Bishop's weight pulls Tarwater down into the water. While having this vision, Tarwater's "pale face twitched and grimaced. He might have been Jonah clinging madly to the whale's tongue" (1, p. 432). Finally, he recalls the words of Baptism, cries out and "opened his eyes" (1, p. 432). Tarwater acts and his eyes are opened. At that instant he hears the oaths of his "friend" fading into the darkness. As yet, though, Tarwater cannot stand the sight of what he sees, so "forcefully, he closed the inner eye that witnessed his dream" (1, p. 432).

The truck driver releases Tarwater from the "gigantic monster" in the morning. Then "he set his face toward the clearing. By sundown he would be there, by sundown he would be where he could begin to live his life as he had elected it, and where, for the rest of his days, he would make good his refusal" (1, p. 433). Tarwater's forceful closing of his inner eye is like Rayber's anesthetizing of his life. His determination to arrive at Powderhead by sundown is his determination to live with the sun down through his refusal of Divine election.

Like Rayber, Tarwater is pleased that he has saved himself. He has not said NO, but done it. This attitude
affects his sight so that even the sun is transfigured: "The sun, from being only a ball of glare, was becoming distinct like a large pearl, as if the sun and moon had fused in brilliant marriage. The boy's narrowed eyes made a black spot of it" (1, p. 435). Tarwater's sight is darkened by denial. His vision, clue to his being, becomes a "black" or "burnt" spot like Rayber's soul. Tarwater sees false visions: he imagines his "calm and detached": person clearing away the rubble and burnt bones of his uncle and building a house for himself. As if to contradict him the sun burns an overwhelming thirst into him, and the water he stops to drink gives him the sight of a "gray clear pool, down and down to where two silent serene eyes were gazing at him" (1, p. 436).

Tarwater's inner eye does not open until a "pale, lean, old-looking young man" picks him up, drugs him, and then rapes him. This stranger resembles the one who has been haunting Tarwater so closely. One telling sign of Tarwater's predicament is the window on his side of the young man's car: "it was cracked and patched with a piece of adhesive tape and the handle to lower it had been removed" (1, p. 439). This is a view of Tarwater's perspective on reality at present -- cracked, patched, obscured. The last thing Tarwater remembers before losing consciousness is counting trees -- three of them (1, p. 440) -- signs of the Calvary he is suffering.
When Tarwater awakens after the rape, the sun's light no longer seems to reach him although it is directly overhead. It is a "small and silver" sun, "sifting down light that seemed to spend itself before it reached him" (1, p. 441). Tarwater's eyes "looked small and seedlike as if while he was asleep they had been lifted out, scorched, and dropped back into his head. His expression seemed to contract until it reached some point beyond pain or rage. Then a loud cry tore out of him" (1, p. 441). Tarwater is immersed in the baptism of evil and drowned into life as Bishop was. His eyes have been burned and his sight restored. Immediately after this, Tarwater dresses and sets fire to the evil spot. When he runs onto the road "it stretched beneath him like fire hardened" (1, p. 442) and assumed direction to Powderhead.

Tarwater's deformity has always been his lack of sight. He could not be a prophet if this were not corrected. Now "his scorched eyes no longer looked hollow or as if they were meant only to guide him forward. They looked as if, touched with a coal like the lips of the prophet, they would never be used for ordinary sights again" (1, p. 442).

Tarwater re-walks the same paths and sees the same sights as Rayber did the day before. Instead of Bishop to gaze in his face, though, Tarwater's old friend whispers that the place is theirs now. Tarwater's reply
is to set fire to the evil spot where he stands. Lighting fires before him, he backs his way to the clearing, reversing the firing of the shack in the first chapter. Now the clearing is home and the evil in himself is confronted. Tarwater realizes he is the "burnt spot."

Finally home, Tarwater sees Buford, the negro neighbor of the two Tarwaters, and runs to him, hoping to go home with him and eat. But the thought of eating makes him ill as he remembers the sight of the half-dug grave he left behind. "He stood there and felt a crater opening inside of him, and stretching out before him, surrounding him, he saw the clear gray spaces of that country where he vowed never to set foot" (1, p. 445). When his eyes meet the gravesite and he sees the cross placed at the head of it by Buford when he buried the old man, "The boy's hands opened stiffly as if he were dropping something he had been clutching all his life. . . . Nothing seemed alive about the boy but his eyes" (1, p. 446). With his guilt and resistance gone, and his sight cleansed, Tarwater is able to see what has been there all along. His vision expands by the minute. Knowing that his uncle's burial in Christ has been provided, his vision is released. He sees the crowd waiting for the loaves and fishes, his uncle in it, and knows his hunger is the same. He sees the long line of prophets sent to prolong that hunger down through the ages. Then
It seemed in one instant to lift and turn him. He whirled toward the treeline. There, rising and spreading in the night, a red-gold tree of fire ascended as if it would consume the darkness in one tremendous burst of flame. The boy's breath went out to meet it. He knew that this was the fire that had encircled Daniel, that had raised Elijah from the earth, that had spoken to Moses and would in the instant speak to him (1, p. 447).

It is the last light Tarwater is to see. He is sent back to all the Raybers of the city. He leaves at midnight, the moon clearing a path for him. "His singed eyes, black in their deep sockets, seemed ready to envision the fate that awaited him but he moved steadily on, his face set toward the dark city, where the children of God lay sleeping" (1, p. 447).
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER V

THE RELATIONSHIP OF VISION IMAGERY AND STRUCTURE
IN WISE BLOOD AND THE VIOLENT BEAR IT AWAY

The structures of Wise Blood and The Violent Bear It Away depend on a combination of the "metaphor of journey," as Gilbert H. Muller calls it (7, p. 51), and Biblical myth. The journey or quest structure takes a character out into the unknown where he must cope with the realities of life and adapt himself, or be adapted to their pleasure. Whatever he meets either destroys him or forces him to be utterly himself: to go on a journey is to undergo either purification or destruction.

The conclusions of Wise Blood and The Violent show only the beginnings of an integrity in Haze and Tarwater that the plots have been pushing them towards. O'Connor does not seem to be interested in examining the state of integrity, but the process of attaining it. Since a journey is a process, the use of such a structural framework as a metaphor is understandable. Vision imagery interrelates with the journey structure in the consideration that integrity cannot be reached unless a degree of maturity and selflessness is achieved. A character must be able to see deficiencies and limitations before he can progress to integrity. This is not just a struggle; it is partly gift.
O'Connor is primarily concerned with the growth process and the intrusion of mystery as its climax. In both her novels, Redemption by Christ, symbolized by baptism, is the initiation into the process. Baptism is the sign of the final reality the main characters grow into through the grace of Redemption. As O'Connor seems to see it, the growth process requires catastrophe, evil, trauma of all kinds for the process to reach completion. These things can be considered grace in her belief because the Christian is baptized into Christ as an essential part of his Redemption. The Christian cannot reach his true condition without undergoing the same radical violence in his life as Christ did. Violence awakens sight. This process is always mysterious in O'Connor fiction. It is mysterious that evil can serve good; it is mysterious that a person must experience a number of drastic purgations to reach one saving vision. Yet, the reader sees this happen to Haze and Tarwater. Haze sinks to the depths of his being; sees one vision, the content of which is never revealed to the reader; and blinds himself for Christ's sake. The same pattern occurs in Tarwater's journey which jars him from his illusions of self-sufficiency. Yet, the salvific power of murder and rape remains a mystery to the rational mind.

Haze's and Tarwater's rebirths through painful circumstances point out the importance of adversities in the
journey motif. In a mythological perspective, according to Mircea Eliade, death and hell are challenges to be faced and overcome in order that personality may be reintegrated on a higher level. Death and hell experiences are found in all myths as a prelude to a higher state of being. Furthermore, spiritual chaos is presented in these myths as the disintegration of one personality in order that a new one may be born (9, p. 70).

The relationship of vision imagery to journey and evil can be explained by referring to the thought of theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, with which O'Connor was well acquainted. In his view, bringing man to the ability to see is both the on-going concern of evolution and its goal. The Divine penetration of matter causes the evolution of the world toward ever greater perfection. The most perfect form of life, according to de Chardin, is a conscious being able to reflect upon himself (6, p. 38).

Increased spiritualization, the result of reflection, is the Teilhardian concept that O'Connor seems to utilize in her plots (5, p. 266). As painful events impinge upon a character and he reflects upon their significance, he comes to an apprehension of God, although with tortuous slowness. Pain forces sight in de Chardin's philosophy also. In his view, evil is God's means of purification: "The more deeply and incurably the evil is encrusted in my flesh, the more it will be You that I am harbouring -- You
as a loving, active principle of purification and detachment" (1, p. 62). Good and evil, then, are inextricably bound together in the evolutionary process bringing man to reflection and purifying sight. Teilhard's description of the human situation exactly resembles the plot and structure of O'Connor's novels which function according to this concept:

Variously situated at different levels, the task assigned to us is to climb towards the light, passing through, so as to attain God, a given series of created things which are not exactly obstacles but rather footholds, intermediaries to be made use of, nourishment to be taken, sap to be purified, ... . By means of all created things, without exception, the divine assails us, penetrates us and moulds us. ... As Jacob said, waking from his dream, the world, this palpable world, to which we brought the boredom and callousness reserved for a profane place, is in truth, a holy place and we did not know it (1, pp. 83-84, 89).

Both Haze and Tarwater climb laboriously to the light from their starting places, pass through a series of obstacles which purify them, and finally gain their wholeness and holiness. When their sight is cleansed the world is no longer a profane place, but a Divine vision.

These journeys as the structures, or frameworks, of Wise Blood and The Violent Bear It Away are important for an understanding of the novels. The structure of a novel is "regarded today as the most reliable as well as most revealing key to the meaning of the work," according to C. Hugh Holman (4, p. 514). Although journey is the structure of both O'Connor novels, the destination is always
within the traveller: "the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). Haze and Tarwater do not see well enough at the beginning of their odysseys to perceive this, therefore they travel. Basically the structure of both novels is ironic: the destination of the journey is the traveller; the farther the traveller goes the farther away from himself he gets. He only reaches his destination by circling back where he came from. In both Wise Blood and The Violent the journeys, and therefore the structures, are circular. Characters who cannot see their way clearly move in confused circles. Once they do see, the characters circle back to the place where they began. In The Violent the main circular movement is both physical and spiritual. In Wise Blood the corresponding circular movement is primarily spiritual.

The point of origin of the circular structure is not merely a place-name, but the fact of being born "into Christ" and commissioned to live his life over again in the world. Baptism into Redemption is an inescapable human condition in O'Connor fiction. It is the origin of Haze's and Tarwater's beings and journeys, and also the conclusion of them.

The Structure of Wise Blood

The obvious journey in Wise Blood is Haze's train journey to Taulkinham, where he then journeys in search of
a place to "be." This seems to be more or less a straightforward trip, from train to Mrs. Watts to car to boarding house. On the physical level it is, but on the spiritual level which is seen through the factual, Haze is a blind man moving in a broad circle; a circle with several smaller circles within it, as well as indecisive movements fluctuating between forward and reverse. Movement, travelling of all kinds, is constant in Wise Blood: Haze following Hawks, Haze travelling in his car, Enoch travelling his daily ritual, Haze travelling from picture show to picture show to preach, Haze walking out and back in the last chapter. Many of these travels are around the same paths all the time or around the block.

The key to the broad circle in which Haze moves is in chapter one of Wise Blood. Haze's grandfather preaches, using Haze as an example: "That boy has been redeemed and Jesus wasn't going to leave him ever. . . . Jesus would have him in the end" (8, p. 16). The sight imagery in Wise Blood makes the Jesus-controlled circle apparent. Haze's original redemption establishes Jesus as the center of his life. Haze tries to shun it by escaping Eastrod to live in the city and preach his belief in nothing. But it is impossible to escape from the condition of one's life: "he saw Jesus move from tree to tree in the back of his mind, a wild ragged figure motioning him to turn
around and come off into the dark where he was not sure of his footing" (8, p. 16). Haze does turn around in the dark -- first to try to escape into nothingness, and finally, to enter the darkness of faith. He returns full circle to the Christ of his Baptism. In fact, throughout the novel, the goal of Haze's journey is the path he takes; or as Emerson expresses it in his poem "Brahma": "They reckon ill who leave me out; / When me they fly, I am the wings" (3, p. 809).

That the beginning and the end are the same in Wise Blood is illustrated by parallel incidents in chapters one and fourteen. Mrs. Wally Bee Hitchcock in the first chapter and Mrs. Flood in the last chapter are both fascinated by Haze's eyes, and their hope is to be able to see into them. Both women are superficial and value money above all else. (Mrs. Flood does change in the very end, when she values Haze above all else.) Mrs. Hitchcock talks about going home in the first chapter; in the last one when the police bring Haze back, Mrs. Flood says, oblivious of the real meaning of her words: "Well, Mr. Motes, I see you've come home" (8, p. 126). The berth, darkness, and sleep of chapter one are repeated in the blindness and death of the last chapter. The deaths of Haze's family are recounted in the beginning, and Haze himself dies in
the end. Haze is born into new life at the end of chapter fourteen, as is foreshadowed at the end of chapter one by the use of birth imagery.

Circular movements within the main circular journey are Haze's movement from spiritual blindness to physical blindness and Enoch's parallel movement from the human state back to his evolutionary origin as a gorilla. Haze's first refuge in Taulkinham is with a prostitute, Mrs. Watts; his last refuge before his conversion is with another prostitute, Sabbath Hawks. A policeman ends Haze's idyll with his car, and begins his spiritual birth. Similarly, in the last chapter, policemen end Haze's earthly life, so beginning the heavenly one.

The movement, or non-movement, of Haze's car often serves to stress Haze's hesitancy and uncertainty of direction: "He took off the brake and the car shot backward because the man left it in reverse. In a second, he got it going again forward and he drove off crookedly" (9, p. 44). "He got in his car and went through the motions of starting it but it only made noises like water lost somewhere in the pipes. . . . There were two instruments on the dashboard with needles that pointed dizzily in first one direction and then the other, but they worked on a private system, independent of the whole car" (9, p. 70). "The Essex had a tendency to develop a tic by nightfall. It would go forward about six inches and
then back about four; it did that now a succession of times rapidly; . . ." (8, p. 85). Similarly, the structure of Wise Blood periodically backtracks to Haze's youthful memories in his dream-visions. The image of Haze's mother in chapters one and three is recalled in the "grinning" woman and Sabbath Hawks, suggesting a backtracking to Haze's childhood connection of woman-sin. Chapters four through twelve show a first-forward-then-backward movement as they alternate between Enoch and Haze episodes. The "Haze chapters" represent forward movement; the "Enoch chapters" backward movement. Enoch is Haze's counterpart on a materialistic level. He has many qualities in common with Haze, as Martha A. Dula points out, including a psychological motivation through family relationship -- he relies on the "wise blood" of his "daddy" (2, pp. 6-9). All of Enoch's means of spiritual journey, though, are material. He idolizes the shrunken man and the motion-picture gorilla. His aim is not transcendent truth, but an ever-better Enoch: "He wanted to be THE young man of the future, like the ones in the insurance ads. He wanted, some day, to see a line of people waiting to shake his hand" (8, p. 104). The alternating between Enoch and Haze episodes structurally represents Haze's constant wavering back and forth, and his danger of falling down to Enoch's level. Enoch is what Haze could easily have become -- a perversion of the Divine image. Not until Enoch adapts the animal state as
the inevitable outcome of his course in chapter twelve, does the novel move straightforward toward the end -- Haze's completed conversion in Christ at death.

The theme of conversion permeates *Wise Blood*, especially as concerns Haze. The constant concern of all reality seems to be turning Haze around, the basic meaning of conversion, either to face his God or turn from evil. "Turning" and "turning and looking" are repeated often in the novel. The combination of "turning and looking" couples circular movement and sight imagery throughout *Wise Blood*. Turning "around and coming off into the dark" expresses the central meaning of the novel. Haze turns his head and looks at Sabbath "with interest for the first time" when she offers some new knowledge about her father (8, p. 66). The waitress in the FROSTY BOTTLE "turned around and stared at him" when Haze accompanied Enoch (8, p. 53).

When Haze finds his goal, he no longer needs to turn: "His face didn't change and he didn't turn it toward the patrolman. It seemed concentrated on space" (8, p. 114). Similarly, in the last chapter, Haze who was so curious about everything before his blindness, looking earnestly, ignores his landlady as if she does not exist. Something else absorbs all of his concentration.
The Structure of *The Violent Bear It Away*

The structure of *The Violent Bear It Away* is even more dependent on the circular structure pattern than *Wise Blood*. Haze Motes makes a spiritual circular journey from his redeemed condition in Christ back to it through conversion in the end of *Wise Blood*. His physical journey, though, does not end where it began (the train), nor does he ever physically visit the scene of his childhood redemption, Eastrod. In *The Violent*, Tarwater's journey ends spiritually and physically where it began -- Powderhead. The novel opens with his refusal to complete his uncle's burial and establish the sign of the cross at the head of the grave. Symbolically this is a refusal to accept the Christian condition. The fact that the burial and establishment of the cross are accomplished without Tarwater, by Buford, indicates that Tarwater is not so powerful that he can make or break the Christian condition at will. The Christian condition is incontrovertible, and Tarwater discovers this at the end when he sees the sign of the cross at the head of his uncle's grave.

Tarwater's failure to see the truth of his condition is symbolized by his deliberate refusal to turn his head toward his uncle's unfinished -- he believes -- gravesite while he sets fire to the shack, an act of blasphemy symbolizing an attempt to obliterate the fact of Redemption. After setting the fire, Tarwater turns and runs, begin-
ning his circular journey. Presumably, had he looked at the gravesite in the beginning — had he been able to see — the journey would not have been necessary. Because of guilt, though, he is unable to see, the condition of the sinner.

When Tarwater returns again in the end, he has been baptized in evil as well as water, and is about to be baptized by fire into the mission of the Lord. Going to Powderhead means being born again.

The first chapter of *The Violent* is a brief circular replica of the entire novel's structure. Tarwater moves from refusal to finish the gravesite to the still where he gets drunk on whiskey and also meets the "stranger" who accompanies Tarwater until he returns. After the drinking bout, Tarwater sets fire to the shack and then returns to run toward the city. In the novel as a whole, Tarwater moves from his refusal to bury his uncle to the city — a place where the spirit can become inebriated with rationalism and materialism. The stranger counseling him at the still appears again in Meeks, Rayber and the man who rapes him. Tarwater loses consciousness at the still when he is completely saturated with liquor. Completely saturated with evil at the time of his violation, he is drugged into unconsciousness. Upon awakening he sets fire to the scene of the rape as he did to the shack after regaining consciousness. When the "stranger" tries to tempt him on the return
to Powderhead, Tarwater sets fire to the place where he is standing. Since the evil one is himself, the novel comes full circle when Tarwater repents for the blasphemous fire of the first chapter by turning his fire upon himself. As he turned from the fire he set in the beginning, he now turns toward the "red-gold tree of fire" from the Lord in the end (8, p. 447). Submissive to his calling he returns to the city once again, this time enlightened.

Tarwater's lack of sight, his expectations of visions he does not yet deserve, lead him away from Powderhead to seek the truth. Travel from home, denial of the Christian condition, invariably means falling into the unknown: darkness, destruction, evil. Significantly, Tarwater is lost as soon as he leaves Powderhead in the darkness of night. He does not even recognize the city, representing an alien condition, when he sees it. In his guilt and terror of the unfamiliar, he mistakes the city's lights for the fire he set in Powderhead. He believes he has travelled full circle already. With his mistaken vision, Tarwater tells Meeks, the driver, he's turned around, "it's the same fire" (8, p. 333), not realizing that he is turned around facing his own guilt. Symbolically, Tarwater believes that he is already heading into the consequences of his denial -- the fires of hell, or the state of unredemption.
Tarwater journeys to Rayber's house in the darkness, to the Carmodys' revival, and back to Powderhead -- thinking he has saved himself -- in characteristic darkness. He baptizes Bishop in the darkness; he is baptized into evil through the rape in the darkness of unconsciousness. Between and during all this, Tarwater is moving. Like Wise Blood, The Violent is filled with movement. Tarwater goes from Powderhead to Rayber's. At Rayber's there is constant moving. Walking in the city and back, walking to and from the Carmodys', travelling to Cherokee Lodge, travelling to and from Powderhead. The characters are hardly ever still, and the "waiting" and the "stillness" mentioned often as indicating the mystery of the Divine Presence are disregarded. The constant physical journeying is accompanied by and interspersed with constant mental journeying. Flashbacks into the past are the most frequent example of this.

By all this moving, Tarwater tries to escape what he keeps running into. Believing he has burned old Tarwater's body, he runs into his image in Bishop. Believing he has left the burnt spot of the shack behind, he meets it again in himself. He leaves Meeks behind to find him in Rayber; he leaves his old self behind in Powderhead only to see his face in Rayber's. He sets fire in the beginning to what he defies, and sets others in the end for the same reason.

Within the circular journey Tarwater makes, which is the broad structural pattern of the novel, is Rayber's
circular journey, set in motion by Tarwater. Rayber's course in the novel is an attempt to follow Tarwater in order to get ahead of him so as to lead or save him. The exhaustion Rayber suffers almost constantly from the journeys he makes is proportionate to his spiritual exhaustion from taking on a role beyond his limitations — that of God. As the journeying is triggered for Rayber by Tarwater's coming, so it steps when Tarwater leaves for Powderhead. Tarwater's action, in fact, causes Rayber's collapse.

Rayber's journeys are circular only in a superficial sense. Rayber is not "home" when he collapses, and "collapsing" is not new birth. Rayber is born again at Powderhead, but he seems to kill it when he returns to Powderhead to curse at the age of fourteen. Bishop's birth causes Rayber to start killing his life. Furthermore, Rayber goes from genuine interest in Tarwater to hatred of him in chapter nine. It reflects his own attitude toward himself, for he sees Tarwater as his "son," his self-image, and in hating himself, he hates his humanity. Rayber is saved at Powderhead as a boy, only to be condemned by what he cannot see there as a man.

Just as Wise Blood is not a straightforward journey on the spiritual level, neither is The Violent. The struggle of salvation in Tarwater and Rayber is reflected in the "hesitations" and forward-reverse movements of the
structure. The "backward drag" of a character's past toward identification with the Christian condition originating there is portrayed through flashbacks caused by the "undertow" of the mind. The Violent opens in a flashback of old Tarwater's life with young Tarwater. Within that flashback is another flashback -- old Tarwater's account of the boy's life and upbringing and Rayber. This flashback is not straightforward. It is continually interrupted by the verbal joustings of old and young Tarwater on the correct way to see, or interpret, the meaning of these past events. A similar counterpoint movement is Rayber's memories and feelings interspersed with Lucette Carmody's sermon in chapter five. These memories and feelings about the child Lucette directly contradict what she says and is.

The Violent progresses slowly in a complex fashion because of the dominance of someone who is no longer physically present in life -- old Tarwater. He reappears in conflicting tension in the present events of the novel through his hold on Tarwater's and Rayber's memories and his likeness to Bishop. He is responsible for almost all such conflicts expressed in the novel: his belief in mystery and intuitive knowledge versus the rationalism of his nephews, Rayber's adjustment program for Tarwater versus the boy's resistance, Rayber's inability to act
versus Tarwater's ability to, reason versus emotions in Rayber, Rayber's image of the future Tarwater versus the actual Tarwater, and the "stranger" versus Tarwater. These conflicts cause the back-and-forth movement which prevents straightforward progress to the goal. The chapters of the novel, alternating as they do between Tarwater's viewpoint and Rayber's, reinforce the tension and strangled movement.

The word and action of "turning" is used more frequently in The Violent, perhaps because of the need both to "turn" and "return" to Powderhead, because it is both a place and a condition. Also, turning away from sin and guilt is important in The Violent to reach self-knowledge and Redemption. To turn implies both moving in a new direction and seeing a new sight upon turning, so its use reinforces the vision imagery of the novel.

Old Tarwater, who is not mentioned as having made any sort of physically significant journey, does not have to turn to receive the revelation of God (8, p. 306). Young Tarwater, however, after all the turning he does to save himself, is turned by the Lord in the end: "It seemed in one instant to lift and turn him. He whirled toward the treeline. There... a red-gold tree of fire ascended" (8, p. 447). Old Tarwater turns Rayber back with a gun when Rayber comes to get his nephew. Rayber has turned his destiny by sheer will power (8, p. 373). Rayber is
constantly turning his mind to other thoughts, indicating his faith in rationalism; Tarwater, on the other hand, is mentioned as turning his head, indicating his search for wisdom and vision. Tarwater turns his head to the window in Meeks' car in reply to Meeks' advice. Similarly, Tarwater turns from the stranger's eyes at the scene of Bishop's drowning. In chapter one, Tarwater will not turn to his uncle's gravesite, and he turns from the fire he sets. In the last chapter, Tarwater returns, turns to the evil in himself, sees and is turned by the Lord. At the novel's closing, Tarwater has turned back to the city.

The idea and image of "cross" is prevalent in the novel as a direction and a condition. At times it prevents forward development in the novel, and at other times promotes it. A field has to be "crossed" to reach Powderhead because there is no convenient road. Rayber thinks of crossing this field with distaste, but Tarwater crosses it and the clearing to his uncle's grave. The two place themselves in relation to Redemption by their decisions about this "crossing." Characters, also, are almost always at cross purposes. Rayber and Tarwater cross wills; so do old and young Tarwater. Bishop's presence crosses Rayber's will. The stranger crosses Tarwater's will, and evil fixes the sign of the cross in Tarwater's spirit.
Wise Blood and The Violent Bear It Away are studies of salvation histories. O'Connor matches opposing figures in both novels, seemingly to show how various journeys toward the light work themselves out in basically the same human nature. Haze, Enoch, Rayber and young Tarwater all have the same opportunities and influences throughout their lives. They have similar motivations for the redemption searches they undertake, yet each ends very differently from all of the others. The differences among them are emphasized by sight imagery and the particular structures of their journeys. O'Connor portrays the freedom of will in each character to choose his own route despite all influences on him. Without these separate journeys and separate visions, O'Connor would be showing us a world determined towards good by the Redemption. This is not her vision at all, as is proved by Enoch in Wise Blood and Rayber in The Violent. The ultimate mystery is free will: that a man can choose his own way according to what he sees, even though he may turn his back on the sight of the Divine.
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