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AESTHETICS AND THE RELIGIOUS MIND: FRANÇOIS MAURIAC, GRAHAM GREENE, AND FLANNERY O'CONNOR

by

James Charles McCullagh

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Chairman

Many thanks to Professors Jack DeBellis, Carl Strauch, Frank Hook, James Frakes, and Norman Melchert who appear from time to time.

Clayborn Possibilities

for Flannery O'Connor

Peachickens hatched
in thick Georgia mud
make national copy;
we have long hungered for
clayborn possibilities
and will excuse your scarlet face
those Jezebel lines
born in the shadow of bone-death
because you died
without piping sawdust sounds
and refused to genuflect before the world.

You must have felt punishment
as raw water wounds
its inward salt
and sheds blood
over devilish hell-sent troughs
as waves climb after God
in a desperate hilltop whisper.

Now forests burn your finger line:
Tarwater
who is carefully coiled under God
and sleepily robbed of his sex
has enough fire in his loins
to cover leper spots
in a soft curtained world
where atmospheres converge
in Chardin's delicate soil.
You who burnt weeds back to teeth
knew the danger of foliage
overrating the soul
until black timber
signifies mischief
and not the wrath of God.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

AESTHETICS AND THE RELIGIOUS MIND: FRANÇOIS MAURIAC, GRAHAM GREENE, AND FLANNERY O'CONNOR

by James C. McCullagh

In this dissertation, by an analysis of the major works of François Mauriac, Graham Greene, and Flannery O'Connor, I have attempted to answer the following critical and aesthetic question: what is the relationship between the religious elements in the novels and the fictional techniques that the individual authors use to express their religious visions. I have tried to enlarge the customary critical boundaries and to consider a work within the appropriate religious, psychological, and philosophical context. To answer the above question I have gone to the religious ideas in Paul Tillich's The Religious Situation, to the post-Freudian psychological critiques in Norman O. Brown's Life Against Death and Love's Body, and to the Christian aesthetics of Jacques Maritain in Art and Poetry and Art and Scholasticism. Most importantly, I have gone to the individual novels, which include: Mauriac's A Kiss for the Leper, Genetrix, and The Desert of Love; Greene's Brighton Rock, The Power and the Glory, and The Heart of the Matter; O'Connor's Wise Blood and The Violent Bear It Away.

By considering Mauriac, Greene, and O'Connor as a "customary critical grouping," I have discussed them within the confines of the Catholic literary tradition. In Chapter 1 I have proposed a descriptive, evolutionary definition of Catholic fiction. Without proposing a prescriptive formula, I have suggested that, in the significant

works of the three authors, there is an increasing tendency to recover the sacred, symbolic, scriptural, and apocalyptical aspects of the original Catholic or Christian imagination.

I have shown in Chapter 2 that François Mauriac dramatizes the infantile, negative, non-symbolic attributes of Christianity. His finest fiction, such as The Desert of Love, Genetrix, and A Kiss for the Leper, represents an exploration of significant themes at the core of a repressive Christianity which condemns man to a destructive psychology and theology of love.

In Chapter 3 I have demonstrated that Graham Greene, in chronology and perception, stands between his French and American counterparts. Greatly influenced by Mauriac, Greene after he wrote Brighton Rock generally repudiated the Frenchman's brand of negative Catholicism. And in his attention to symbolism, existential participation, and the re-creation of central Christian imagery he shared O'Connor's fictional themes and techniques.

My study converges in the important fiction of Flannery O'Connor since she represents a culmination in attempts by Catholic writers to wed religious ideas to modern secular themes. For O'Connor, the essence of religion that has been lost and the essence of religion a writer must invoke if he is to write Catholic fiction is symbolism, prophecy, and mystery. As she shows in Wise Blood and The Violent Bear It Away, there is no reason for the autonomy of art to be superceded by a religious view, because both art and religion find their meaning in metaphor and symbolism.

INTRODUCTION

Nearly sixty years ago in "Sunday Morning" Wallace Stevens poetically charted the tenuous course of the religious impulse in the contemporary imagination. The persona of the poem, basking in "complacencies of the peignoir," and the "green freedom of a cockatoo" is able to perceive little of "The holy hush of ancient sacrifice" which has been largely dissipated by the invasion of early morning sounds in a consciousness tired in seminal luxury. This is both poetic and epistemological truth--concrete sounds are metaphors and ways of knowing far superior to a time-worn mythology articulated by Christ who "moved among us, as a muttering king." Stevens, long before the term "imaginative truth" became comfortable blasphemy for a profane but eager world, knew that the Christic imagination, as William F. Lynch acknowledges in Christ and Apollo,[1] must penetrate that region of flesh and blood, of storm and stress, because such religious language was no longer permeated with the sounds of Sunday metaphors and could not provide archetypes that fostered belief and possibility. The poet also knew, "We live in an old chaos of the sun," and that if his female persona in "Sunday Morning" is to survive for more than her own cultivated boredom, "Divinity must live within herself": she, in a sense, must be her own God. With such suggestions, Stevens places himself in the forefront of contemporary thought in diverse disciplines. Dualisms that set the sacred and the

profane in bipolar opposition have become the paradigm of Western thought but must necessarily fade as man adopts Sören Kierkegaard's notion of radical subjectivity. Modern man has found that he should make over religion in his own image and in his own time. Not surprisingly, a new faith exists in aesthetics and in the arcanic power of the metaphor. As Stevens himself suggests in "Esthétique du Mal," the failure of mythology and the advent of general negation might be a dialectical beginning of a new era and a renewed sense of creativity:

> How cold the vacancy
> When the phantoms are gone and the shaken realist
> First sees reality. The mortal no
> Has its emptiness and tragic expirations.
> The tragedy, however, may have begun,
> Again, in the imagination's new beginning,
> In the 'yes' of the realist spoken because he must
> Say 'yes,' spoken because under every no
> Lay a passion for 'yes' that had never been broken.[2]

And now man is at the conclusion of Samuel Beckett's The Unnamable where the protagonist, who is more like a "psi-component" than a traditional character, plaintively, defiantly remarks: "I can't go on, I'll go on." It is not unusual in twentieth century fiction that a lack of formal belief and the acceptance of a fundamental nihilism has spurned writers to force meaning from the void.

Frederick Hoffman in The Imagination's New Beginning writes that significant authors of this century "have themselves, individually, taken one part or much of a religious system, or set of religious emotions, and have tried to look at them in light of a temporary or a permanent disillusion, then have engaged in two kinds of dramatic speculation; either to describe what happens with the

symbols of a religious system or to recreate these symbols in terms of a teeming world, alive with both variants of 'the mortal no' and the stress and strain of 'the yes of the realist spoken because he must say yes.'"[3] Hoffman seems to think that the most important religious writers of recent times are Feodor Dostoevski and Nikolas Kazantzakis because they were able, in E. Brunner's words, to relive the "brutal facts" of the Incarnation, the Passion, the death, and the Resurrection of Christ, by postulating dramatically a mythopoeic version of the Christic phenomenon where God joined the subjective world within the mind of man and where religion is not fact nor metaphysic but a strategy of epistemology. It is difficult to dispute the critic's contention about this renewed interest in religious symbols especially since religious writers in the so-called Catholic tradition, such as François Mauriac, Graham Greene, and Flannery O'Connor, spent a good part of their creative careers attempting to reconcile the objective requirements of a theological system with the demands of imaginative literature and were, collectively, gradually able to develop a religious point of view that echoed the urgency of Pascal and St. Augustine.

Since the occasion of Plato's Republic and Aristotle's Poetics, numerous attempts have been made to reconcile the antinomies of art and religion or morality. In recent times Mortimer Adler's Art and Prudence, Jacques Maritain's Art and Scholasticism, and François Mauriac's God and Mammon represent equivocal efforts to resolve this conflict, especially the question of the position and quality of evil

and the demoniac in fiction. The problem for contemporary writers, at least as Amos Wilder sees it, is that they are writing for a public which has been "brought up in the romantic idealist tradition" and which partakes of a Christian inspirational and moralistic art which "strive to capture the great afflatus which the romantic movement, especially transcendentalism, possessed at its height."[4] Few critics, including Wilder, would argue that the same public is now willing to judge a work of art on the basis of aesthetic truth, but when Paul Tillich in The Religious Situation believes that the shift in the arts toward expressionism is not a sign of decadence but evidence of a new depth of experience and religious dimension, there is some reason to be optimistic. Baudelaire, if not the reading public, would be eternally grateful for Tillich's remark. So possibly at this time, because of developments in dogmatic and systematic theology, evolution in concepts of morality and the tendency of the "times" to catch up with art, the question of the relationship between art and religion is closer to being solved. At least more people are willing to agree that art in general and literature in particular, whatever the mode or manner of presentation, is frequently an embodiment of essential biblical truths.

There is probably no more suitable area of investigation concerning the highly ambiguous and controversial relationship between aesthetics and the religious mind than in some of the significant fiction of the Catholic literary revival in France, England, and the United States, during which such representative writers as François

Mauriac, Graham Greene, and Flannery O'Connor tried to satisfy the formal fictional requirements of the novel that are particularly pressing when they attempt to dramatize the effects of "eternity peeping into time."

While my first chapter will make abundantly clear what I mean by the phrases "Catholic novel" and "Catholic writer," I must say at the outset that the choice of these three authors is far from arbitrary. They are, first of all, joined under the nebulous rubric of "Catholic novelist," thus, however defined, they represent a "customary grouping." Critics have long associated them and placed them in the same twentieth century tradition but for widely divergent reasons. This in itself is a fertile field of investigation and will be explored. Likewise, an attempt to establish literary relationships and degrees of "indebtedness" will be an important though minor part of this study. It can be effectively demonstrated that Greene was influenced by Mauriac and O'Connor by both of them. Above all, the three were struggling to resolve the question of the relationship between religion and art in their own ways.

Though I will pay sufficient attention to philosophical, theological, and aesthetic attributes of the Catholic religion and attempt to show how various doctrines influenced the writers, my investigation will be primarily aesthetic and will proceed along inductive, analytic, and descriptive lines. By an analysis of the aesthetic qualities (aesthetic is defined vis-à-vis the formalist critical tradition and refers generally to point of view, symbolic

strategy, structure and texture of a work) of the important religious fiction of these writers or that work which is generally considered Catholic, I would like to describe, to define the quality of the religious impulse and try to discern whether the realization of religious themes and particularly the handling of the reception of grace, the relationship between determinism and free will in any way colors, undercuts, or renders inadequate the aesthetic dimensions of the works.

I will also show that Mauriac, in The Desert of Love, Genetrix, The Knot of Vipers, A Kiss for the Leper, and other works (these will not be dealt with exhaustively or systematically), indulges in a "negative Catholicism" and that these novels are examples of the author walking the heretical line: his texture of Manicheism, Pantheism, and especially his Jansenism. His finest fiction represents a working out of the body-soul dialectic in harsh Pascalian terms. In Mauriac, as I will explain, I sense an assertion of Catholicism in its barest garb: a literal, dogmatic (though not prescriptive) assertion rather than a symbolic expression. It is my intention to demonstrate that with Graham Greene's The Power and the Glory, The Heart of the Matter, and A Burnt-Out Case and Flannery O'Connor's Wise Blood and The Violent Bear It Away, not only did the religious sense catch up with the aesthetic sense, but there is a moral and existential seriousness that is largely absent in Mauriac. The later writers dramatize a Dionysian Christianity; a situation where commitment to God is a life or death struggle. Their fiction is alive with a sense of mystery and tragedy

which is the heart of the Incarnation. Most important, Greene and O'Connor were able to articulate an appropriate symbolic technique to convey their religious point of view. Hopefully, this study will be a dialogue that will concretely demonstrate the intricate interstratifications of literature with existential aspects of man's condition that is mythically schematized in some writers and overtly rigified, by appeal to religious doctrines, in others. And to enhance this dialogue and to demonstrate the convergence of Catholic literature in Greene and especially in O'Connor, references will be made, in exploratory fashion, to Karl Barth's Systematic Theology, Paul Tillich's The Religious Situation, and Norman O. Brown's Life Against Death.

It will be quickly noted that many writers who are usually thought to be part of the Catholic tradition have been omitted, except for occasional reference, from this study. This decision is also far from arbitrary. Some early Catholic writers, such as Belloc, Chesterton, Huysmans, Bourget and literally hundreds more have fallen, for good reason, from critical favor and are simply not worth investigating, though it must be remembered that many of them influenced Mauriac, Greene and O'Connor. Unfortunately, because the Catholic press in this century has had only a feeble notion as to the aesthetic requirements of their fiction, morality and pietism are often given as vital signs of Catholic literature.

Possibly Gene Kellog in The Vital Tradition has provided the most convincing reasons for distinguishing Catholic writers on

thematic or artistic grounds. He believes that J. F. Powers and Evelyn Waugh--the former is considered by many reviewers to be the "great white hope" of Catholics in America--are less powerful writers than Mauriac, Greene, and O'Connor because they tend to treat individuals as social or political units rather than as persons with souls to save or lose.[5] This is one of the most useful insights in Kellog's book which tends to advance historical and sociological theses.

Satire, especially when it is directed against institutions, comes of age and this is very true of Waugh's Brideshead Revisited in which he satirizes the follies of secularism. Powers' Morte D'Urban, is a little more complex. It is Catholic in the sense of characters and subjects. But while Powers, in the Joycean spirit, is beautifully able to show the Church as a victim of the business instinct and the Protestant ethic, he does not put his characters on trial for their lives. Thus his fiction does lack an existential seriousness. Catholic literature, as I will define it, is that written in the manner of the gospel of St. John--apocalyptic, symbolic, and Christ-centered. Not surprisingly, it took the Protestant theologian Tillich to remind Catholics of their radical and symbolic heritage. Carl Armbruster in The Vision of Paul Tillich makes the point: "... that Christ is the answer to existential anguish is a fundamental insight which Catholics have tended to neglect in a smug unconcern for those who have brought this anguish to the fore of modern thought. We should be grateful that we can learn something

about Christ, that at least some aspects of Christology can be emphasized with the help of modern thinkers."[6] Their own theology and siege mentality of three centuries after the Protestant Reformation have cut the Catholics off from the best sources of creative inspiration. It was only with recent Catholic writers such as Greene and O'Connor that elements of the tragic and symbolic entered their fiction to any great extent.

Therefore, in a detailed and reflective Chapter 1, with help from the critical tradition, formal aesthetics, and the literary works themselves, I will propose an evolutionary definition of Catholic fiction. I will also trace a recognizable convergence in thought between the Protestant and Catholic religions and suggest to what degree modern literature has influenced dogmatic theology.

Chapter 2 will consist of a discussion of the relationship between the psychology and theology of love in François Mauriac with particular attention to the interplay of nature and grace, love and death, and grace and time. Some discussion of the influences of Pascal, Freud and others on Mauriac is essential. I will show that his best fiction gets its extraordinary power from his fictionalization of anti-dogma, from the appeal of Manicheism and Jansenism. The key questions I will ask about Mauriac as well as the other writers are: Does there emerge from the work an experience of reality such as Christ leaves to man? Is the core of Christology engaged psychologically, existentially, or metaphysically?

Before investigating Greene's Catholic novels in Chapter 3,

first it will be necessary to establish the literary relationship between Mauriac and Greene. Though The Power and the Glory and A Burnt-Out Case can be considered critiques of theological positions held by the Catholic Church, the novels are also man-centered and psychologically convincing. Man must struggle in his full complexity to accept or reject God. This fight must be waged in time without the help of a melodramatic intrusion of grace. With Greene the Catholic novel began to return to aspects of theology which have been long neglected but which find a paradigm in the sufferings of St. John of the Cross.

Chapter 4 will be an analysis of the relationship between the aesthetics and the religious mind in Flannery O'Connor's Wise Blood and The Violent Bear It Away since it is in her, and largely in her use of the grotesque mode, that the religious sense catches up with the aesthetic sense. Such a claim is only partly fanciful. What I am proposing is that when O'Connor was able to find a symbolic mode that was not only ambitious and meaningful in a profoundly religious sense but that also contained, inherently, a quality of ambiguity and negation which is potentially and expectedly a critique of easy religious optimism as well as secularism, then the modern religious novel was born. She, like many writers of the last few decades, realized that religion, if it is to be appealed to in fiction, must occupy a position of estrangement and must fight with other epistemologies for recognition. And this is essentially the texture of Wise Blood. Before eternity can be permitted to peep into time, the

basic engagement must take place on a psychological level but in a psychology that has been exposed to a religious temper. For these reasons Flannery O'Connor can be described as one of the most convincing religious writers of the century. It is as if with her, theological and aesthetic developments converged and because of this, the truly Catholic novel was born and died.

If one would draw an imaginary line from François Mauriac, through Graham Greene, to Flannery O'Connor, one could discern a steady movement away from fictionalized dogma and theological critique toward a man-centered, existential fiction which involves a sense of risk, commitment, an eschatological reality where essential truths of the Christic phenomenon become meshed with profound psychological and aesthetic concerns. In light of my concrete proposals, I will attempt to draw that line.

CHAPTER ONE

The Catholic Novelist

While I do not think that it can be effectively demonstrated, as Maritain claims, that there is no such thing as secular literature, I believe few works of this century completely ignore any hint of transcendence, though it might appear in patently untraditional garb. Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot," twenty years after its creation, is still a paradigm for the plight of twentieth century man who longs in all his grotesqueness for some kind of savior but generally does not recognize him when he appears.

A religious literary tradition, to be sure, has always existed. The Middle Ages inherited, by way of Aristotle and Aquinas, a fixed Catholic metaphysic which became in the writings of Dante both apocalyptic and predictable. Though nearly a century of Catholic critics and clergy has been pointing back nostalgically to Dante as the perennial and positive example of Catholic art, one supposes the reasons for this reflect more the critics' interest in tidy hierarchies and triparite systems than in the non-literal dimensions of The Divine Comedy. It may well be argued that the dissociation of religious sensibility occurred at approximately this time when expression was both theological and symbolic. Possibly for the last time in Catholic literature it could be claimed that the aesthetic imagination was an important clue to reality and supra-reality. Apparently it has been

forgotten by many contemporary Catholic critics that much biblical and early Christian literature was at bottom an expression of both the symbolic and the tragic. But as Bernard Murchland so correctly remarks:

> Much of the theology of the West, unfortunately, has been ill at ease with both symbolic expression and the tragic. It has frequently opted for an abstractive mode of expression and confronted the tragic only indirectly through some form of pietism or other. We might say that this is especially true of a long-standing tradition of Catholic theology. Father Yves Congar has been one persistent critic of the shortcomings of this tradition. Theology, he says, operates neither in a physical nor a metaphysical order but rather in the positive order of Christian revelation which is an expression--and largely a symbolic expression--of a free act of God.[7]

While his objections were of a different order, Hegel in The Positivity of Christianity wrote that Christianity had become a ponderous institution replete with man-made statutes, false notions of morality, and little of the central Christian message. Similarly, Nietzsche saw Christianity as the stone on the grave of Christ. So by the mid-nineteenth century there already existed a contemplated distance between the Christian religion and those aspects of the Christic imagination that Kierkegaard and Catholic and Protestant theologians after him saw embodied in the person of Christ. And modern literature, by virtue of psychological and aesthetic devices, has helped man understand what St. Paul meant when he said man must remake himself "in Christ."

Though it is not altogether true, one might say that the religious revival, or more specifically, the Catholic revival in the arts

is marked most dramatically by Paul Claudel's "illumination." "There are few events in modern literary history," according to Melvin Friedman, "which have had quite the symbolic impact of Paul Claudel's religious 'illumination' on Christmas day, 1886, in Notre Dame Cathedral. The event served as a useful paradigm for what Martin Turnell has called ... 'a radically Christian standpoint.'"[8]

That there was a recognizable, self-conscious Catholic literary revival in France, England, and the United States in the late nineteenth and particularly twentieth centuries has been ably demonstrated by Gene Kellog in The Vital Tradition. Kellog sees Pious IX's issuance of the Syllabus of Errors in 1864 (which condemned pantheism, naturalism, Jansenism, materialism) as an intentional manifesto of Catholic separatism that soon after, in the fiction of Darby d'Aurevilly and Huysman in France, and Belloc and Chesterton in England, all of whom tended to criticize pagans, lapsed Catholics, and scientific secularists, marked the first time the Catholics had raised their creative heads above water since the Protestant Reformation forced them to acquire a siege mentality that prompted much moralistic and defensive writing.[9]

In retrospect, considering the rapid advances in all areas of knowledge and investigation, this assertiveness on the part of Catholic artists, though not instantaneous, was in certain respects a necessary but not always successful check to prominent intellectual trends of the late nineteenth century. Whatever the merits of his accusations about Baudelaire's paganism and Zola's materialism,

Mauriac saw a decided absence of God and sense of the eternal in much French fiction of the period. Thus, in many ways, he intended his novels to be an answer to the deterministic novels of Balzac and Zola. And to a greater extent than Mauriac, the earliest Catholic novelists in France and England were engaged in a rebuttal of the century's most cherished convictions. From its very conception, then, the Catholic tradition was a separatist cult which often paid more attention to the moral and overt religious demands of art than to aesthetic requirements. Fortunately, with Mauriac and those who were influenced by him, there arose a process of on-going redefinition, which John Henry Cardinal Newman called "development," within the Catholic community which was matched, as the consciously separatist instinct lessened, by a greater creativity until approximately the time of Flannery O'Connor's The Violent Bear It Away when, in Kellog's opinion, Catholics joined the modern world.[10]

I am grateful for Kellog's discussion of historical and sociological aspects of the Catholic literary revival. Nonetheless, I feel that he has largely neglected the aesthetic dimensions of the works or, more specifically, the relationship between the aesthetics and the religious mind in the respective works. He sees the Catholic religious novel tradition from Huysman to O'Connor as little more than a dramatic critique of the sacred and profane environments. Understandably this approach, justifiable as it may be, enabled the writer to forego any serious aesthetic considerations or judgments. And when they are applied they are usually done so on the basis of

sociological formulae.[11] Such an attitude is hardly surprising. A long line of critics has judged Catholic literature of the century as merely a critique of the secular environment. Martin Turnell, who is probably one of the most articulate Catholic critics of this generation, thinks Catholic writers such as Waugh and Greene (and one assumes O'Connor) are more believable when they write satires and entertainments because there is less of a moral commitment in these genres and less of a chance to sermonize or sin. One does not wonder at the glee with which the Catholic community has seized upon J. F. Powers as an author who can write about religious subjects yet still satisfy all the requirements of the New Yorker. Though Powers would not himself fall into this trap--he hardly sees himself as a Catholic writer--many of his readers apparently are convinced that the Church as an institution should be the center of Catholic literature.

A more important consideration, and one that is the ultimate subject of this investigation, concerns the application of a critical aesthetic to a religious or Catholic novel. Is there such a thing as Christic imagination? How can embodied beliefs be transformed in a work of fiction? Before, however, the relationship between religion and aesthetics can be fully explored, the perennial question of "what constitutes a Catholic novel must be answered, not only in deference to the critical tradition, but because it occupies a vital place in my argument.

Not surprisingly, the preponderance of critical opinions

designed to provide definitions and descriptions of the Catholic novel is dogmatic and moralistic. Too frequently such an opinion is marked by a romantic afflatus, as in Felix Hope, who thinks that because "Catholic literature proceeds from the souls of men whose faith enables their vision to pierce the stars, it is the most complete literature of man."[12]

Maybe Flannery O'Connor herself in "The Role of the Catholic Novelist" provides the best comment on the quality and frequency of such opinions:

> I collect articles from the Catholic press on the failure of the Catholic novelist and recently in one of them I came upon this typical sentence: 'Why not a positive novel based on the Church's fight for social justice, or the liturgical revival, or life in a seminary?' I take it that if seminarians began to write novels about life in the seminary, there soon would be several fewer seminarians; but we are to assume that anybody who has the energy to do some research can give us a novel ... and can make it positive ...
>
> In another article, the writer asks this wistful question: 'Would it not seem in order now for some of our younger men to explore the possibilities inherent in certain positive factors which make Catholic life and the Catholic position in this country increasingly challenging?' ... No serious novelist 'explores possibilities inherent in factors.' Conrad wrote that the artist 'descends within himself; and in that region of stress and strife, if he can be deserving and fortunate, he finds the terms of his appeal.'[13]

O'Connor might have said more about what isn't a Catholic novel than what one is; nevertheless, in the above paragraphs and in the rest of the article she refuses to let religion dictate the style or terms of her fiction. She makes a commitment to aesthetics without, one

feels, compromising her religious point of view. She instinctively rejects any pleas for a weak-kneed, literal fiction that appears to make the Catholic Church itself the center of meaning. O'Connor's dramatic and assertive conception of the Catholic novel and tradition is central to my study and will be returned to after further consideration of the critical argument.

One of the few critics who has been bold enough to propose a definition of the Catholic novel is Gene Kellog in The Vital Tradition. For him "Only a novel whose mainspring of dramatic action depends upon Roman Catholic theology, or upon the history of thought within one of the world's large Roman Catholic communities, or upon 'development' of Roman Catholic 'ideas' in Newman's sense, is regarded as contributing to the flowering of major literary achievement which began when the isolation of the world's Roman Catholic community started to break down in the nineteenth century, and which tapered off ... when Roman Catholics joined the modern world after Vatican II."[14]

This definition or description, for inclusiveness and suggestiveness, is impressive and worth some consideration. When, however, it is looked at carefully, it leads the reader into a critical cul-de-sac. Nowhere in his study does Kellog show exactly how the mainspring of dramatic action in any of the novels under scrutiny depends upon Roman Catholic theology. I would very much like to know how formal Thomistic theology is translated wholesale into fictional form. I assume an author must take his theology wholesale if his

book is to be theologically sound. Could a novel be a partial or thorough fictional restatement of the Thomistic understanding of grace and still be Catholic? Such is the case in Greene's The Power and the Glory and O'Connor's The Violent Bear It Away. Would an articulation of the grotesque mode, representing an oxymoronic character and tenuous existence and found in O'Connor and Greene, constitute a violation of Maritain's aesthetic doctrine of portrayal of fictional states without "connivance"?

In a real sense Kellog's definition is too general to be useful. More than anything else, it points toward historical, sociological, and formal philosophical developments rather than aesthetics. And this is the root of the critical problem. It is demonstrably easier to see the Catholic Church in "institutional" terms and the Catholic novel as a critique of secularism than to discuss the peculiar tone of the religious impulse in important books. But the latter must be done if we are able to claim any merit in the autonomy of art.

As Morse Peckam reminds us about the Romantic period in literature, the quality of artistic perception is often registered in the intricate interrelationships of images and metaphorical patterns. He sees the most significant aspect of Romanticism as the gradual repudiation of a mechanical consciousness, as in Poe, and the general embracing, by Keats, Wordsworth, and Shelley, of a dynamic, changing conception of nature and world order. Thus the symbolism, the imagery is the window to the Romantic consciousness. This, however,

is not simply because literary historians want it to be the case; it is because our mode of investigating literature has begun to coincide with our perception of that literature. Thirty years ago in The World's Body John Crowe Ransom, when he called poetry or metaphor nothing less than "a desperate ontological maneuver," more ably than any of his predecessors, argues that we should no longer consider poetry as ornamentation and decoration for the sentence proper, but a vital way of knowing, a means of developing a special kind of knowledge in a mechanistic, binary world which, because of the fabled "dissociation of sensibility," was not able to conceive of relationships in diversity. There is, of course, a defensive streak in Ransom and in other modern critics who sometimes long for security in periods of cultural disarray. But there is more to the argument than this.

Ransom, Peckam and others have proposed that metaphor or symbolism is a unique way of knowing and perceiving in a Western world characterized by a kind of mechanistic, binary thinking and a subject/object disposition that is ingrained in Western man. Art, and especially verbal art, should always be a critique of dualisms that fail to capture the complexity of life. Similarly, because other theories of knowledge and inquiry (such as rationalism and empiricism), particularly in the twentieth century which is underscored by varieties of existential nightmares, have proven inadequate and ordered metaphysical systems based on Hegelian dialectics have proven suspect, a general subjectivism, expressed in literature in terms of metaphor and symbol, has taken over. In addition, man desires to be his own

creator. So in Yeats' "Among School Children" the poet asks: "How can we know the dancer from the dance?" We cannot because the distinction between categories fades. Or in Wallace Stevens' "The Idea of Order at Key West": the artificer becomes the work of art. It is not difficult to find numerous examples in modern literature which proclaim the supremacy of art, of metaphor. Though from a cultural standpoint it is mildly ironic that we increasingly tend to judge a work on the quality of its metaphor, we may well consider Ransom's claim of thirty years ago that poetry is a desperate ontological maneuver as literally true.

For the above reasons, and others that will be presented during the course of this investigation, it seems that my study of the Catholic novel tradition will also be determined by the quality of the metaphor in the fiction discussed. Fortunately, more and more critics are beginning to realize that symbol and metaphor are the places where religion and art converge.

Richard Sullivan in "A Definition of Catholic Fiction" speaks of two habitual attitudes, two ingrained ways of viewing reality which especially and peculiarly mark the mind of the Catholic writer: the sacramental habit of mind, and the sacrificial habit of mind.[15] While these phrases are alive with implications, it is regrettable that Sullivan does not develop them further. The terms sacramental and sacrificial, however, are useful because they get to the nature of fundamental Christian imagery and to the dimensions of the tragic and symbolic.

In This is Catholic Fiction Sister Mariella Gable O.S.B. sees similar impulses at the core of Catholic fiction but is more detailed and convincing in her suggestions. She first necessarily rejects the comprehensive view of Catholic literature which would mean any literature as a Catholic would treat it. Such a view is deductive and impossible to maintain convincingly. Sister Gable proposes a number of types of Catholic fiction. Local color novels of Catholic life and those which contribute to the "pulp mentality" she places at the periphery, though she undoubtedly believes this form serves a useful purpose. Closer to the center of Catholic fiction would be works that deal with ethical problems: birth control or the teachings of the Church on the race problem.[16] She adds: "The white center of the target of Catholic fiction is devoted to a study of the human and spiritual problems involved in keeping the first commandment--the forgotten commandment. The one great fiction writer in the Church who has been able to hit the precise center of the bull's eye is the Frenchman, Georges Bernanos."[17]

That Sister Gable sees Bernanos and not Mauriac or Greene as the center of Catholic fiction is of little consequence.[18] What is most interesting is her belief, which I believe to be valid, that Bernanos in The Diary of a Country Priest dramatizes a man's journey toward Christ in all its existential seriousness. The protagonist-narrator relives the "brutal facts" of Christ's career in time and in anguish. The unconvincing ending of the novel does not prevent it from representing a metaphorical expression of the original Christian mysteries.

The aesthetic requirements of a Catholic novel or literature have been ably delineated by Newman, Maritain, and Turnell. All three are able to recognize the difficulties that arise in any discussion of the relationship between formal religion and artistic sensibility.

Newman, the first great modern Catholic thinker, realized that the Church was no "policeman" and acknowledged that "It is a contradiction in terms to attempt a sinless literature of sinful men ... . A university is not a convent or a seminary ... . Cut out from your class books with all broad manifestations of the natural man, and those manifestations are waiting for your pupils' benefit at the very doors of the lecture room... . You have succeeded but in this --making the world his University."[19]

Maritain, the foremost Catholic aesthetician of this century and one who attempted to translate Thomistic philosophy into aesthetic terms, like Newman, conceived of a dynamic relationship between good and evil and the necessity for Catholic novels to explore honestly the states of sin. He, however, tried more concretely to settle the question of the writer's relation to depicted evil. Since evil must be shown in all its true aspects, is there any way of doing it without complicity? Maritain tried to settle this question in Art and Scholasticism and Art and Poetry.

In the 1930's and the 1940's Maritain spiritedly entered the Parisian conversations and controversies involving Andre Gide, François Mauriac, Jean Cocteau, and Charles Du Bos with his efforts

to imbue literary criticism with a Catholic or Christian humanism. He, less nervously than Mauriac, objected to the tradition of nineteenth century decadence in the arts and remarks in Art and Poetry that "In the past century two great disasters threw their fire into the night. Nietzsche fallen from the heaven of liberty, Wilde from the heaven of art."[20] As was often the case, Maritain blamed the romantic German metaphysics for the ascendancy of the god "aesthetics" and saw the shadows of Schopenhauer, Pater, and Wilde passing strongly over the gloom of European literature. For the French aesthetician this was subjectivism at its worst: Wilde putting his genius into his life and not his art. Maritain clearly wishes for a separation of the artist and the subject he depicts. Gide was not able to do this and confuses his model with himself. The central question, then, in Catholic aesthetics relating to the novel concerns that subtle distance between creator and created. So for Maritain the fundamental question "is not whether a novelist may paint or not paint a given aspect of evil. The essential thing is to know with what degree of aloofness he might do his painting, and whether his heart and his skill are sufficiently pure and strong to do it without conniving at it. The deeper the novel descends into man's wretchedness, the more it demands of the novelist superhuman virtues. To write the work of Proust as it needed to be written, the interior light of St. Augustine would have been necessary."[21]

Maritain reaffirms this opinion in the later Art and Poetry: "The essential question is to know at what height he [the novelist]

places himself to make this painting."[22] These two precepts became the cornerstone of Christian aesthetics in this century.

Maritain is no moralist in the narrow sense. He is more aware, for example, than fellow Frenchman Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, of the depths to which writers must go to achieve a genuine picture of man. Indeed, he criticizes de Chardin's "chronolatry" which he sees as part of the new trend in theology and ecclesiastic thinking--"a genuflection before the world." He could not rest comfortably with de Chardin's notion of the formation of the "Noosphere." Maritain knew that Dostoevsky met Christ at hard labor and did not turn away. Maritain also realizes that a radical encounter with Christ and with evil cannot be avoided by the Christian writer. It is unfortunate that many critics, particularly Catholic ones, fail to notice this existential germ in Maritain that constantly emerges from his aesthetics.

Nonetheless, Maritain would have no truck with the "art for art's sake" doctrine or notions of aesthetic truth. While he acknowledges that "the role of the novelist is not that of the scientist" and that characters must live within the author if they are to fully exist, he does appear to desire some separation of author and work. Consequently, his brand of aesthetics ultimately raises question about style, tone, and point of view. Is it possible within the concrete confines of the novel to satisfy the above dictums? In Greene's The Power and the Glory the narrator is obviously sympathetic to the whisky-priest, despite his religious failings. And

Mauriac's attitude, by his own admission, toward Therese in Therese Desqueyroux and O'Connor's toward young Tarwater in The Violent Bear It Away is much the same. As I will show later, this sympathy is often complicity or connivance. The central problem here, and one Maritain does not discuss, is the relationship between the form and content of the Catholic novel. Could not the style or central metaphor be thought a strategy of transcendence? Whether such a method would satisfy Maritainian aesthetics is not clear, though it is undoubtedly the method endorsed by Greene and O'Connor. Flannery O'Connor knew that if her fictional sense of radical Christianity or Catholicism was to be received by an audience who had long since rejected, often unconsciously, the essence of Christian symbolism, she, by the quality of her metaphors, must draw large and startling figures to awaken an indifferent world. She does, however, by making transcendence an attenuated hope, come close to reversing Maritain's formula by implying in Wise Blood and other places that salvation might be in art and not in God.

Martin Turnell has probably gone farther than Newman or Maritain in recognizing that the style and philosophy of an age greatly affects the sensibility of religious writers. "We do not," he observes, "expect novelists living in times of stress to possess the serene untroubled vision of a Dante or a Chaucer. A writer is not a disembodied intelligence imposing beliefs on experience. He offers us an imaginative interpretation of experience in which intelligence and sensibility have a part to play."[23] "The religious novelist,"

he continues, "lives in a world in which salvation and damnation are a constant possibility, in which good and evil, sin and redemption are realities. This gives him greater depth and seriousness than the secular novelist, but it also creates peculiar difficulties."[24]

And the "peculiar difficulties" primarily concern the artistic and religious sensibilities. Any writer knows that edification of the good and the holy brings negligible fictional returns. Catholic writers, especially those with some grounding in orthodox theology, are conscious of the inherent dangers in dramatizing too overtly the acquisition of grace or sainthood, not only because it usually makes for inferior fiction, but because theological schematics make grim moral truths. Bernanos in The Diary of a Country Priest meets this problem head-on with ambiguous results. Though his narrator's struggle during most of the book is perverse and convincingly existential, it is a failure in artistic strategy to have the priest's possible sainthood proposed at the conclusion in a strictly expository form.

One might ask, rhetorically, at this point if there is really any organic way, other than by articulating a symbolic method that is alive with psychological and metaphysical tones, to dramatize the workings of a religious sensibility. It took fifty years of critical discussions before religious writers and thinkers realized that if symbolism was the center of art, it might also be the core of religion. Mauriac, in both his fiction and essays, had to lay the groundwork before such a realization could become even a possibility.

Mauriac, unlike Maritain, Newman, and Turnell, entered the dialogue between religion and artistic sensibility largely to silence the critics of his novels and to publicly declare some of his unconscious perceptions. As "a metaphysician who works in the concrete," Mauriac understood how difficult it was to satisfy Maritain's doctrine of non-connivance; not surprisingly, he wrestled with the problem a good part of his creative career.

In The Sufferings of a Christian published in 1928 Mauriac, ostensibly referring to an early Catholic writer Bossuet but reflecting instead his personal aesthetic tinged with Freudianism, argues that Christianity makes no peace with the flesh, for the flesh is corrupt. Man is prostrate before his passions: concupiscence is the rule of the day. Understandably the Catholic press received Mauriac's statements with great disfavor, causing the author to recant in part and write, as a form of corrective, The Joy of the Christian which, in the manner of the Sermon on the Mount, traces the sources of Christian joy. "But," as Jerome D'Souza in "What Constitutes a Catholic Novelist" remarks, "sincere as these avowals undoubtedly are, the former article, 'Souffrances du Chretien,' represents the more habitual, the more fundamental, as it certainly is the earliest attitude, of the writer, one in which the true Catholic will at once have recognized a mixture of Manichean and Jansenistical ideas, rendered all the more piquant by a dash of Freudian naturalism. This depressing view of the world is illustrated by the various novels which Mauriac wrote, before the moral

crisis described in 'Dieu et Mammon.'"[25]

D'Souza is surely correct in suggesting the main action of The Desert of Love, A Kiss for the Leper, Genetrix, and other novels written before and after Mauriac's heralded "conversion," turns on some aspect of sexual attraction or repulsion and that these works constitute studies in temptation and surrender. Though Mauriac in God and Mammon ultimately but equivocally rejected, at least intellectually, Gide's notion of necessary collaboration with the demoniac and apparently, with some strong criticism and genuine doubts, accepted Maritain's doctrine of non-connivance, it is clear, as later discussion will substantiate, that he never completely ceased walking the heretical line in his fiction. The psychological atmosphere of gloom in his early works is a direct result of his appeal to the concupiscent, deterministic, and horrifying aspects of the formal doctrine of Jansenism, which centered its teachings on the unworthiness of the individual and the extreme difficulty of spiritual renewal. It has been argued that Mauriac, by emphasizing the repulsive nature of a world that systematically excluded God, renders a Catholic novel in a negative way. Such is not an impossible claim as Flannery O'Connor, with much greater insight and resources, was to do something very similar two decades later. Nevertheless, Mauriac must be held accountable for the moral and spiritual universes of his fiction. To an orthodox critic like D'Souza and many before and after him, Mauriac's novels are examples of negative Catholicism because the author makes use of those qualities of religion that have been termed

heretical. And this charge can be substantiated.

It is my opinion that Mauriac's works are examples of negative Catholicism not only because he walks the heretical line but because his concept of religion is narrow, often doctrinaire, and patently unsymbolic. Not that other writers do not do the same thing. James Joyce is himself a subtle Jansenist and apparently held Mauriac's opinion of the horror of sex. But he was able to formulate an elaborate literary posture to get theology out of his system. Mauriac had difficulty doing this.

It is also my opinion that the important religious novels of Greene and O'Connor are attempts to move away from this influence of Mauriac, whether conscious or otherwise. The problem these later writers confronted was essentially one of form: how to find a strategy to express a religious vision. Greene in The Power and the Glory solved the problem by letting the theological drama work itself in the psychology of the whisky-priest. O'Connor was able to do approximately the same thing in Wise Blood. By a deft handling of narrative structure and time, she could both parody and proclaim the virtues of excessive religious commitment. Ironically, the solution of the aesthetic dilemma for these two writers was also the solution of the religious one because in searching for a form, a task that was obviously helped by the general influences and modes of the day, they began to recover those qualities of the original Catholic or Christian imagination that had long been neglected because of the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation, and all

those forces in the Christian sects which in the last two centuries have tended to equate religion with moralism, literalism, and pietism. In a sense I am saying that much of the heralded Catholic revival, as expressed in the novel, could be deemed a negative tradition since the representative literature of the period tended to find its voice and strength in religious modes, concepts, and themes that were a product of inter-Christian feuding rather than an expression of Christianity in its original Christian guise. Flannery O'Connor's fiction is not only an example of ecumenism and the end of Catholic insularity but a rather unique example of an author who, because she was an artist before anything else, forced herself to find a form to convey a religious point of view that was radical because she combined her understanding of Christianity with her acknowledgment of the existential plight of modern man. In other words she did not have to remake the Catholic religion but to recover those essential aspects of it that had been neglected or lost. Through aesthetics, she discovered that symbolic or metaphorical truth is not only aesthetically pleasing but also the very foundation of Christianity.

This is not to say that there was not a self-conscious Catholic literary revival in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There most assuredly was. Catholic thinkers and writers were anxious to make up for three centuries of Protestant predominance. But the metaphorical value of their fiction indicates a general reluctance to experiment aesthetically and therefore a failure to see that

notions of transcendence could only be presented symbolically if they were to be engaging and convincing. The Catholic press has bewailed for decades the failure of Catholic fiction. Though they were frequently very reluctant to admit Mauriac and Greene into their circle, they had little choice since the two were most illustrative of the Catholic tradition. While it is sufficiently true that there are examples of negative Catholicism in Mauriac, Greene, and O'Connor (i.e. Jansenist themes), what the Catholic press failed to notice was that Catholic literature, because it was calling on the wrong imaginative resources inherent in Christianity, failed aesthetically and religiously. As Wilfrid Sheed in "Enemies of Catholic Promise" and Michael Novak in "Prophecy and the Novel," remark, it was twentieth century Catholic aesthetics (which when applied, usually became quasi-aesthetic judgments) that in a perplexing, self-conscious way, kept Catholic writers away from their best and most fruitful source of creativity--the prophetic impulse which was the cornerstone of the Catholic Church.[26] Novak's assessment of this situation as he sees it reflected in American Catholic fiction is penetrating:

> ... the novelist soon becomes aware of a radical disharmony between American Catholic intelligence and its emotional and imaginative life. In seminaries, and therefore to some extent in sermons and in schools, a psychology is still sometimes taught in which the will and abstractive intelligence are supreme; the emotions and imagination are scanted as inferior faculties. Furthermore, 'the will' and 'abstractive intelligence' are themselves studied as abstractions ... . Such psychology dates from late Scholasticism, after the Augustinian modulations which Aquinas retained has been shredded in the gears of essentialistic logic. The Roman and Napoleonic requirements of canon

> law, so different from English law, abetted the abstraction from living men and human situations.[27]

The implications of the above statement are almost endless. While it is impossible to trace the reception of the rational Thomistic system by the various Catholic communities, particularly in the last hundred years, there appear to be some general truths in what Novak proposes. By keeping this in mind it is easier to understand the Catholic community's acceptance of and abhorrence at the narrowly sensual, pantheistic world of A Kiss for the Leper. Mauriac, and Huysman before him, satisfied the unexpressed, unconscious desires of Catholic readers. His was an assault on Thomistic thinking by collaboration with the demoniac and the heretical. Understandably, much Catholic fiction of this century was an expression of a psychology that tended toward the moralistic or the rational. A fixed metaphysical system and a static psychology will be of little service to man in the act of becoming. It is difficult to disagree with Gide, who reproaches Catholicism because it evades the drama of existence and places its members in comfortable spiritual situations.

Norman O. Brown in Life Against Death and Love's Body has gone farther than any contemporary theologian or philosopher in his psychoanalytical critique of Christianity. His argument is perplexing and interesting. The life against death he calls for will come about only through the abolition of repressions and genuine resurrection of the body; thus psychoanalysis and Christianity are wed. The absence of these desired states is the result of religious, cultural, and psychological developments during the last thousand years.

According to Brown "The medieval Catholic synthesis between Christianity and Greek philosophy, with its notion of an immortal soul, compromised and confused the issue."[28] The issue that he refers to is the relationship between the existential body and the soul. Neither Catholicism nor Protestantism, with few exceptions, brings a concrete sense of the living body to the modern world. Art and poetry have always been changing our ways of sensing and feeling--that is, altering the psychic structure of the human body, but religions of the West have not. "No one," in Brown's estimation, "has gone further than Hopkins in presenting Christ as the direct and omnipresent object of perception, so deeply ingrained in the eyes, the flesh, and the bone ... that the sense of self and the sense of being in Christ can no longer be distinguished."[29]

Brown believes that the original fabric of Christianity has been lost sight of because of man's unwillingness to accept the apocalyptical terms of the bible. In the "Resurrection" chapter of Love's Body Brown writes with the Christian eagerness of an Augustine or Luther: "II Corinthians III, 6: The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. Literal meanings as against spiritual or symbolic interpretations, a Matter of Life against Death. The return to symbolism, the rediscovery that everything is symbolic ... ."[30] And there are two exterminators of symbolism: Protestant literalism and Catholic scholasticism. Contrary to the Christian teachings, Brown argues, the events of Christ's life should not be considered to represent a unique historical event but as a history

of renewals. Both Christian traditions, however, have attempted to freeze time and New Testament revelations in a unilinear, literal frame:

> Instead of a living spirit, possession by the dead. The Protestant substituted for the ritual (magical) repetition of the past (Christ's passion), a purely mental invocation; a historical commemoration. Instead of a dramatic reenactment a reanimation in the mind only--the quest for the historical Jesus. But the Jesus of historical commemoration can only be the ghost of Jesus--die Historie erreichet nicht Christi Fleisch und Blut, history reaches not Christ's flesh and blood. The Jesus of commemorative ceremony and historical reconstruction is the passive, not the active, Jesus. The active Jesus can only be recreated. The historical reconstruction is a spectral image in a passive viewer.[31]

Brown has undertaken a massive reinterpretation of the magical and symbolic qualities of the New Testament in the light of present exigencies. He goes farther in fact. By claiming that the dialectical, literal, rationalistic methodology of the Christian traditions has provided us with a spectral image of Christ, Brown in effect is asserting that this same methodology has perverted the symbolic substance of Christianity. And this charge places him somewhat uncomfortably in the company of the modern Protestant theologians, Barth and Tillich, in whom the essential features of contemporary literature and theology might be said to converge.

The twentieth century, in its anguish, discovered Kierkegaard and St. John of the Cross. Barth in his Systematic Theology and Tillich in The Religious Situation, with generous help from the writings of Kierkegaard, reinterpreted the fate of a Christian as an existential fate. Kierkegaard, in The Sickness Unto Death and

Fear and Trembling, works that can be thought the groundwork of modern theology, acknowledges the paradoxical relationship between subjective and objective truth. "With the birth of objective knowledge, reality appeared as an objective order, and God was banished from the 'real' world."[32] But Kierkegaard, still living at a time when a Christian sensibility was possible, theorized that the only way the concept of God or faith could be accepted was if these concepts were deemed subjective, momentary and paradoxical. Thus the modern drama of the absurd was born. One could not climb a safe metaphysical ladder to God or salvation; one must risk his identity in the journey, must encounter God in the "limit-situations" of human existence (sin, guilt, strife, suffering, death). Since faith is an example of a radically subjective kind of knowledge, the only way, in Kierkegaard's opinion, for man to encounter the doctrines of Christianity in any meaningful way, was by reliving the "brutal facts" of Christ's life, by an existential participation in the Pauline idea of the Mystical Body of Christ. Though Kierkegaard saw no hope of a synthesis between man and God, he thought man could approach God through subjectivism.[33]

Barth and Tillich, following in the tradition of Kierkegaard, translate Christian symbolism into existential terms. Existentialism rediscovers sin as a state of separation and estrangement. The original Fall of Man is a Fall into division. Since unbelief, particularly for Tillich, is a mark of estrangement, man must overcome this state by participation in Christ. Through the mystery of the Incar-

nation, Christ was involved in that which was estranged from him. And it is through man's rediscovery of the existential man in God that he will partake of the transcendent aspects of life. Salvation means uniting that which is estranged and is accomplished by realizing that the answer to existential anguish is Christ.

It is this theological emphasis on subjectivism, existential participation, symbolism, and the necessary recreation of central Christian imagery that makes the dialogue between literature and theology increasingly popular and rewarding. Amos Wilder in Theology and Modern Literature thinks the reason for this is that, while the changes in man's knowledge and perspectives were reflected in fiction (one thinks of Joyce, Woolf, and Kafka) by experiments in form, point of view, time-schemes and spatial relationships, dogmatic Christian theologians, with the exception of Barth, Tillich, Niebuhr, and others, did not realize that new relations meant new religions, cultural images that spoke to man's deepest religious needs.[34] The implication is that religions must relinquish their strong hold on the historicity of Christianity if they are to accommodate man. They must, as Bishop Robinson suggests in Honest to God, be completely willing to remake Christianity in the image of the psychologically, metaphysically troubled twentieth century man.

What is most remarkable about the current dialogue between literature and theology is the gradual recognition, on the part of many critics, that not only is modern literature often a more appropriate answer to the needs of man but that literature in particular

and art in general have, by discerning the sensibility of the times, been recovering some essential features of the Christian imagination lost in the over-refined rationalism of theologies. Bernard Murchland, in an important article referred to earlier, writes that in the Middle Ages there was a productive interplay between theology and literature: "Literature, as a privileged mode of symbolic expression, was constantly at work tilling the soil of theological reflection. A religious view of the world was intrinsically enunciated in that mode. Early theological efforts ... projected the fundamental orientation of esthetic insight upon a larger screen and added the specific dimension of transcendence. From a deeper point of view, theology was the very basis of symbolic expression because it was the revelation of the tragic."[35] Though the critic does not make it clear, one assumes he is referring to The Divine Comedy. Murchland's discussion is unfortunately general, but he uncovered, nonetheless, a relationship between theology and literature that is worth close attention. That theological developments since the time of Aquinas have generally neglected the symbolic and the tragic aspects of the Christian vision is beyond dispute. Has it not been largely in novels such as The Power and the Glory, Wise Blood, and The Greek Passion that these two qualities have been recovered and revitalized? Is there not reason to assume the ambiguous aesthetic truth of these works is fundamentally Christian though sometimes in a post-Christian sense?

It is fitting to give the final words of this chapter to Flannery O'Connor, in whose best work many of the ideas expressed here

seem to find concrete articulation. She knew that the shortcoming of Catholic literature could be attributed to the authors who placed religion before art. She can be considered a Catholic writer in the sense in which I have attempted to define it because she was well aware that religious literature required a commitment to the prophetic, the symbolic, the transfigured. She was aware that aesthetic considerations were important, not only as a means of controlling a religious vision, but also because such devices enabled her to dramatize an encounter with God in limit-situations which embodied an attenuated hope: thus her use of irony, humor, parody, and the like. O'Connor acknowledges in "The Role of the Catholic Novelist" that if the "awful mystery" of religion is to be fictionalized, it must be accomplished in time without violating the aesthetic wholeness of the work. She is, paradoxically, the beginning and the end of a genuine Catholic tradition. And for this reason my study will converge in her.

CHAPTER TWO

François Mauriac

Background and the Critical Problem

First Part: Wretchedness of Man without God
Second Part: Happiness of Man with God
otherwise
First Part: Nature is corrupt, proved by Nature itself
Second Part: There is a Redeemer, proved by Scripture[1]

The above items, taken from the "Order" section in Blaise Pascal's Pensees, emphasizing the Augustinian notion of corrupt nature and the promised cure, generally define the two poles of the Pascalian dialectic of spirit and flesh that has furnished countless critics from Charles Du Bos to Louis D. Rubin Jr. with a workable schematic with which to analyze the religious, or more strictly theological, dimensions of François Mauriac's fiction. The Pascalian argument, which will be returned to when the philosophy and psychology of Jansenism are formally discussed, in simple terms postulates a human nature so corrupted by the Fall that only the direct intervention of God's Grace can save man. This contention, however, as Michael F. Moloney has correctly noted, makes for interesting theology, though not necessarily successful fiction. Mauriac, because of his penchant for scrupulous itemizing of influences and sources and for pushing his own compelling psychological and religious crises to the forefront of early twentieth century

French letters, has given his critics, especially in The Sufferings of a Christian, The Joy of the Christian, and God and Mammon, an intellectual, non-dramatic formula to apply to his fiction. While, as Leslie Fiedler remarks in Love and Death in the American Novel, men's lives and full personalities, when translated into fiction, can be considered an illuminating unconscious heritage of an age, Mauriac's personal struggles and his apologist writings, when applied too inflexibly to his fiction, can have a short-circuiting effect. The question is: to what degree should we allow the author to be his own critic, to what extent shall the reader go to non-fiction for critical premises to be applied to the novels? This dilemma is even more vital in an investigation of Mauriac because, since the critical debate turns largely on his Catholicism and on the religious impulse in his fiction, the temptation is to let him speak for himself. Philip Stratford, one of the most sensitive current commentators on Mauriac, encounters difficulty in this area. In attempting to reconcile the contradictions between the doctrine of necessary collaboration with the demoniac and Maritain's insistence on authorial "altitude," Stratford relies primarily on what Mauriac said he was doing in his novels.[2] The result of this procedure, in my opinion, is subtle and misleading Catholic criticism at its best.

The question still remains: how can we lend a discriminating ear to one of the most troubled and acute minds of the century without forcing a reading of his fiction? In other words, how can we inhabit that ambiguous landscape where his theology, his criticism,

and his fiction merge? The task has its pitfalls and involves, as critics such as Leslie Fiedler and Kenneth Burke often charge, putting the object of critical attention in all its relevant contexts while still doing justice to the piece as an aesthetic whole. And this will be my approach. While I will concentrate on point of view, quality of metaphor, and symbolic strategy, I will feel free to give my discussion resonance by appeal to biographical, philosophical, and psychological criteria when useful.

It is time, I believe, now that the apologist fervor is over and that astute critics, including Michael Moloney, Philip Stratford, and Gene Kellog, have rescued Mauriac from his friends, to study this French master more carefully and particularly to consider in different lights the paradoxical relationship between his theology and his art. This will mean utilizing new theological insights which have become prominent in the last few decades as well as Norman O. Brown's psychoanalytical critique of Christianity which throws the psychological aspects of Mauriac's fiction into some interesting perspectives. Too long has the misunderstood and superficial Jansenist formula been applied to Mauriac's writings with the resultant neglect of a psychological richness that often qualifies the religious tone.

Mauriac, born near the close of the nineteenth century in Bordeaux, France, nailed in interesting ways to his mother, his childhood, and the corruption of the cross (the cross, mother, and childhood are also to be the staple of Flannery O'Connor's fiction), was weaned on the self-conscious Catholic sensuality of the unin-

tellectual Maranist Fathers. He was intent, like Newman and Maritain, on breathing new life into all phases of Catholic intellectual life. And for these reasons Mauriac cuts a strange figure across French and world literature. Unlike most writers who are usually reluctant to annotate indebtedness, Mauriac was forever displaying an arrogant humility about his own influences. In Men I Hold Great he cites Pascal, Molière, Voltaire, Rousseau, Racine, Gide and others as having influenced him. Though his tastes and interests were dictated principally by his nationalism, he was perceptive enough to realize that the tradition of the psychological novel was deficient in design. Mauriac, caught in the throes in the Catholic Counter-Reformation that had been given such prominence in France by Péguy and Claudel, struggled with what seems a messianic intent to bring a sense of the eternal into French fiction. And for this theme he felt that he could not go to the novels of Balzac or the critical theories of Taine, both of whom he accused of "an abuse of logic in art," but to Dostoevsky who did not treat characters as types but as individuals. His main concern was "to leave untouched the tangled skein of human personality. He refused to introduce either preconceived order or logic into the psychology of his characters, created them without beforehand passing any judgment on their intellectual or moral values ... . They are creations of flesh and blood, burdened with hereditary and moral flaws, susceptible to desire, capable of almost anything, for good as for evil, and in whom one can expect everything, fear everything, hope everything."[3] Whether Mauriac was able to

adhere to the spirit of the Dostoevskian model is a question that must await a discussion of the individual novels. What is significant is that Mauriac, who thought that writers should "disown nothing of the tradition of the French novel," intuitively realized that the psychological novels of Flaubert, with little hint of the divine, subtlely pointed forward to the pure art novels of Proust whom Mauriac liked although he could not eschew Proust's repudiation of any religious instinct in his fiction.

In spite of his fine sentiments concerning the subject matter and techniques of the novel, Mauriac was, fortunately, unable to avoid the paradox of his profession. Like Flannery O'Connor, who argued thirty years later that she had to draw "large and startling figures" to awaken a secular, hostile world, Mauriac sincerely felt he could best combat the appeal of Gide and Proust, whom he considered, like the Romantics, "corrupt children of Christ," on their own secular and aesthetic grounds.

Though he often chastised Gide, Proust, and Freud for the dearth of the spiritual in their writings, even a cursory glance at Mauriac's novels of the 1920's demonstrates that he was closer to the preoccupations of these men than he was willing to admit. In fact, as I will verify in the ensuing pages, Mauriac uses their methods not only to show the evil of the secular world--a familiar argument advanced by his followers: show the absence of God by giving evil a positive value--but also to dramatize that deadly theological notions often do more to enforce than to redeem the profane. While he might well

believe that Freud is a mystic divorced from God, Mauriac in his treatment of the oedipal theme, adult sexuality, and childhood eroticism (i.e. A Kiss for the Leper, Genetrix, The River of Fire) is patently Freudian. And in his general linking of formalized Catholicism and Christianity with the forces of neurosis and repression (A Kiss for the Leper, Genetrix), he comes close to the position taken by the post-Freudian philosopher Norman O. Brown, who sees the flight from death, God, and the body as reasons that prevent the realization of true Christianity. I believe that Mauriac's associating of repression fostered by Christianity with the plight of modern man is a subject that has received almost no critical scrutiny.

Early Works: Flesh and Blood and The River of Fire

One has only to glance at the thematic and structural qualities of two early and uneven novels, Flesh and Blood and The River of Fire, to sense that Mauriac from the beginning of his creative career was careful to anchor the redemptive, spiritual aspects of his novels in the local and sometimes squalid image. Though Flesh and Blood, published in 1920 (it took six years to complete) is in the final analysis somewhat unsatisfactory, it does illustrate the author's search for themes and a theological perspective.

Flesh and Blood, by virtue of its emotional landscape, the family chronical theme, and intricate love relationships is similar to D. H. Lawrence's The Rainbow, which traces the evolution of creative love through three generations until Ursula, one of the first

emancipated English heroines, influenced by forms of erotic love and lesbianism, emerges an unshackled woman with an existential hunger for freedom. The significant difference between the two novels is that Lawrence, despite the usual critical assumptions, sees sensual love as one part of a full-bodied creativity. Mauriac, on the other hand, appears to languish in the sensual and metaphorical possibilities of sexual love with which he, pander-like, tantalizes the reader before he abruptly closes the erotic door. Rather than viewing erotic love as a means to fulfillment, Mauriac sees it, like St. Paul and Pascal, as a vulgar interruption of the spiritual journey to Christ. But if Mauriac were invoking the body-soul dialectic merely to reject the first part of the argument, a mechanistic quality, a predictability would set in. Such is not the case. Mauriac, as his more sophisticated novels will make apparent, seems to recognize, and to fight, as Greene does in Brighton Rock, the prison of his theologically inspired psychology.

Possibly Flesh and Blood is most Laurentian in its evocation of a paganistic, pantheistic environment. "The pagan D. H. Lawrence," remarks Conor Cruise O'Brien, "who made a cult of sex and sun, never evoked them with anything like the dangerous power of the Christian Mauriac."[4] And the novel stands as a seminal example of Mauriac's manipulation of the erotic symbol. Claude Favereau, an exile from the seminary because of his subtle hedonism and blistering sensuality, soon after his arrival home contemplates the mystery of the land and the sun and mentally marries them in an atmosphere of refined religiosity.

> He genuflected before the flame-encircled image of the Virgin, who was displayed in her ordinary, work-aday clothes, for she, too, had a richly furnished wardrobe and changed her adornments on Sundays and Festivals. He stayed meditating at the feet of Her whose name was never absent from his lips when the angelus sent forth its summons at evening and at dawn. Ah, more than ever would he need Her help now that his only companion would be the warm, soft earth so closely in league with the flesh, from which on stormy evenings there rose a smell which seemed to be the very breath and fragrance of desire ... . He prayed that the Virgin would protect him against his pagan brothers, the trees, against the arrogant splendour of the oaks, against the limes, which smelt of love and passion. Might She bring to him a surer comfort than the blind, deaf constellations of the sky, with their names of evil gods.[5]

Few passages in Mauriac appear so clear in intent and focus. Claude has consciously transposed the "warm, soft earth, so closely in league with the flesh" and images of the Virgin Mary. That his reverie is a poetic seduction of the Virgin is clear enough. What the author accomplishes in the passage and many like it is to encircle images of devotion and adoration with a rhetorical fire. No wonder his early readers saw a seductive element in his fiction. But maybe more important is Mauriac's attempts to have his characters contemplate God through a veil of carnality. While the above example can suggest in the abstract that Christianity is the most carnal of all religions--after all, the cult of the Virgin did not diminish her breasts--similar passages in later, more mature works will reveal that carnal contemplation internalized can provide a religious dimension to profoundly psychological concerns. But here is the paradox in Mauriac. Though he often moved, in almost imperceptible stages, from varieties of human love to those divine, and though he clearly recognized the

drama of the flesh, he was never able to contemplate the "resurrected" body, free of cultural and religious misconceptions.

Claude, who suffers from a form of heat prostration, is actually a hedonist of the spirit. When he is confronted in the flesh by the flesh, he shows his perverse coloring. Rejected by May, Claude hopes her husband "will fill her with a feeling of such disgust that only in the memory of my shy and religious love will she find comfort." Claude fits perfectly the Laurentian definition of the Christian who flies from the body whenever it gets close. And Claude, like his creator, wants to have it both ways. He wants to believe that sexual love is unique and blissfully independent of the love of God and at the same time both men must echo with Pascal that such love is the most dangerous and basest of all the states of Christian living. This is a problem Mauriac wrestled with throughout his productive career. While he never completely solved it, he was able to in A Kiss for the Leper, Genetrix, and The Desert of Love to develop some interesting psychological themes from a dead-end philosophy.

So Flesh and Blood is a forced working-out of the body-soul dialectic. Even May, who after her marriage infuriates Claude by the serenity of her being, by the time the honeymoon is over, is forced by Mauriac to second-guess what the reader has assumed to be a genuine statement of her feelings. She writes in her private diary:

> Between shame and the sanctified embraces of the marriage bed how small the difference is. According to Father's instructions I ought to look upon the

> body with pure eyes. He thinks that a lurking trace of heresy gets between me and Marcel, who is so regular in his religious observances, doesn't worry about making sure of the precise limits within which the Church permits married people to indulge their desires. ... I have a feeling that I have fallen from grace: I am filled with a sense of disgust with myself... . It wouldn't be so bad if I took no pleasure in that side of marriage--but I do and the fact that my pleasure is legitimate does not console me for its baseness.[6]

This admission by May captures the profound psychological conflict of Mauriac and would, if he were not able to turn it into a fictional asset in later works, register a severe limitation to his novels.

But Flesh and Blood, probably unwittingly on the author's part, is more than a battle between nature and grace. It sketches a dreary, dechristianized world that is remarkably similar to that of Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises. Mauriac brilliantly shows the psychology of people on the make, the loneliness of the psychically wounded and rejected, and the suicidal tendencies in modern man.

These themes, only tangentially related to Claude's overly pious and sentimental plight, are embodied in the characters of Madame Gonzales, a panderess, Edith Gonzales, a lesbian, and Edward, a frustrated painter with homosexual and suicidal tendencies. The story is simple enough. Madame Gonzales attempts to arrange marriages among the various pairs in the novel. Though she is Jamesian in her desire to manipulate and direct the lives of others, she is the object of some of Mauriac's finest satire. Satire, or not, she is a deadly meddler.

In a real sense it appears that only Edward truly suffers.

Bereft of all friends, he sends letters to three of them declaring he intends to commit suicide if at least one does not come to him: "One must commit suicide ... in order to survive." Claude and Edith both come too late: Edward has put a bullet through his head. Claude arrives in time to say the Lord's Prayer but Edward's final words, "There is nobody," put in doubt the quality of his repentance. Nevertheless Mauriac, not wishing to embrace completely an existential nihilism, allows a moment of grace filtered through the restricted consciousness of Edith: "Eternal peace had smoothed the face which to her had never expressed anything but unhappiness and bewilderment." Mauriac, like Flannery O'Connor, could well claim that "death is the brother to my imagination," for it is often the place where religious themes merge. But there is more than a subtle difference. Death and attenuated hope are won by Hazel Motes of Wise Blood only after he has comically and perversely traveled his profane way of the cross. In Life Against Death Brown asks rhetorically: " ... is the psychological premise of Christianity the impossibility of reconciling life and death in 'this' world or the 'next,' so that flight from death--with all its morbid consequences--is our eternal fate ... ?"[7] In regard to Mauriac's early fiction the answer to Brown's question must be "yes." The author is not able to resolve this dialectic. If his novels are steeped in the atmosphere of life, they also move unambiguously toward death, which is both curse and refuge. Life is his metaphor; death his reality.

The second-person authorial voice of Mauriac is a subject that

will be taken up shortly. Suffice it to say here that, at the conclusion of Flesh and Blood, the author, clearly troubled in intention, wants to introduce the religious theme, which survives Edward's conversion, by the authority of the authorial voice. At this point in his creative career Mauriac had not realized the possibilities and limitations of the rhetorical second-self of the author; thus in this novel the results are less than satisfactory. But the conclusion, nonetheless, is interesting for the light it sheds on his handling of the moment of grace.

Mauriac, like most Catholic novelists, understood that grace as a theological phenomenon, since it operates outside of time and cause and effect, is theoretically impossible to approximate in fiction. His later novel The Enemy is a splendid example of this. What it means is that, considerations of technical theology aside, if the moment of grace does not proceed from the psychology of the characters, from the dramatic action itself, from the symbolic strategy of the work, it is not dramatically acceptable. To admit the doctrine of "irresistible grace"--when you are elected to receive grace, you can't resist it--as a critical truth is to undercut any potential in fiction for its own redemption. Grace, understood in the strictest sense, can render realistic literature (and the psychological realism of Mauriac) completely useless. And this Mauriac, the man of the double-mind, seemed to realize. The final words of Flesh and Blood, an obsessive ringing in Edith's ears--"When a man kills himself for a woman ... her fortune is made"--

remind us that the squalid world of the novel has not been transformed. These words are also a legitimate outcome of the theological and psychological developments of the narrative. The theological strain is represented by the repressive aspects of Christianity, the psychological strain by the Parisian crowd on the make, and whatever their spiritual ugliness, they are the final word. Thus in Flesh and Blood Mauriac somewhat self-consciously acknowledges that he will not rest easily with a theology that had engaged and imprisoned him since childhood.

Similarly in The River of Fire, another relatively early work, Mauriac reveals a search for themes and a compelling religious resolution. The protagonist Daniel Trasis, as lonely as some of Dostoevsky's figures, is a sensualist and professional seducer with a tendency toward masochism--a common trait in Mauriac's lovers. The arrival of the vulnerable Gisele at his hotel prompts him to stay and seduce her. But, as if Gisele were his cross, "He knew that he was fated to suffer, that the further he advanced in knowledge of the heart and body after which he yearned, the deeper would the mystery become ... ."[8]

Probably more than anything else The River of Fire reflects the author's efforts to let the religious elements invade the minds of the participants. Daniel, despite his lusts, longs for the spiritual, the innocent, the child-like. For reasons not fully developed, he is tied to the memory of Marie Ransinangue, who promised to join the convent if he returned safely from the war. He does and she keeps

her promise. And the memory of her strange sacrifice merges with his more recent thoughts of seducing Gisele. The young novitiate haunts him. She has made an absurd commitment that he cannot fathom. When he and his friends drive to a surburban hotel with a cargo of girls, he would have a momentary vision of his little country companion on her knees. Though he consciously desires to ravish the profered flesh of Gisele, thoughts of purity and Marie invade his mind: "He would have given anything to know that she [Gisele] was still innocent of the traffic of sex. What he most longed for was that she should have been til now, another Marie Ransinangue, kept in a cloister from the eyes of men."[9] Daniel cannot separate his need for physical satisfaction from his troubled awareness of Marie's spiritual presence. "Was it possible," he asks himself," to love one's body in every muscle and sinew, and thus to find a means of emptying it of passion?"[10] He, like so many spiritual cripples of our literature, hungers after the spiritual. And like O'Connor's hero Hazel Motes and Graham Greene's Pinkie, he will reach some satisfaction even if it includes a form of "sacred sinning."

For complex psychological reasons, Daniel is tied to Marie. When he tries to love another woman, he cannot because the novitiate is his cross. Gisele keeps him a prisoner as he has not conquered her and clearly wants more than a physical presence. What he desires, in fact, is to see Gisele as a virgin mother. And she understands his motivation: "It is almost as though men seek in us their own lost innocence." She, however, is only partly correct. Daniel,

obsessed with virginity, is stuck in the oedipal stage, where he perversely, through disinterested sex, pays the price of his spiritual need. If he reaches spiritual maturity, he remains an emotional adolescent.

It is evident that Mauriac's religious vision is maturing. He discovers that a Christian presence must be subjective. He also realizes, as Graham Greene does in The Heart of the Matter, that a sentimental Catholicism nurtures a psychological immaturity because, in bowing to Agape love, it condemns man to a neurotic innocence and an unconscious masochism. Mauriac finds in The River of Fire dramatic possibilities in the psychological structure of a repressive Christianity. Greene and O'Connor would later rediscover some of the transcendant qualities of the same religion.

The weakness of The River of Fire resides in the characterization of Gisele, whose motivations are unclear. While Daniel projects his own restless psychological virginity in her, Mauriac tries too hard to convince readers of her immortal maidenhood. Though she has some recognizable traits of a budding nymphomaniac, her first sexual adventures had a stirring personal origin. She is driven by a terrible loneliness, as well as haughty need to test her virginity against the world. But whatever the full reasons, she reaches a "wordless understanding" with a child-like Officer Cadet. Their relationship, considering the usual treatment of genital love in Mauriac, is remarkable for its tenderness. They are not driven by the usual furious sexual compulsion born from the inevitable

surrender to tasteless concupiscence but by need to make contact. Mauriac comes close to implying that it might not be undesirable for Gisele "to break the ring of the encircling angels."

Mauriac eventually has his way. Marie Ransinangue dies in a convent of consumption; Gisele nearly joins the Sisterhood. As Daniel watches her at the altar, he admits that she will not return from the night that she has built around herself. Without denying the flesh, Mauriac invokes it as a way to the spiritual and gives them equal metaphorical weight. Gisele's turn to the altar has psychological validity, and one is not particularly troubled by it. Daniel, because he is not entirely free of jealousy, will continue to avenge his thwarted spirituality on women who represent both cross and virgin. His is a static psychology; as long as he rejects the religious message that symbolically invades his consciousness, he will shuttle between revenge and atonement.

The River of Fire abounds in technical problems I have not attempted to explore. The overall motivation is suspect; the author clearly forces the conclusion in some important ways. But it is more important at this stage to note the positive achievements of the writer in the two early novels.

The River of Fire is an example of Mauriac's attempts to let the religious drama work itself out in the mind of the protagonist. And the interior struggle of Daniel, as it surfaces in his symbolic comprehension of the role of women, is sound. His is a confused mind, and it is understandable that he does not perceive that Marie

serves a Christ-like role in his life and that Gisele, in the beginning, is a mother figure. Daniel is trapped by a combination of his physical needs, a religious view of the virginal woman/mother, and his unconscious desire to find spiritual fulfillment. While the development of these themes is less than thorough, it does hint that Mauriac knows that religion must be a part of the psychological texture of a novel.

Flesh and Blood is a relentless, though not completely successful, critique of the superficial Christian dialectic of nature and grace; it also provides evidence that the writer understood existential loneliness and despair. One might argue, as numerous critics have done, that by giving such a forceful weight to the secular image, Mauriac succeeded in showing the need for a truly Christian redemption. But this argument feeds on itself. His criticism of the Christian community, as Gene Kellog has indicated, is as thorough as that of the secular world.[11] Surely the Christianity espoused by Claude and May is not a model for imitation. And while Mauriac is unhappy with the nihilist bent of Edward, he seems to be more sympathetic to his cause. What I am suggesting here, and will deal with more fully when I discuss A Kiss for the Leper, Genetrix, and The Desert of Love, is that Mauriac, as limited as was Flannery O'Connor in fictional range and theme, when he was able to successfully formulate and dramatize the psychological core of Christianity (as he saw it), he accepted a "donnée" that would resist easy religious resolution.

Possibly a number of things can be observed from my less than thorough analysis of the above novels. Mauriac is, more than anything, attempting to find a form to convey his religious views. By embroidering on the Jansenist tenets of nature and grace, he was able to criticize and embrace negative, but richly dramatic, aspects of his faith. By introducing a subjective element, he was able to make religion a part of a character's psychology where it is obliged to adhere to the requirements of organic art. And most significant: in the themes and subjects of childhood, the mother, the cross, love and in their complex psychological ramifications, he found material which could be transformed into engaging religious fiction.

Jansenism in the Flesh: A Kiss for the Leper

In his discussion of Djuna Barnes' novel Nightwood, Kenneth Burke suggests that James Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man could be called the Bible of Aestheticism because the author first proclaims the doctrine, then invents appropriate symbols (the bird-girl, the bird-man, the latter combining connotations of both flight and maze) and traces the kind of history (the story of Stephen's religious fall and romantically aesthetic rise) implicit in the symbols.[12] Joyce, to extend Burke's analysis, dramatizes an internal rejection of kinetic art, such as the terrifying sermon of Chapter II because it excites "desire or loathing;" thus psychological movement leads to aesthetic stasis and to symbolism. Though the reader probably no longer believes, thanks to Wayne Booth and

others, in Stephen's "aesthetic emancipation" and though Caroline Gordon is probably right in turning our attention back to the psychological/religious aspects of Stephen's Fall, Joyce stands by himself in modern literature in his ability to make attributes of formal theology and Thomist aesthetics serve a dramatic purpose.

At the other pole (to cite an extreme example) one might place particular writings of Mauriac, who, in his efforts to rechristianize literature, chose a mode of composition which has led critics to argue that, unlike Joyce, he was ruled by his theology and a very shallow one at that. There are, to be sure, some interesting parallels between Joyce and Mauriac. Both were haunted by their Catholicism; both were subtle Jansenists. Darcy O'Brien in The Conscience of James Joyce finds Joyce fascinated by the perverse sexual appetites of bestial man. But if "The sexual emphasis of Irish Catholic morality left an indelible mark on his thinking," he was, unlike Mauriac, able to translate a self-lacerating, puritanical, conscience-stricken view of life into satiric comedy.[13] Nonetheless, in their own ways, both men saw the history of Christianity and especially latter-day Catholicism as a history of repression. They fought for a way out of their personal nightmarish history. Similarly, the two men spent a lifetime trying to remove theology from their blood. Joyce, because his brand of Catholicism was predominantly intellectual, was able to find a strategy for artistic survival and excellence in the formal precepts and aesthetics of his religion. Mauriac could not go so far.

Mauriac's The Enemy, published in 1938, contains a scene which is reminiscent of some of the Cranly-Stephen dialogues in Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and is illustrative of certain profound problems the author encounters in his fictionalization of dogma. Manz, a Jew, replying to the protagonist Fabian Dézaymeries' charge that he never confided in him, remarks:

> Yes you have, often though you didn't know it. For instance, one day when we were talking about Saint Catherine of Siena you trotted out a whole theory of the nature of love. You described the frantic appetite that only we ourselves can divert God-wards. You told me that no human being can remain stationary, that the Infinite is a river and that we've got to go either upstream or down ... . You see, you can't get away from your Catholic heritage ... in a chap like you the Catholic religion produces a whole crop of conflicts and private dramas ... .[14]

Manz' charge would better fit Joyce than Mauriac since the former was able not only to capture the psychological anguish resulting from the intellectual repudiation of religion but also the very symbolic foundation of Christianity: fatherhood, motherhood, and the possible meanings contained in them. Mauriac's Catholic religion did produce "a whole crop of conflicts and private dramas" of another order but not in The Enemy. The one place in Mauriac's canon where he noted the dramatic potentials in a latent Catholicism fails as a novel because it is structured on a warp of improbability. Religion is raised as a false dilemma. Though Fabien might occasionally sound like Stephen Daedalus, he has none of his Irish cousin's genuine motivation and urgency. He is persuaded from the path of sensual sin by Colombe, a closet-angel, who glows beneath her lipstick

and languor. By this time Mariac's creative powers are waning and he appears to realize this in his authorial admission at the close of The Enemy. After a highly unconvincing reversal of the protagonist's fate Mauriac writes: "The real story of Fabien Dezaymeries should, properly speaking, begin at this point, for all that had gone before was in the nature of a prologue. But how is one to describe the secret drama of a man who struggles to subdue his earthly heritage, that drama which finds expression neither in words nor gestures? Where is the artist who may dare to imagine the processes and shifts of the great protagonist--Grace? It is the mark of our slavery and of our wretchedness that we can, without lying, paint a faithful portrait only of the passions."[15]

That Mauriac employs the authorial voice is not undesirable in itself; that he uses it so blatantly is. He acknowledges that he is not able in The Enemy to show a psychologically convincing conversion. So he invokes the theological definition of grace which is a protagonist beyond fictional confinement. He reverts to a familiar argument: it is because of the Fall that the artist is cursed with the passionate world as his "donnée." Mauriac makes it clear elsewhere, when he was more sure of himself, that a restless, uncompromising art is the best answer to a religion that threatens to usurp fiction.

I have deliberately used an extreme case in Mauriac's fiction --there are other examples, particularly in the novels written in the 1930's and 1940's--to put in sharp relief some of the central

critical problems one encounters when he tries to outline the religious dimension of the writer. His critical history reads like a litany of complaints. Michael Moloney makes the point: "For the student of the novels [the major works of Mauriac] Mauriac's spiritual history introduces the manner of his handling of his central theme. Has he, as has been charged, with his Pascalian insistence on the inevitability of spiritual conflict, posed for his characters, in the Pascalian manner, an unfair dilemma? Has he committed man to a struggle against his corrupted nature which he is bound to lose?"[16] Moloney does not think so. Though he finds numerous incidents of natural fatality and compromised conversions in The River of Fire (the motivation of Gisele), The Enemy (Fabien's proximity to the "occasion of sin"), The Desert of Love (Maria Cross's drifting into love relationships), Moloney believes there "seems never to have been any real question of Mauriac's formal belief in man's freedom, a freedom confirmed by grace."[17]

According to Mauriac himself, "The heroes of our novels must be free in the sense that the theologian says that man is free. The novelist must not intervene arbitrarily in their destinies ... . The French novelist who follows the plan he has conceived, changing nothing, and with a rigorous logic, who austerely and inflexibly directs the characters of his novels in the direction he has chosen for them, closely resembles the God of Jansenius."[18] How deeply Mauriac felt this as a novelist is made clear by the following passage:

> When one of my characters moves obediently in the direction I have assigned him, when he develops

> through all the stages I had predetermined and fulfills every gesture I expected of him, I begin to worry. This submission to my design proves that he has no life of his own, that he has not detached himself from me, in short, that he remains only an essence, an abstraction. I am not content with my work unless my character resists me, unless he rebels against the things that I had decided to make him do. Perhaps this accounts for the fact that all creators prefer the recalcitrant child, the prodigal son to the wise one. I am never so reassured about the value of my work as when my hero obliges me to change the direction of my novel, as he pushes and drags me toward horizons which I had not at first envisaged. This personal experience may help to emphasize the obligation we all have, each according to his capacity, not only to follow the French tradition, and order the psychology of our protagonists, but also to give our confidence to these beings who have issued from us and into whom we have breathed life. We should respect their oddities, their contradictions, their extravagances, and take into account everything in them which appears unforeseen and unexpected, for that is the very beating of the heart of flesh and blood that we have given them.[19]

What is most significant about the preceding remarks is not Mauriac's abstract claim of freedom for his characters but his admission of the struggle he waged with his creations, a point substantiated by the quality of the authorial voice in some of his best works.

Before these works can be examined in detail and before the operation of free will, determinism, and grace in the fiction of Mauriac can be fully understood, some mention, if only in passing, of the doctrine of Jansenism is necessary. I believe it was Stendhal who remarked that few people who use the term really comprehend it. But since Jansenism has found its way into the body of criticism, at times somewhat erroneously, this religious philosophy must be rescued and defined.

Jansenism as a doctrine had its origins in Cornelius Jansenius' controversial work on St. Augustine (published posthumously in 1640) and attained intellectual respectability in the hands of Racine and Pascal. It stands somewhere between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, or more accurately Calvinism. "It is closest to Calvinism," according to Kurt Reinhardt, "in its doctrine of grace; and differs most from Calvinism in its teaching on the sacraments; in this latter aspect it is essentially Roman Catholic. But while Jansenism theoretically continues the Roman Catholic teachings, in its practice it deprives the faithful of the consolations of the sacramental life by making the assurance of absolution or the forgiveness of sin more and more difficult."[20] But Jansenism, carried into modern thought by Pascal's Pensées (not the writings of Augustine), is more of an emotion, a psychology than a strict doctrine. It echoes the themes of Luther's Theology of the Cross: the precarious nature of human existence, the anguish caused by a sense of guilt and sin, the idea of a fragile existence stretched out between the abyss of nothingness and infinity. In speaking of Pascal William Barrett in Irrational Man remarks that reading Pascal "we are no longer in the world of Tertullian, or a St. Augustine, not in the Romanesque world of St. Bernard, nor in the world in which Duns Scotus debated the positions taken by St. Thomas and in which Christian faith was so strong that it could make a miraculous marriage with the philosophy of Aristotle. No; it is our world, the modern world, that Pascal depicts, and reading him we enter that world as our home just because

we are as homeless there as he was."[21]

Those critics who have tied Mauriac to Pascal's Jansenism emphasize the author's belief in the corruption of the flesh, predestination, and irresistible grace fail to affirm that he was profoundly influenced by the full Pascalian psychology of Jansenism. Louis D. Rubin Jr. in The Teller in the Tale tends toward his superficiality.

> Mauriac's very Jansenist view of the human condition goes something like this. Most human beings live lives of unthinking, animalistic worthlessness, blindly preoccupied with the gross and materialistic concerns of the world. Some human beings break out of this routine and desire something more, which takes the form of a great passion. These humans are at least 'alive'--but like Dante's Paolo and Francesca they are sinners and Hell is their inevitable portion. Only those few fortunate human beings who are gifted with the talent for experiencing God's Grace can triumph over life, but of themselves they can do nothing to merit this Grace.[22]

Rubin, despite a forced dialectical reading of Mauriac, is at least able to recognize that one of the real strengths of his fiction is the author's struggle with his own psychology.

The critical debate over Mauriac's artistry really began when Jean-Paul Sartre's article "François Mauriac and Freedom" appeared in La Nouvelle Française in February, 1939. Referring to The End of the Night, one of the Thérèse novels, Sartre accused Mauriac of forcing the fate of his character: "He has chosen to ignore ... that the theory of relativity applies intrinsically to the novelist's universe and that in a true novel there is no more place for a privileged observer than in the world of Einstein. ... M. Mauriac has preferred himself. He has chosen divine omniscience and omnipotence. But the

novel is written by a man for men. In the sight of God, who penetrates appearances without coming to rest in them, there is no novel, there is no art, since art lives by appearances. God is not an artist; neither is M. Mauriac."[23]

Similarly Claude-Edmonde Magny in her Histoire du roman français depuis 1918, referring like Sartre almost exclusively to The End of the Night, which Mauriac himself admits is imperfect, writes that "The absence of liberty in the character of Thérèse is the direct consequence of the attachment which her spiritual father feels for her." Mauriac, she continues, dreams of "holding the creature that he loves in absolute dependence to himself."[24]

It is not surprising that both critics find The End of the Night flawed. Mauriac's authorial presence is intrusive. At times he moralizes. But, however, to apply in blanket fashion Sartre's and Mlle. Magny's criticisms to Mauriac's canon does him an injustice and possibly imposes a false standard of evaluation on the writer.

As Wayne Booth in The Rhetoric of Fiction has observed, attacking the omniscient author is a post-Flaubertian phenomenon. Booth, much in the tradition of Percy Lubbock, feels that the passion for objectivity has gone too far and tends to ignore or downgrade the created second self. Taking up Booth's line of argument Louis D. Rubin Jr. in The Teller in the Tale writes: "The author's presence does not become an aid but an intrusion only when, instead of helping us to take part in the fictional situation, it impedes us from doing so."[25] And referring to Mauriac Rubin adds: "It is not a question

of whether Mauriac's personality should or should not be present in his novels; rather, it is a matter of how that personality is present." Rubin has added a significant contribution to the tools and terminology of criticism. He reminds us that we should not run in horror of the interior voice. More specifically, he observes that Mauriac is most engaging when the authorial personality is a passionate participant, a creature of two minds. Such a claim, to be exact, was made approximately two decades before Rubin formalized it by Graham Greene, student and defender of Mauriac. In an essay on Mauriac's A Woman of the Pharisees--a novel in which the writer tried to answer, with disastrous results, Sartre's charge of authorial intrusion, Greene, who at this time was himself struggling with problems of religion and aesthetics, wrote how tired everyone was of the dogmatically pure novel: "The exclusion of the author can go too far. Even the author, poor devil, has a right to exist, and M. Mauriac reaffirms that right."[26] Though Greene's psychological and symbolic strategies formulated to convey a religious vision were closer to Flannery O'Connor's than to Mauriac's, he was conscious of and learned from Mauriac's public and private wrestlings with his Catholic angel.

To concretely investigate the religious and aesthetic dimensions of key Mauriac fiction, and to see how the authority of his Jansenism and the created second self help establish an acceptable religious texture, the reader must turn to A Kiss for the Leper and Genetrix. In both works he interposes an authorial personality between truth

and appearance. And this personality can have a number of rhetorical guises: ironic, participatory and anticipatory.

A Kiss for the Leper, written in 1922, is one of the most powerful and pessimistic accounts of the psychological consequences of a marriage arranged under the auspices of a benevolent and meddling priest. Jean Peloueryre, who is physically repulsive, is forced to marry Moemie d'Artiailh, a virgin. The result is that they crucify each other on their individual crosses of tortured sexuality. They wage war on their bodies because of their bodies. Instinctively they know that sexual gratification is a natural thing (though they are not happy in this knowledge), but their religious training has convinced them that it is evil and unnatural. Religion, then, is embodied in abstract intellectual terms, in psychological revelations, and in the authorial voice, which becomes a criticism of religion itself. The religious themes, therefore, are part of the novel's design.

Early in the narrative Jean Peloueyre, outraged at his own ugliness, opens a volume of Selections from Nietzsche and reads: "What is the meaning of 'good'?--All that enlarges the sense of power in a man, the will to power, and power itself. What is the meaning of 'bad'?--Whatever is rooted in weakness. Let the weak and the failures perish; it is for us to see that they perish. What is more harmful than any vice?--Active pity for the feeble and the underdog: in fact, Christianity."[27] Mauriac tells us that "The words burst in upon him like a blaze of noon." Jean realizes that

the Christian religion is a slave morality, a rebuke to the natural. And this is essentially the intellectual argument of the novel. Mauriac, like Freud in Totem and Taboo and Moses and Monotheism, argues that Christianity is based on a theory of repression, on the cultivation of the anti-body. Freud discovered that the link between the theory of neurosis and the theory of history is the theory of religion which perpetuates the unconscious neurotic symptoms of the individual. Christianity considered in this way becomes, for Norman O. Brown, a false psychological structure that postulates an erroneous dialectic between body and soul. And this brings us close to some aspects of Jansenism that Mauriac fictionalizes in A Kiss for the Leper.

A Kiss for the Leper is Mauriac's most forceful critique of a Jansenist or a general Christianity that emphasizes the horror of the body and repression. In this regard the novel is a critique of a religious attitude that the author found himself trapped in though he desperately fought this confinement.

Jean, like his creator, does not rest easily with his religious notions and is initially able to combat them, to mentally free himself from the net of suffocating doctrine. When he is informed that he must marry Noemi, his earlier bravado weakens and he, in a vague sort of way, felt himself less chaste. The description of the marriage night could not be more chilling.

> Long was the battle waged by Jean Peloueyre, at first with his own ice-bound senses, and then with the woman who was as one dead. As day was dawning

> a stifled groan marked the end of a struggle that had lasted six hours long. Soaked with sweat, Jean Peloueyre dared not make a movement. He sat there, looking more hideous than a worm beside the corpse it had at last abandoned.
>
> She looked like a sleeping martyr. Her matted hair clung to her forehead as in the throes of death, accentuating the thinness of a face which might have been that of a beaten child. Her hands, crossed on her innocent breast, clasped a faded scapular and a necklace of sacred medals. Someone should have kissed her feet, lifted her tender body, and run with it, still unwaked, to the open sea, there to leave it to the chaste mercies of the creamy foam.[28]

There is no mistaking the couple's utter repulsion at sexual congress; it is, as the author makes clear, the beginning of a death journey for both of them. This is merely a dramatic rendering of Pascal's insistence that marriage is the most detestable and undesirable of all states. But beyond this the writer, through the authorial voice, seems to impart his own attitude to events. What are we to assume is Mauriac's attitude toward the sexual death throes of the pair? The words "ice-bound," "worm," and "corpse" tell the story. But what about the second paragraph? Can one not assume that the sentence, "She looked like a sleeping martyr," considering the context, to be an indictment of false spirituality that fosters and encourages such behavior. But is not the note of tranquility a false one? When the narrator suggests that "Someone should have kissed her feet," might we not assume the tone of the authorial voice is ironic? I think it is evident that Mauriac is repossessing the body of Noemi for a spiritual rape with Freudian overtones. Though he appears to resurrect and rescue her from the despicable duty of paragraph one,

he allows her to be at the mercies of the "creamy foam." Noemie suffers a double ridicule: first the bed, then the pen.

Contrary to some popular critical opinions Mauriac was able to employ the authorial voice as a way of placing himself a distance from the dismal swamp of his fiction. When Jean excitedly realizes that virginity might not be a permanent state, "He was seized by a desire to take a bath. It often happens in that part of France that baths are used for storage purposes, and the one belonging to the Pelouеyres was filled with potatoes. These Cadette had to remove before it could be used." The implicit humor is enough to remind us that we should not be taken in by Jean's claims to have joined the Master race.

Before returning to a fuller discussion of A Kiss for the Leper, it would be of some help to investigate Mauriac's attitude toward his creations. Philip Stratford tries to settle once and for all the question of the relationship between the religious novelist and what he depicts. Stratford feels that Mauriac's sympathy for his creations is nothing short of a Christ-like identification of the author with his characters, that the author remains attached by bonds of love to his creatures and though it is spurned, "continues to act through his sacrifice and suffering for them."[29] The critic's reconciliation of theology and aesthetics is subtle Catholic criticism indeed, and this way he is able to satisfy both Gide and Maritain. He translates the doctrines of connivance and altitude into Christian terms by claiming Mauriac was able, without edifi-

cation and without benevolent intervention in the destinies of his characters, to grant his creatures an essential freedom because he was able to suffer for them. What Stratford's claim means as a critical proposition I am not sure. How does a writer suffer for his fictional people? Does a religious writer suffer any more than a blatantly secular one? I do not know of any Mauriac novel, with the possible exception of The Lamb, published in the 1950's, where the voice of the narrator even approximates that of Christ. In most of Mauriac's early and more successful novels he does not only not take a Christ-like attitude toward his creations but makes them bear the brunt of his own psychological dilemma. There is, to be sure, suffering in A Kiss for the Leper, but it is caused by a religion of repression which the author embraces and rejects.

Mauriac is relentless in demonstrating the terrible consequences of Jean's marriage to Noemie. They are creatures of the daylight, fearful of the proximity night will bring. Ironically, they only partially understand their mutual unconscious antagonism. "They never had any of those quarrels that usually flare up between lovers. They knew themselves to be so deeply wounded that they dared not strike at one another. The tiniest cause of offense would have carried mortal poison, would have been beyond all hope of cure." Enemies in the flesh, they found union in their nightly supplications.

At this point the theme of perverse spirituality emerges. When Jean, sent to Paris by the curé to do library work, is confronted by a prostitute who is completely submissive to his will, he flees from

her in terror. Soon after, "A sense of purity invaded him. The thought of his wretched chastity delighted him." He is, in a mild way, similar to Dostoevsky's Underground Man, who exposes himself to others so that he will be insulted and humiliated. He regularly visits a consumptive until he is infected himself. Jean is actively searching out death. But he is not a martyr in the usual sense. Though to him suffering is a joy, it is also vindication of the perverse pleasure he gets from acting out the role of Nietzsche's slave. He antagonizes Noemie and the curé by his parade of false spirituality. If he truly suffers, as he surely does, it is not a suffering in Christ but that prompted by his need to be revenged on those he cannot love. Mauriac does not put much faith in a religion that, by virtue of its very tenets, drives people to suicide and then fails to rescue them in their despair. Noemie's remark after Jean's death, "He was beautiful," is the author's irony. As Norman O. Brown observes in Life Against Death and as Mauriac dramatizes in A Kiss for the Leper and other works, there is a recognizable masochistic component to the Christian Agape love.

Noemie is the personification of the spiritual. A psychological virgin, she feels that marriage would make her less chaste. She, so pained by the physical presence of her husband, can love him only in his absence. Her union with Jean occurs when they pay a monthly visit to the sick. As Jean retreats into a child-like passivity, Noemie becomes more like his mother. It seems that she cannot love him unless he is a physical and spiritual cripple. Though she prays for

him to recover, she longs for him to die. After his death she nurtures a secret passion for a young doctor but soon suppresses this instinct. "Small she might be as a human being," Mauriac writes, "but she was condemned to greatness. Born a slave, she had been called to a throne and must exercise regal powers. Do what she might, this rather fat, middle-class woman could not avoid a destiny that had made her greater than herself ... . At that moment, standing in a cloud of flies among the pine-trees, she knew that loyalty to the dead would be her humble glory, and it was no longer possible for her to turn her back on Fate. Across the dry heath she ran, until, at last, worn out, her shoes filled with sand, she flung her arms about a stunted oak whose brown leaves were still unshed, and quivered in the hot breeze--a black oak which had about it something of the look of Jean Peloueyre."[30]

While it is perfectly defensible to claim that the author is trying to rescue his heroine by indicating that she is moving toward the divine, the tone of the final paragraph suggests otherwise. The clause, "Small she might be as a human being," is revealing because Noemie is rather fat. The woman is clearly a slave in the Nietzschean sense, but one wonders just what regal powers this large woman, standing in a cloud of flies, is to exercise. And her quivering in the hot breeze as she embraces a black oak which resembles her dead husband, is the closest the author can bring the woman to orgasm. Shoes filled with sand, Noemie is really no closer to the divine. Rid of her husband, she can experience sexual fantasies in the torpid

afternoon air. Ironically, death has redeemed and purified the sex act. Now Noemie can project her unconscious sexual desires on forms of her husband she finds in the forest. If this is meant to be her triumph, it is a passionately secular and troubled victory. A lifetime of repression is breaking out of her imposed spirituality.

To summarize, in most ways I think the religious elements and themes are successfully made a part of the novel's texture. An intellectual dimension is given to the book by Mauriac's appeal to aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy which equate the history of Christianity with that of repression. And the author, finding corroboration in his own Jansenist psychology, emphasized repression of the body. In turn, he sketched a dialectical movement toward the spiritual. Yet in the same breath, by the very severity of his descriptions, by the undisguised tone of his writing as it emerges through the authorial presence, we must conclude that Mauriac, though he may well have fully accepted the Pascalian body-soul dichotomy, registers his uneasiness at the personal price persons, subjected to this kind of Christianity, must pay. If he embraces the doctrine of Jansenism, he also in part repudiates it. To this degree, as Philip Stratford has noted, Mauriac suffers with his characters but not in Ghrist-like fashion. The world of A Kiss for the Leper is not a Christ-centered world; it is almost devoid of a fundamental love or charity. If O'Connor's Wise Blood, due to the complex rendering of religious themes, erupts in a general, outward violence, A Kiss for the Leper erupts inwardly in a form of psychological destruction that never

becomes completely conscious. The difference is that though Hazel Motes of Wise Blood believes (incorrectly) that religion is an influence he must flee from, O'Connor, who places Christ in the very center of her incarnational art, sees religion as a positive inevitability. Christ and the type of religion he represents might indeed be a destructive or negative force but not in the way that Mauriac sees it. For O'Connor contemporary man, for numerous reasons which include the evolution of formalized Christianity itself, has alienated himself from Christ. Thus violence, as a scheme of action (and a mode of fiction) which helps man become one with Christ, is a positive force. Mauriac, on the other hand, though his expression is not as forceful or convincing as O'Connor's, intimates that Christianity has alienated itself from man and in its contemporary form has imposed a paradigm of psychological violence on the faithful. Ironically, though Mauriac in his review of Graham Greene's The Power and the Glory was able to recognize the dramatic possibilities in the Christological basis of the novel and that the Catholic or Christian novel must be alive with characters who are able to trace the "brutal facts" of Christ's career, he was not able, with the possible exception of The Lamb, to articulate this symbolic mode that Greene and O'Connor were to perfect in their best works. In simple terms this means that Mauriac, in spite of his critical astuteness and general familiarity with the Christian tradition, seemed unable to comprehend, as O'Connor was able to do in her short lifetime, in any full sense, that the original Catholic or Christian imagination, if he was to

recover it in his fiction, meant an appeal to the prophetic, the symbolic, and the scriptural. But, nonetheless, he opened up vistas for these later writers by subjecting his religion to a psychological scrutiny and by dramatizing the archetypal aspects of the Father and the Mother which, however feebly, pointed him toward some inherent symbolic potential in the Catholic religion. So during the 1920's, in Destinies, Genetrix, and The Desert of Love, by wrestling with the relationship between the psychology and the theology of love, Mauriac tries to enlarge his conception of the religious novel.

Maria Cross: The Love Theme in Destinies, Genetrix, and The Desert of Love

To say there is a compelling failure of love in the significant fiction of Mauriac is to play with understatement. To ask how the love theme is related to the religious framework of his fiction is to open up some interesting areas of investigation. It is clear enough that genital or creative love has little room in his fiction. The characters in A Kiss for the Leper, Genetrix, Destinies, Thérèse, to name a few novels, are unable to love in a full human sense because their religious notions, whether emphatic or implied, prevent such expression. Earthly love, one assumes, is an embarrassment to a jealous God. In God and Mammon, by declaring that "all human love forms a barrier which is erected against the unique love," the love of God, Mauriac interprets the Fall as an existential falling away from God. Human love is a direct product of Adam's sin since it is

paradoxically related to pride and narcissism. Theoretically the suppression of this type of love, then, is desirable. Unfortunately, it is not, because Mauriac's premise is apparently based on a false Christian dualism: that acceptance of the divine means a rejection of the fallen body; sublimation in the guise of morbid asceticism. Norman O. Brown, with the help of the Christian mystic Boehme, contends that this "flight from the body" and inability of Christianity to reconcile libidinal energy and religion within time, has placed the cults of Western religions within the forefront of repressive forces. Mauriac, of course, could not go as far as Brown but was able, when he scrutinized the theological doctrine of love from a psychological point of view, to show the high cost of union with the divine.

Understandably, a heated critical debate has ensued over the meaning of the love theme in Mauriac. Robert J. North equates human love in the fiction with concupiscence.[31] Disagreeing with North, Michael Moloney contends that Mauriac never ceases to stress the oneness of love's essence. What he is never weary of saying, Moloney writes, "is that all loves are identical in ultimate origin since, in its broadest acceptation, love is the search of human nature for self-realization, a consummation which can only be perfectly achieved when the soul is united with God." "Human love," he continues, "derives from the senses, it is nourished by the senses, but it cannot rest in the senses. In it by an obscure compulsion, the finite searches for the Infinite. It is, however unknowing, a hunger for

the divine, even when its object is another human."[32]

The critic is correct in certain respects. True, Mauriac never ceases to stress the oneness of love's essence. "Perhaps," says the narrator in Genetrix, "there are not different kinds of love, but one kind only." In Saint Margaret of Cortona the author goes to Lacordaire for his authority: "Lacordaire has said that there are not two kinds of love."[33] Nonetheless, the reader must be careful in assuming Mauriac stayed with the bare theological content of this Catholic doctrine. He does not. Conor Cruise O'Brien notes that in the Lacordairean doctrine there are no "loves" only one "love": "The love of a woman, the love of a cause, the love of your mother, are all, in so far as they are love at all, the love of God."[34] "This theory," O'Brien suggests, "theologically unassailable if strictly interpreted, yet possessed enormous flexibility. It accorded perfectly with Mauriac's predisposition, for it is in practice impossible in describing the behavior of fallen man to disentangle pure love from the various and frustrated lusts of the flesh. This theory, therefore, enables a Catholic novelist to pass almost imperceptively from one plane to another, from the physical to the spiritual and back again, through many gradations of consciousness and a shimmering veil of confusion."[35]

This statement is one of the most significant contributions to Mauriac criticism, since O'Brien is able to find psychological urgency in theological doctrine. He does not, like Moloney, rationalize the Lacordairean formula and claim that human love is merely a stage on the way to the transcendent love of God. Too many critics want

their theology and psychology too without allowing for the requirements one makes of the other. Whether Moloney likes it or not, human love in Genetrix, A Kiss for the Leper, and The Desert of Love is, for reasons that will be determined, evil and bestial. What few critics recognize is that the author's protraiture of love is generally a critique of a theologically induced position that denies an existential reality to human love. I believe a close examination of the above works will substantiate this claim.

Genetrix must surely be judged a thoroughly oppressive account of the suffocating effects of the oedipal theme which Mauriac manages to link to the repressive forces of Christianity. On one level the novel can be regarded as a working out in dramatic form the problems generated by a Jansenist temperament. On the other hand, however, it should be seen as the protagonist's general awakening from his religious and psychological infantilism to the point where he is able to discern the consequences of his own perversity. As in A Kiss for the Leper, the religious elements emerge largely through indirection. Similarly Mauriac, plagued with an ambiguous attitude toward his own beliefs, exposes the human version of the spiritual struggle.

Mauriac, probably due to his own close relationship to his mother, reserves a special and not altogether flattering position for women in his fiction. Brigitte Pian of Woman of the Pharisees, Maria Cross of The Desert of Love, and Madame Cazenave of Genetrix all belong to the gallery of the author's possessive women. He does not, it should be noted, merely characterize these women in

their finest oedipal trappings. He attempts, not altogether successfully, to Christianize the oedipal concept, to make the mother, in its full religious dimensions, the cross of the son and to tie these female figures to the significant development of the female archetype since the invasion of the courtly love phenomenon and the counter-invasion of the Virgin Mary on the undermind of Europe. Here he joins company, uncomfortably, with James Joyce and Flannery O'Connor. Mauriac, as will be made clearer when The Desert of Love is discussed, tries to place the female archetype somewhere between the body and the soul where she will stand as a "pure" but psychologically corrupt version of the Eternal Mother relentlessly reminding her sons that women either want to trap them or give them a dose. In this way he is able to put the mother image fast within the doctrine of Jansenism and also to reap the fictional benefits of the dramatic implications of the Christianized oedipal theme.

Genetrix opens with Mathilde, who has recently lost a child during labor, on her death-bed thinking of the mistakes she has made in coming between the all-consuming love of Madame Cazenave for her son Fernand. She is not sorry; she only regrets that she has not been wiser. With the cackling of the mother-in-law and the sorrow of the husband in the background, Mathilde, with no thought of prayer, recollects the failure of love in her life.

> She was overcome by a feeling of utter loneliness. Why was her father not here, sitting, as he had always done in the days of her childish ailments ... . She cried aloud the name of her brother, Jean, who, maybe, was still living somewhere ... .

> She had loved nobody and been loved by none. Her body that had never been consumed by love would now soon be devoured by death. The rending annihilation of passion had not been for her a foretaste of the last utter dissolution of mortality. Her body would die without ever having known its own secrets.[36]

There is a decided note of finality to Mathilde's last thoughts. She has suffered a loveless life because she has been a foreigner to her own body. The loss of a daughter due to a miscarriage suggests that neither she nor her husband can sustain life. Thus, as in many works of Mauriac, Genetrix is about death in life. The remainder of the novel records the religious and psychological dimensions of this state.

The dramatic center of Genetrix is the oedipal relationship which the author implies is the reason for the woman's death. Though the wife has no influence over her husband in life, she controls him in death. Most of all, she nurtures a sensibility that has long hungered for knowledge of the body. So the narrative rapidly becomes a battle of the dead for the living. Certain his mother had killed his wife by neglect, Fernand moves into the sick room to take up residence. Paradoxically, the loss of Mathilde exposes him to his own vulnerabilities. Long an opponent of the body and an advocate of sham spirituality, he now desires to know his wife in the flesh.

> What did he care about the soul. Were there people so idiotic as to find comfort in such fairy tales? What he craved was the gift of her living body. What he longed for was to see upon the fearful and suspicious face that had been hers in life the sudden flicker of happiness. He, who had always been incapable of escaping from himself, even in the frenzy of physical satisfaction, realized now, too late,

> that what the body blindly seeks is a pleasure that lies concealed outside itself, that only by mingling its delights with the delight of another body not itself can it find assuagement.[37]

A page earlier Mauriac describes the genuine loneliness of Fernand: "Between the window and the bed, between a universe of dead worlds and one dead thing of flesh, he stood, a lonely, living creature." This attitude seems unnatural coming from a writer who has long been thought to reject the physical for the spiritual. But actually it is not. Mauriac did not portray his landed gentry in such squalid physical terms in order to make the alternative the spiritual. He consistently tries to reject the religious point of view that became a psychological stricture early in life.

Fernand's thoughts are of an existential nature. Though his mother thinks that "Perhaps there are not different kinds of love, but one kind only," the kind he desires must be inside time. Somewhat in the manner of Ivan Ilych, who becomes more concrete and perceptive as he approaches death, Fernand, lying on the dead wife's bed, reconstructs their first encounter and the possibilities that he might have acted differently. He realizes that behind the wish to avenge his thwarted manhood is a deeper desire. Yet "he realized this now, now when it was too late to satisfy the latent hunger, when that selfsame prey of flesh and blood and intoxicating scent had turned to corruption and become a horrible and nameless thing."

In a subtle if not terrifying way Mauriac joins what might be called the psychology and theology of love. And the mother figure stands between these two positions. Fernand, in retrospect, discovers

that the denial of the flesh, which was fostered by the mother and with her help became corruption, "a horrible and nameless thing," suppressed a latent hunger. His undraped psychological need conflicts with the Pascalian repudiation of the flesh: "Loving now for the first time in his life, he resented the mirage which plunged the whole world in darkness, leaving one single image only bathed in light. Corrupted from his earliest youth, he had really never grown up." "Mirage" and "one single image" are of some significance because they are the author's charge and Fernand's recognition that his narrow, matriarchal view of the world has been a mirage because it concentrated on a single image: the horror of the natural. The fifty year old Fernand, who struggled for half a century in the sticky web of his mother, recognized his own infantilism, which Freud would equate with repressive religion. In Totem and Taboo Freud hypothesizes that the religious phase corresponds to the oedipal stage, and this view points to the convergence of the psychological and theological themes in Genetrix. Fernand, by his own admissions and those of the narrator, suffocated by a possessive mother, and ruled by a rigid theology, has remained in the infantile stage; he has stayed in a state of petty narcissism. He has been unable to develop a fully integrated personality. After Mathilde's death, however, he tries to break out of this neurosis but finds the mother's influence too strong. His search for unqualified human love is thwarted by the powerful "genetrix." Though he comes close to cutting the oedipal cord when his mother is alive, after her "sacri-

ficial" death she again engulfs him. Like the maternal figure in Wise Blood, she gains strength in death.

Before his mother dies Fernand asks: "Were you and papa ever really in love?" What the son really means is whether the mother loved him as much as the father. So while there is sufficient evidence that he might have left the desert of possessive and narcissistic love, there is reason to believe that he partially remains in this phase. The mother, characterized in Christ-like terms before her death, suffers humiliation and mental torture to bring Fernand back under her "black wing." "How much more bitter than gall," Mauriac writes, "was the sight, upon that taut and suffering face, of so much love offered to another. Yet Félicité Cazenave felt dimly that it was a good thing she should suffer for her son. What she did not know was that she had been crucified."[38]

The allusions to the crucifixion are largely ironical. The son, because he knows that he has been laid bare on the maternal cross, by forcing his mother to eat (so he will eat in return), has so taxed her physical condition that she eventually dies. The dinner scene is a genuine plate of horrors. The son's menu sends Félicité to her death. Ironically, she sees herself as Christ-like since she has given of her love to a son in need. This final Christian act enables the mother to take over once again the fate of Fernand. He begins to resemble her. "It was with a feeling of joy that he let his mother force an entry, invade and possess him." When the servant and her family threaten to jeopardize his position in the house, he

uncharacteristically rises like a "genetrix" to thwart them. He, in effect, becomes his mother. But, when so full of her spirit, "Peace came to him, a feeling of detachment. It was as though he were conscious of some realm of love and silence beyond his own horrible existence, beyond the aridity of his heart, of a land where his mother lived, but a different mother from the one who, but a moment back, had possessed him like a Maenad, a land where Mathilde turned to him a face no longer tense and tragic, but for ever at peace,--a face that wore a smile of happiness."[39]

Mauriac, assuredly, intends the above premonition to be Fernand's moment of grace, and the reader can accept it as such. There is no reason to apply religious formulas here. On an obvious psychological level the son, feeling partially guilty for both deaths and sensing a real threat from the retainers, though he has contemplated a rich love within time, pleads for a state beyond tension. That this reading is more than a possibility can be gleaned from the final chapter. If Mauriac has intended the passage quoted earlier to be Fernand's religious vision, he probably would have ended the novel at that point. Yet he added another section as if to imply that the son's moment of grace might well be a self-induced hallucination. Somewhat later, apparently little affected by the previous vision, Fernand Cazenave understands the meaning of utter silence; "he was now, perhaps, recapturing his earlier mood, was finding once again the peace that waited for him on the threshold of that kingdom where his mother was his mother still ... . That, at least, was how

he felt. He forgot the wine that he had drunk, forgot that a very slight degree of intoxication is often enough to fill us with premonitions of eternity."

Mauriac's authorial commentary, unmistakably, acts as an ironic commentary on the musings of a drunk, sentimental old fool. Thus it seems reasonably clear that both moments of grace are examples of intoxication. Fernand has given up the fight to be loved, to save his house, even to live. Fernand's religious vision does not save him from this earth. At the close of the novel he fears that he might die alone in the attic, but the old servant Marie de Lados, whom he banished from the house, returns in the night looking like a "black virgin." Though the "weight of eternity seemed to press upon his limbs," he needs on his forehead the touch of her "toil-worn hand." The Eternal Mother he has conjured comes to him in a much gentler guise. The mother is too powerful: he cannot attain the creative human love he had envisioned. His "premonitions of eternity" are essentially projections of his anguished need and not genuine traces of solace. The son, if he is to survive, must depend on human love, whatever its inadequacies, not the divine.

Genetrix is a psychological critique of those aspects of theology that make human love and life so intolerable. Mauriac shows the personal and collective costs of negative Christian precepts. What many commentators have seen as the moment of grace in the novel, on close analysis, is found to be ironic or parodic, which is another way of saying this method is the author's last line of defense.

Mauriac is also aware of the existential terrain. He was unable to formulate a symbolic or even consistently metaphorical strategy to carry the transcendent themes of Christianity; he did know, however, that religion condemned man to psychological servitude. And there is probably no better example of such servitude than Destinies, written in 1928.

Critics have long noted the writer's ability to transmute his native Bordeaux landscape into an enchanted country, an expression and accomplice of sin. Destinies is no exception. But, as in other relatively early novels, the vaginal landscape is a psychological trigger. The suffocating sensuality of the Gornac plantation strangles Bob Lagrave and Elizabeth Gornac, the sensitive inhabitants. "The love of the land," Mauriac writes, "was their sacrament of worship." This is undisguised paganism and one of the reasons Mauriac was soundly chastised in the Catholic press.

The novel, nonetheless, is not a love affair with the land. The author's poetic temperament allowed him to bring the land to life, but his nature-worship was largely an index to a troubled mind. Lyricism was a rebuke of the spiritual.

While the family chronicle, the sensual atmosphere, and a natural determinism form significant parts of the novel's texture, Destinies is primarily an intriguing portrait of Elizabeth Gornac, who at age forty-five falls in love with the hedonist Bob Lagrave but is unable to express this love until after the young man dies tragically in a car accident. Elizabeth is a restless spirit. Her

marriage, a capitulation to the forces of propriety, has left her untamed. After the death of her husband and young son, she becomes a "woman of affairs" but finds little respite in mercantilism. Thus her life is a continual straining at the yoke of propriety. Pierre, her only living son and a fine example of religious perversity, is a constant reminder of her repressed feelings.

Elizabeth's "awakening" occurs when she harbors the lovers, Bob Lagrave and Mademoiselle de la Sesque. She becomes, in effect, a voyeur as she mentally traces the lovers' intimacies. Prompted by the sounds of the night, "she knew she was alone, and she awoke like a sleep-walker on the edge of a roof--on the lips of an abyss." Her keen desire is to live existentially. "Once, at least," she thinks, a person has the right to say "I escaped; once, at least, and once only, I lived indifferently to death and to life, wealth and poverty, good and evil, fame and obscurity--suspended by a breath." Elizabeth's "intolerable pain" is her knowledge that "only the body of the beloved can save us from that fall" and is her inability to be truly united with someone in the flesh. Interestingly, she reinterprets the orthodox version of the Fall. Her fall would not be in her surrender to the desires of the body but in her failure to satisfy her full needs. Mauriac, sounding very much like Tillich, who considers the Fall in terms of estrangement, the falling away of people from union with each other, compounds Elizabeth's anguish by giving credence, at least in her mind, to a repressive Christianity.

Pierre, Elizabeth's son, and Bob Lagrave represent the polar

aspects of her religious and psychological problems. Returning home during the time his mother is fighting to free herself of cumbersome societal restraints, Pierre, fresh from the lecture circuit, infuriates his mother by his pompous spirituality. Since for him seduction is far worse than murder, he feels compelled to reveal to Mademoiselle de la Sesque the nature of Lagrave's depravity, which, as far as the reader can tell, involves little more than traveling with a promiscuous Parisian crowd. But Pierre, sensing "he had saved a young girl ... had snatched her from the grasp of this filthy little creature," in a fine example of inverted pride, imagines he has been the instrument of God's grace: "He suddenly felt a profound sympathy for this young creature who had fallen, but who, thanks to him, knew how great was his fall." That he has saved the girl allows him to show sympathy for her lover. Pierre's meddling subsequently drives the young man to his death, but since Bob Lagrave dies in the arms of a poor country curé, Gornac "was glad to feel joyful because his enemy's salvation was assured. Now he was convinced that he had been the unworthy instrument to that end."[40]

Mauriac's irony was never sharper. Though Pierre intends to enter a Trappist monastery, he is filled with the spirit of masochism and sadism. Rather than cloister himself for reasons of repentance, he does it for revenge, to make his mother suffer. Thus she asks of the son, as might the reader, "Has God taken you into His confidence?"

Elizabeth is not immediately affected by the religious intolerance of her son. She realizes that Pierre came from a race that

did not understand passion. Ironically from the catastrophes "there emerged into the light the love that had been hidden within her flesh, that she had carried like a pregnant woman who does not at first know that she is carrying a living germ within her womb." The "living germ" she carried within her womb is her love for Bob Lagrave, who, since his childhood had been hemmed in by a silent atmosphere of lust and who thought of nothing but his own enjoyment, cannot return the tender, passionate love the older woman feels for him. When she goes to his room to console him after he is abandoned by his fiancée, he tries brutally to rape her. Louis Rubin is incorrect in seeing in this scene and the automobile accident in which Lagrave dies the reasons for Elizabeth's growing awareness of her love for this young dissolute.[41] She has always loved him, even when he was a child. What the rape scene demonstrates is the impossibility of acquiring that type of love that would enable one to fly in the face of fate. Though she continues to imagine the bedroom scenes of her lover, "her religious habits reawakened one by one." In time her love begins to trouble her conscience. When she goes to confession, the priest "was very careful not to forbid her to think of the dead boy, provided she did so in the presence of God." "Thus," Mauriac adds, "she tamed Bob's memory." Only in The Heart of the Matter does a Catholic writer show more forcefully and convincingly that an intellectualized God is an Enemy God.

Invoking the Lacordairean doctrine, the author reminds us that Elizabeth's love for Lagrave is equally the love of God. This is

theologically, not psychologically sound. The priest's pronouncements send the woman on a death journey and cancel any existential content in her life. At the close of the book during Elizabeth's visit to the cemetery, she has a vision of her love: "Bob stretched out his arms to her, his teeth gleamed and his chest was bare." But because he and her life have become a spiritual formula, "Once again Elizabeth Gornac became one of those corpses that are carried down the stream of life."

Destinies is a novel about the Fall. Mauriac gives voice to two kinds of Fall: the "falling into" life and the "falling away from" God through passion. As in Genetrix and A Kiss for the Leper, in Destinies the author provides credibility to the existential search for psychological satisfaction. There can be no mistaking the tenor of the authorial commentary when it is directed at the Jansenist Christianity of Pierre. Some of these descriptions might have come from D. H. Lawrence's Studies in Classic American Literature.[42] Given Mauriac's obvious attitude toward the sadistic religious views of Pierre, it can be concluded that these views represent a negative Christianity that feeds upon man's weaknesses and encourages a masochistic asceticism. Nonetheless, the Church is a structure that will capture man in the end. Elizabeth's religious habits are awakened, not because of any positive desire she experiences, but because she is weary. Mauriac seems particularly critical of a religion which first denies life to the faithful, then through sheer pertinacity retains a death hold on her people. When Elizabeth

renounces any hope of finding the love that would make her independent of spiritual ties, she becomes "one of those corpses that are carried down the stream of life." Her religion condemns her to a death in life. By imposing a theology of love (all loves merge into God) on the psychology of love (Elizabeth's needs), Christianity, the author maintains, is an enemy to man. So while it may be correct to call Mauriac's early fiction a "negative Catholicism," it is not negative in the sense in which most critics use the term--the author appeals to anti-Catholic elements, as defined earlier, in order to show the state of the world in which the religious qualities are absent. This is not at all true. In no novel of the 1920's, or later for that matter, do true Catholic or Christian themes emerge from Mauriac's squalid environment. Likewise, there is little hint of the transcendent; grace really rescues no one. When it is invoked, it is usually done ironically.

More so than either Greene or O'Connor, Mauriac inherited a structure of Catholicism that, far from the symbolic Catholicism of O'Connor, was akin to a destructive force of Christianity that had long fostered the repressive and neurotic tendencies in man. If Mauriac's fiction is a negative Catholicism, it is so because the author was locked into a system of Christianity, which became for him a psychological stricture that was essentially based on guilt, repression, masochism, sadistic love, false ascetism, and neurosis. Freud in Moses and Monotheism and Totem and Taboo, Brown in Life Against Death, and Marcuse in Eros and Civilization all recognize,

with distinctions, that the link between the theory of neurosis and the theory of history is the theory of religion, that is, a theory of repressive Christianity. Although Brown envisions Christianity, in both its repressive and symbolic guises, as both neurosis and as that attempt to make the neurosis conscious, Freud did not go so far: "I have never doubted," he remarks, "that religious phenomena are to be understood only on the model of the neurotic symptoms of the individual."[43] Mauriac, in spite of his protestations to the contrary, is close to Freud's understanding of the neurotic and repressive aspects of Christianity. The French writer, to be sure, was no systematic thinker; in some respects he was not particularly intellectual. But his method was dramatic not dialectical. Nonetheless, the above subjects and themes became his donnée. I think I have shown that the Catholic concept of grace rarely redeems this world. If he was caught in a neurotic Catholicism, his ironic voice was his protection. And if he, after great struggle, handed a character over to a dismal religious fate, one of the reasons is that he probably did not know, either psychologically or fictionally, how to rescue his characters. What he needed, in short, was a method of perception and symbolism that would rescue his fiction from a psychological and religious determinism. And, in The Desert of Love, he came close to accomplishing these things.

The Desert of Love can be considered an early culmination of Mauriac's particular effort to incorporate a religious impulse into his work without either a too forceful expression of the fatalistic

Jansenist world of his morbid theology or a too conscious embroidery, which was to mark many of the novels up to the publication of The Lamb in 1954, of Catholic or Christian themes on the texture of his fiction. Shortly after writing The Desert of Love Mauriac was to issue his famous The Joy of a Christian, a stepping-back from the heretical brink of The Sufferings of a Christian, which, whether the result of a lessening of his creative instinct of the 1920's or the result of a conscious intellectual decision, was to mean the novel with the intellectual thesis, such as The Knot of Vipers or Mauriac's creative counterattack, The Woman of the Pharisees, where he attempted, with disastrous results, to answer Sartre's charge of unnecessary omniscience. The Desert of Love is one of Mauriac's last risks.

The Desert of Love is a haunting, baffling work containing enough of the old fire and theme--the sharp parallels between erotic environment and the budding sexuality of Raymond Courrèges[1]; the stuffy, suffocating bourgeoise; the Jansenist emphasis--to make it vintage Mauriac and one of his most skillfully executed novels. In addition, there is a more determined effort at character development and motivation, particularly in regard to the complicated oedipal theme. It is also an attempt, though not altogether successful, to strike a religious stance through an indirect yet forceful application of the archetypal figure of the Eternal Mother who is part and parcel of the West's gradual recognition of the forces of the female unconscious. More so than in any other work of this or a later period, Mauriac in The Desert of Love has placed the Lacordairean

doctrine of a single love in dramatic contrast to the general literary notions of the mother figure by presenting in the ambiguous figure of Maria Cross the struggle of man, thoroughly indoctrinated in a Jansenist psychology, to recognize his own human needs and his crucifixion. The battleground for this struggle is the desert of love in the most modern sense, a forceful repudiation of the Lacordairean formula which in effect condemns man to loneliness and frustration. Mauriac moves toward a psychology of love or more properly the relationship between the psychology and theology of love complicated by the Christianized oedipal theme. The Lacordairean love ethic is the novel's intellectual structure, but the psychologies of the father and the son, fixed in time and merging with the mother, provide the drama of the piece.

The Desert of Love, with a placidity of tone that stands in sharp contrast to the horror of the loveless void that all major characters inhabit, begins: "For years Raymond Courrèges," now a thirty-five year old petulant bachelor reminiscent of Spandrell in Huxley's Point Counterpoint, "had been cherishing the hope that one day he might run across Maria Cross, the woman on whom he so ardently longed to be revenged." This is a startling and psychologically intriguing first sentence and immediately brings us to the terrifying position that women occupy in Mauriac. As in many of D. H. Lawrence's novels, especially Sons and Lovers, the oedipal theme is often the creative and destructive center of Mauriac's fiction. In fact the oedipal theme in The Desert of Love appears to have genuine

archetypal ramifications, and for this reason some exploration of the quality of the female image in Western literature in general would be useful to help illustrate the success and failure of this novel in which the author searches for a symbolic form to convey a religious vision that is psychologically convincing.

In Love and Death in the American Novel Leslie Fiedler makes some useful and provocative statements about the female archetype as it invaded the domain of Christendom.[44] For the author courtly love represented a general break-through of the mother image onto the under-mind of Europe which the Catholic Church was able to deal with in its memorable way by absorbing the image into the Cult of the Virgin. Fiedler argues that courtly love and Mariolatry are both aspects of the same psychic revolution, the resurgence of the Female archetype which, toward the close of the Middle Ages, left its impress everywhere and reasserted an energy that had been misdirected for a long time. In primitive Christianity, in the Judaism of the Old Testament, the Great Mother had been viewed as abomination. She persisted in literature as the bride of darkness, the whore of Babylon, Eve herself. By at least the twelfth century courtly love was found to be one way to defy the West's paternalistic Christianity and the Church's discord between man's passionate impulses and his ego ideals. The Church answer to courtly love and the female of the unconscious was Mariolatry, but the Cult of the Virgin could not altogether reduce the psychic forces surrounding the mother/woman since the Church for so long had pleaded the unchastity of all women.

Fittingly, as Fiedler sees it, the themes of self-punishment and self-destruction are inseparable, in the West at least, from the worship of the female. Though the Church chose to suppress the psychic energy of woman, the mother image in all its guises had an insistent way of appearing in fiction nominally considered to be Catholic: Joyce, Bernanos, Claudel, Bloy, O'Connor, Greene, and Mauriac. Because of the mother's position in the West's psychic heritage and the articulation by the Church of this force in largely spiritual terms, this conflict became a natural battleground for fiction writers who attempted to discover or recover some of the essence of the Catholic psychology. And this directly pertains to the Maria Cross figure in The Desert of Love.

In many of his novels and stories Mauriac characterizes women as virgins or corrupt versions of this type. The Desert of Love, however, is somewhat different. Maria Cross, as I will discuss in some detail, represents, almost in the exact ways Fiedler diagrams in Love and Death in the American Novel, a complex allegory of the paradigmatic struggle in the West between the full sensual, psychological version of the mother figure and the narrow Christian version imposed by the Church. Mariolatry represents repression and denial of the unconscious, a vehicle for expression of the Lacordairean love theme. Gene Kellog sees The Desert of Love as a Catholic novel because "the whole story depends on the Catholic idea that human beings seek the love of God behind all earthly loves".[45] What the critic fails to note is the profound psychological cost registered in such

a spiritual pursuit. Raymond and his father, two protagonists of the novel, search for the Eternal Mother, the woman who can mother them, whom they can unite with sexually and who can destroy them. Ironically Maria Cross, who is at best a complex figure, is also a subtle Jansenist yet also the occasion of men's hopes to flee the desert of love. She is first of all the archetypal Mary but because of her adultery and the death of her child, she crucifies men on her presumed sanctity. Though she is a prostitute, a kept woman, she intellectually and sentimentally ties herself to the image of the Virgin. Men suffer because they project their own thwarted desires on her, because they are unable to break away from an emotionless Church. They suffer self-destruction because Maria Cross becomes the mother but more so their cross, guilt, and repressed needs. "If it were true," Mauriac writes that Maria Cross had created Raymond by virtue of her love, "it was no less true that by scorning him she had added the last finishing touch to her work. She had let loose upon the world a young man whose mania it would be to prove to himself that he was irrestible."[46] Maria unconsciously promises psychic and sexual gratification to father and son but when she is confronted, closes the door like an anxious priest. When the archetype threatens to come to life, Maria Cross retreats to a psychological virginity. But before the full dimensions of the Maria Cross theme can be explored, a closer look at the narrative proper is in order.

Raymond Courrèges has waited seventeen years to be avenged on Maria Cross. This action or inaction, in the face of things, seems

improbable. Yet we must conclude that the author, by placing this startling admission first, is more interested in the psychological/religious ramifications of events than in strict causality. Raymond, like Trasis in The River of Fire, is an unrelenting hedonist: "Up to the age of thirty, being quite incapable of the selflessness demanded by true friendship, and devoting much of his attention to women, he had disregarded everything that was not an object to be possessed, and like a greedy child, would have said, had he put the feeling into words, 'I like only what I can eat.'"[47] The middle-aged bachelor is a hedonist caught in the Freudian stage of object gratification. He means to be avenged on all, to satisfy an infantile hunger. As is clear when Raymond reminisces after meeting her in a bar, Maria represents time, his youth, which is rapidly disappearing.

Since The Desert of Love is narrated retrospectively,--that is, the presence of Maria Cross drags Raymond back bound hand and foot to the vanished past,--the narrative has the effect of montage where events and themes coalesce in the consciousness of the protagonist. He clearly recalls the self-righteous commentary of his mother concerning the death of Maria Cross's child. Madame Courrèges, referring to Maria Cross as a slut, admonishes her for having an expensive funeral for the son whose death was God's judgment. Raymond storms from the house and while wandering in the garden "he noticed his father's shadow passing and re-passing the windows of the first floor. In the twilight that poured dusty and heavy over this stretch of country not far from Bordeaux, a bell was tolling for the child of

this same woman who now sat drinking so close to him ... She looked young, but it was though her youth had come to flower fifteen years ago and remained unchanged."[48]

Though the religious attitude of the Courrèges, as a background motif tolls like a death knell and condemns men who have been exposed to the spiritual perversity of maternal figures, to a life without love, what is more important about Raymond's mental collage as he muses on Maria Cross's presence is the haunting quality of his father's influence that passes like a shadow through his life. Married to this image is the shadow of the woman's son which Raymond is to merge with in the mind of the mother as an unconscious projection of her guilt for being a kept woman. By the novel's end, she has crucified father and son on the cross of her supposed sanctity. In classic oedipal terms father and son are related through Maria Cross.

It has often been remarked that Mauriac was unable to portray convincingly male characters. This charge might be leveled at Doctor Courrèges, Raymond's father, though the author obviously tried to redeem him. For the Doctor his wife is emotionally dead. Accordingly he becomes the platonic lover of his young daughter, who eventually marries a Basque lieutenant, who replaces him as both father and lover. The Courrèges household is a maternal prison which sends the Doctor (and son) scurrying from mother to mother in a desperate search for emotional fulfillment free of the perverse trappings of a sham spirituality. They, however, project on him the paternalistic role of sexless provider. Castrated by religious and psychological

forces beyond his control, the Doctor turns to Maria Cross for emotional satisfaction.

Having cared for her dead son, the Doctor turns his attentions to the mother. Her ambiguous presence opens up vistas for him. His romantic sensibilities are awakened and he sees her, paradoxically, as a saint and a potential lover who might provide what his wife cannot. That he sees her as a saint is testimony to an infantile Catholicism; that he sees her as a lover is testimony to his budding sensuality. And her languorous sensibility will answer to many symbolic possibilities. She will also answer to none. The quality of Maria Cross's personality is, ironically, a projection of the Doctor's deepest fantasies. The drama takes place in his mind. After preparing a lengthy romantic plea for her to flee with him, he is not even able to make it public. She is more interested in Raymond than the father. The Doctor, not altogether unhappily, is again crucified on the maternal cross and is still writhing, begging at the novel's end for the favor of this mysterious woman who represents all things to all men.

As mentioned before, father and son are related through Maria Cross or related through what they think she represents. "Though they had been drawn together by a mutual desire to sing Maria Cross's praises, their very first words set father and son at odds. Raymond maintained that a woman of her emotional scope could not but outrage the anemic susceptibilities of the devout. What he admired in her was her boldness, her limitless ambition, the dissolute life he

imagined her to have led. The doctor, on the contrary, insisted that there was nothing of the courtesan about her."[49] To Raymond's sarcastic remark, "You're not going to tell me that Maria Cross is a saint," the Doctor replies: "You have stumbled on precisely the right word. I know what Maria Cross has been through, and I know that somewhere in her there are the makings of a saint ... yes, really, a saint." Clearly private worlds converge in the character of Maria Cross and contribute to her symbolic meaning.

Like the father, the son is quite wrong in his estimate of her character. For him she is an object of unbridled passion that his Jansenist childhood had forbidden. After some clumsy wooing, he tries to rape her, with disastrous results. She does not, as he suspects, envision him as a possible lover. Nothing could be more revolting. She envisions him as a projection of her dead infant son, whose death she must expiate by daily pilgrimages to the cemetery and by fashioning a physical and psychological replacement.

When Raymond first meets Maria Cross, "the idea that he was little more than a child became firmly fixed in her mind." He, then, is the opportunity for an imposed virginity, an "angelic messenger" who will enable her to commune with her son and to live with herself. Playing with the idea of asking him to her house, she rationalizes to herself: "The extreme of her permitted indulgence was to fancy the feel of his head pressed to her body. He would be to her as a fawn domesticated by kindness ... she would feel the warm, soft muzzle in her hand. ... She seemed to see before her a long, long

vista of caresses. They must be fond yet chaste. She would not let herself, even in imagination, dwell upon a fiercer pilgrimage of love, upon that ultimate bliss of tangled forest undergrowth into which they might plunge and be lost to all the world."[50]

By her own admission she wants to be a mother to Raymond. She wants to reinstitute innocence and purity in her life. But there is something masochistic and perverse in her toying with the expectations of a boy pulling at the sexual bit. It is as if in The Desert of Love each major participant wishes another to act out his fantasies: "There was for her a horrible pleasure in digging still deeper the gulf which separated her from the being whom she forced herself to see as pure." She cultivates his suspect purity to bridge the psychic terrain between her spiritual impoverishment and Raymond's budding sexuality.

Maria Cross is the most interesting and ambiguous figure in the work. Mauriac found the prototype for her in Saint Margaret of Cortona, a thirteenth-century Franciscan who had been a great sinner and the mother of a son.[51] Conor Cruise O'Brien in his masterful and suggestive Maria Cross sees in her name a significant development of Bloy's idea that "woman is the cross." While the name Maria Cross evokes ideas of motherhood and holiness (terms that are "immediately rendered equivocal by the character of her who bears the name--the kept woman of Victor Larousselle"), it also bears connotations of crucifixion.[52] And as I have concretely shown, Raymond and the Doctor are united through a type of psychological if not exactly physical

crucifixion. Maria Cross is the symbolic (and dangerous) Eternal Mother because father and son project desires beyond her person on her personality. To be sure, she turns into a mother for both latent sons; she promises, unconsciously, full sexuality but provides a maternal embrace. For O'Brien "The concept of woman as the cross is ... the focus round which the imagination Christianizes itself."[53] Given the natural development of the female archetype, one can at least surmise how this metaphorical pattern, present in Bloy, Claudel, Joyce, Greene, O'Connor and Mauriac, found its way into the Christian imagination. Without too much of a risk it can be observed that the history of the Church is an extended effort to place aspects of the human psyche in protective custody. The Mariolatry theme, as Leslie Fiedler has made clear, could but redirect the unconscious, psychic energies long associated with the woman. Internally the Mary ideal was itself a type of crucifixion because she was a vehicle in Lacordaire's service. At either end of the Incarnation stand the mother and the cross, a natural psychological structure that later Catholic writers would seize upon. Yet to call Maria Cross in the strictest sense an archetypal representative is probably incorrect because, both generally and in The Desert of Love, she resides within the confines of a religious dialectic, because she represents the battleground for man, who is searching for some resolution of the sacred and profane argument which Christianity has not yet been able to resolve successfully.

The Maria Cross theme in The Desert of Love is a dramatic

re-enactment of the psychological poles of the Catholic imagination. But it is not a theme that points toward transcendence, rather irresolution and conflict. O'Brien, commenting on this idea, remarks that the crucifixion is always a double one: "Thus the idea of suffering is conjoined with the idea of punishment."[54] Implicit is a psychological servitude. As O'Brien puts it, the "balance of pain and punishment subsists until death." And this accurately describes the developments in the novel. Raymond, Mauriac writes, "carried within him a tearing, frantic capability of passion, inherited from his father--of a passion that was all-powerful, that would breed, until he died, still other planetary worlds, other Maria Crosses, of which, in succession, he would become the miserable satellite. ... There could be no hope for either of them, for father or for son, unless, before they died, He should reveal Himself who, unknown to them, had drawn and summoned from the depths of their beings this burning, bitter tide."[55]

The Desert of Love is Mauriac's most ambitious effort to discover a symbolic strategy which could convey a religious point of view without resorting to arbitrary applications of grace. He was able, at least, to tap the psychic resources of his religion though the Maria Cross theme is much too close to the surface of the novel to serve him completely. The characters seem to live and grow through psychological projection and not intense inner punishment or torment. Mauriac and Maria tease the reader into thinking they are holding more than they really are. Maria Cross is a lot of

different things to different people but rarely appears more than a kept woman basking in her seminal luxury. She is the cross, not for any fancy archetypal reasons but because she, deviously and unconsciously, offers more than she is. She does not reverberate with meaning or anything else; her character was assembled all too carefully.

Nonetheless the author came close to realizing that it was metaphor or symbolism that would best serve his religious aesthetic. And to say that he was unable to portray the Maria Cross figure with the skill of a Joyce or a Flannery O'Connor does not say much at all. That Mauriac chose the mode of psychological realism is indication that he was not interested in weaving a thick texture of symbolism in his novels. He was more concerned with the psychological states of suffering man. Ultimately in The Desert of Love, since Raymond cannot escape the psychic poles of suffering and punishment, Mauriac implies that only God can release him from his frustrated orbit. This is a hope, not a promise. Everything else had been tried. Ironically Mauriac seems to have forgotten that Raymond's condition was divinely inspired.

Conclusion: The Later Novels

As previously mentioned, by 1930 Mauriac had undergone a crisis of faith and, concomitantly, the intensity of his fiction lessened. From the powerful novels of the 1920's he moved closer in his treatment of themes to the surface of a recognizable Christianity. Thus,

though The Knot of Vipers published in 1932, represents an interesting use of the first-person narrator, it deals primarily with questions of love, charity, forgiveness, and belief. It is a dramatic critique of superficial and social aspects of Catholicism rather than of the structure itself. Mauriac was more interested in fictional techniques that would allow resolution--the death-bed conversion and the letter exchange after the narrator's death--than in reconciling a compelling religious theme with his fictional aesthetic.

Similarly Woman of the Pharisees, written some ten years later, seems more an answer to Sartre's charge of authorial omniscience than an expression of his religious concerns. So conscious is he of authorial (and narrator) reliability and verisimilitude that the novel deteriorates into a narrative confusion that one finds in Conrad's Chance. And this confusion conceals or obscures any serious religious import.

Mauriac, by his own admission, by the early 1950's is becoming self-consciously Catholic in his novels. After publication of The Lamb in 1954 Mauriac commented that his last novel was "designed especially to illustrate Catholic doctrine." On the same occasion he adds, "I have lost faith in the novel," "I have become a preacher."[56]

Mauriac is both right and wrong about The Lamb. For the first time in his literary career Mauriac went to the archetype of the Passion and Crucifixion for a structural motif. But, unlike O'Connor and Greene, he was unable to render this motif with the necessary

urgency. Xavier, the protagonist, reluctant to attend the seminary discovers that his mystical vocation is to save others. By way of natural, if not dramatic, evolution he emerges as a Christ-figure bent on saving others. Soon it is evident that he is driven by his masochism, hunger for suffering, and his desire for death. Interesting as the Christ parallels are (the torn flesh, blood spots, the ladder-cross), in the end it is Xavier's homosexual and suicidal tendencies that assume greater prominence and interest. Mauriac is no preacher in The Lamb; he has the themes but not the power. But the religious themes are flabby and without proper motivation. As Mauriac's last novel The Lamb stands as testimony to a writer who manipulates religious themes rather than feeling them. But his struggles with his fictional medium and questions relating to a Christian aesthetic, representing almost half a century of work, not only earned him a reputation as one of the foremost Catholic writers of the twentieth century, but laid essential groundwork for Flannery O'Connor and Graham Greene, who were to build and improve upon his fictional aesthetic.

CHAPTER THREE

Graham Greene

Modern theology, it is generally assumed, began with Sören Kierkegaard who, acknowledging the estrangement that was created by the negation of faith, argued in Either/Or, Fear and Trembling, and other works that since existence in faith is antithetically related to existence in objective reality, faith must be considered subjective, momentary, and paradoxical; an existence by virtue of the absurd.[1] Nietzsche, Camus, Sartre, and others have reminded us that a No-saying to formal Christianity is a Yes-saying to man and his precarious human destiny. On the other hand, however, though "God is dead" and is a hundred year-old slogan, there is little evidence that contemporary theologians and writers have dispensed with metaphysical concerns. Frederick J. Hoffman in The Mortal No discusses the presence of the secular in the midst of the religious--the paradoxes of secular grace, the merging of assailant and victim, the spatialization of time, the transposition of the metaphysical properties of the Trinity into areas of secular improvisation--and finds that many modern authors, no matter what their view of the world is, are forced to speculate on the possibility of transcendence because they "cannot long suffer the thought of mortality in and of itself."[2] The writer, Hoffman continues, is "forced back upon the initial experiencing of self in time, and is impelled to work in terms of a sensed immediacy

of his participation in tempered flow."

Such a view is not far different from that held by radical theologian Thomas J. J. Altizer, who writes that, "The man who chooses to live in our destiny can neither know the reality of God's presence nor understand the world as his creation; or, at least, he can no longer respond--either interiorly or cognitively--to the classical Christian images of the Creator and his creation."[3] Theology, Altizer feels, if it is to transcend itself, must negate itself. And in turn man, who must begin again by accepting, affirming, even willing the death of God, must also be willing to participate in the utter desolation of the secular or profane. He must be willing to undergo the discipline of darkness, the dark night of the soul while the possibility of a new epiphany of the sacred, a rebirth of the possibility of having God once more is awaited.[4]

Because faith in many ways is again held to be an epistemological scandal, the writer and theologian share a similar task, the paradoxical one of showing religious meaning in a world where God is absent. In literary matters at least this requires articulation of a mode, a search for a language and a style which, according to contemporary theologian William Hamilton, might enable us to stand before Him once again, delighting in His presence.[5]

If there is a general uneasiness with mythological, eschatological, and supernatural entities or categories, there is also an uneasiness about the style to be used to recover the Holy, to raise Christ from the tomb. Because twentieth-century man cannot easily

forget the folly of the cross, his style, necessarily, will be heavily marked by the use of parody, inversion, the grotesque and the heretical. This is particularly true of Graham Greene and Flannery O'Connor, whose themes and techniques are often so close to parody that their religious views are far from transcendent. Thus parody becomes the norm. Greene's A Burnt-Out Case is a dramatic, though somewhat systematic, rejection of most of the accepted ways of knowing oneself and God. Neither the aesthetic, ethical, nor religious attitude toward life is considered a solution to personal angst. What contentment the protagonist Query finds is due to his experiencing a type of cosmic primitivism before the absurd world intervenes. Greene, who spent a good part of his creative career trying to discover ways to restore to the novel the religious sense which was lost with the death of James, realized (at least after The Power and the Glory) that to introduce God into his work meant to make Him the enemy. The Fall by this argument is not the worst calamity; what is, is God's entrance into time. Yeats, Stevens, Eliot, and other religious poets of the century in their own ways constructed elaborate synthetic myths as an answer to the false asceticism of the Christian faith. Greene, somewhat ironically, in his application of aspects of Christian mythology, began to understand the problematic nature of belief in any God or system. God is raised from a literary death to be slain again and again. Both Greene and O'Connor, two of the most powerful religious writers of the last few decades, tried to show through a variety of techniques and methods that the religious

instinct, however indeterminate, does exist. So while it might be argued that in these authors the religious sense tended to catch up with the general aesthetic sense (that is, the problematic attributes of formal theology often tended to coincide with normative fictional techniques), it must be acknowledged that their artistic pursuits represented a struggle, not always successfully resolved, between a religious form and a radically secular content. Mauriac gave credence to the profane world but even in his best work was unable to transform it. Greene and O'Connor ambiguously invert Christian belief and doctrine, not merely as a formal posture, but as a way of holding back from religious affirmation.

One of the most profound commentators on the significance of the religious instinct in the modern age was Sigmund Freud, recently brought to proper life by Norman O. Brown in his Life Against Death. In Moses and Monotheism Freud set out to find the fragment of historic and psychological truth in Judaism and Christianity. In Totem and Taboo he discovered that the religious phase corresponds to the stage of object-finding in which dependence on the parents is paramount. Thus Christianity is fixed in the oedipal stage. It is a paternalistic theology which Baudelaire reminded us was based on a sense of sin and fitted with a self-sacrificial structure tinged with a Platonic hostility toward the body. William Hamilton believes that the oedipal phase of Christianity must be given up as a theological posture. Man must cease, heavy in his sinfulness, to look at heaven with eyes of faith. The essence of faith should no longer

involve escape from the father but a mastering of anxiety, the rejection of Platonic dualisms, and coming to grips with death and the body.

With no attempt at deprecating the art of François Mauriac I think we must place his work at such a juncture. His fiction is a war with the father, an attempted rejection of a paternalistic, oedipal Christianity. But for Mauriac, any rejection of the father led him to the warm security of the mother and her sentient cross. He fought heroically with the problem of God as parent and tried desperately in A Kiss for the Leper, Destinies, and Genetrix to become post-oedipal in his imagination, to give some credence to the existential world. By 1930 or so he had given up; the father wins in the end.

As I will establish in the ensuing discussion, Greene was profoundly influenced by Mauriac, especially by the Frenchman's serious efforts to put God back into fiction. But first of all it is necessary to place Greene's use of Catholicism in perspective because it differs in important respects from Mauriac's and has received a disproportionate amount of attention. Greene, of course, did not help his case by earning an early reputation for thrillers and entertainments and then slowly, almost calculatingly, adding a religious dimension to his reviews and novels. This has led some critics, such as the extremely hostile and biased John Atkins, to conclude that the author grafted a sentimental, if not slick, Catholicism on his fictional universe, that "the Catholic faith provided him with a refuge

from the tawdry."[6] Atkins charges, no less, that Greene imposes a Catholic sacramental superstructure on his work. Not surprisingly the critic argues that the central preoccupations of the novels might very well have been expressed without any recourse to theology. This is one of the most serious charges leveled against Greene and one my study will try to refute.

Atkins' charges, without the bravado, are common enough because Greene, an Anglican by birth, seemed to work too consciously at incorporating Catholic doctrine into his fiction. Even the negative Catholicism of Mauriac can be accepted before a learned Christianity. Greene has not provided his critics with the voluminous testimonies to his interior struggles the way Mauriac has. He has admitted--though one fancies too quickly--to being profoundly influenced as a boy by Marjorie Bowen's The Viper of Milan, which showed him the nature of absolute evil in the world. Thus his emotional commitment to a fallen world was an early discovery. Philip Stratford might be the most reliable in this matter: "I think it is fair to say that he was temperamentally adjusted to Catholicism long before he joined the Church. On the one hand, Roman doctrine, and particularly the doctrine of Original Sin, took into account the reality of that 'awful prison' that he perceived about him in his childhood."[7] Greene, like Flannery O'Connor, felt that the symbolism of orthodox religions was not sufficiently powerful to convey a religious sense to a world largely ignorant of such matters.

Actually Greene has said little about his use of Catholicism,

possibly because he did not have a Gide watching every move for a respectable complicity. The statement he made a few years before publication of The End of the Affair might be thought definitive:

> If I may be personal, I belong to a group, the Catholic Church, which would present me grave problems as a writer if I were not saved by my disloyalty. If my conscience were as acute as M. Mauriac's showed itself to be in his essay God and Mammon, I could not write a line. There are leaders of the Church who regard literature as a means to one end, edification. That end may be one of the highest value, of far higher value than literature, but it belongs to a different world. Literature has nothing to do with edification. I am not arguing that literature is amoral, but that it presents a personal moral, and the personal morality of an individual is seldom identical with the morality of the group to which he belongs.[8]

For all practical purposes, at least as far as strictly orthodox criticism is concerned, Greene's remarks should have closed the affair. He reserves the right to put Catholic teaching and doctrine to his own imaginative use, to be heretical, to expound a personal vision, to, in effect, ignore, if he chooses, the Maritain doctrine of "altitude," to sacrifice his religion on the altar of his art. While this does not tell us anything about the quality of Greene's religious vision, it does tell us something about his intentions and in the abstract his fiction will substantiate them.

The only critic, to my knowledge, who attempts to reconcile orthodox religious elements with Greene's art is John Currie Sheldon in his unpublished dissertation: Supernaturalism in Graham Greene: A Comparison of Orthodox Catholicism with the Religious Vision in the Major Novels of Graham Greene. Sheldon writes that "Greene

employs the rationalist structure of medieval theology" to inform his works: scholasticism in the garb of a thriller. "The most striking basis for comparison," Sheldon continues, "between Greene's imaginative portrait of man and the Church's view concerns the doctrine of original sin."[9] And he proceeds to apply the Thomistic concept of sin--evil as privation--updated by Maritain to the major works of Greene. Expectedly, the results are thoroughly simplistic. The Power and the Glory illustrates the idea that real virtue is difficult. Scobie of The Heart of the Matter is a bad Catholic because he falls short of the absolute standards of the Church. Accordingly, this novel demonstrates that man is naturally evil. Sheldon's conclusion is that Greene "is a propagandist in the worthy sense of the word."

Sheldon's study is a warning against applying orthodox religious standards to Greene or any other religious writer. The critic fails to get to the heart of Greene or even to ask the important questions. Can a modern writer, even if he believes, subscribe to Christianity in the old terms? "Can he believe," Charles Glicksberg asks, "without falling into heresy? Can the creative imagination accommodate itself to the orthodoxies of the Christian faith?"[10] And these questions must be answered if Greene is to be considered a serious religious writer. Hopefully my investigation will provide a fuller, documented answer to the above questions.

Fortunately there exist more imaginative critics than Sheldon, all of whom will be some help in my study. But if it is dangerous

in viewing Greene afresh on the side of orthodoxy, it is equally dangerous to label him heretical. David H. Hesla in "Theological Ambiguity in the 'Catholic Novels'" remarks that "those critics have been in error who have tacitly assumed that, because Graham Greene is a Roman Catholic, the principles by which he has constructed his fictional universe are the same or similar to the principles which inform the Catholic doctrine of the Creation. For Greene appears to be less indebted for his cosmology to the book of Genesis, the Old Testament prophets, St. Paul, or the Fathers and Doctors of the Church than to Masilides and Valentinus and Marcion and the followers of Mani--that is, to those expositors of the condition of man who, in the first centuries of the Christian era developed a system of thought and myth which are called Gnosticism."[11]

Here, I believe, is another danger in Greene criticism. I do not think it is essential to go to an old heresy to explain, as Hesla does, that the author sees the world as a prison or a hell. This happens to be the state of things. History is truly a prison; man is called back on his own resources. Nonetheless, the critic's discussion of the psychological effects of man's imitation of Christ is intriguing and will be returned to.

The evolutionary quality of Greene's religious imagination vis à vis psychological, theological, and fictional developments of the last half century is a problem that has not been dealt with in any detail. I think that Greene would hold with Brown that any mention of religion or theology in this age necessarily implies

critique. But critique is not the same as criticism. Greene, as stated previously, has clearly acknowledged that he reserves the right to disagree with established teachings, even if his fiction retreats into heresy. Just how often he has apparently done this is elaborately testified to in the Catholic press. Yet as soon as we formulate a fictional relationship between orthodoxy and heresy we also imply a tenuous critical dialectic that at worst becomes reductive and at best dubious. Though I do not intend my argument to be deductive, I believe when it is concluded that many of the major philosophical, theological, and literary developments of our time consist, in their various guises, of a strenuous reworking if not an outright rejection of conventional Christianity, then heresy as a critical posture becomes redundant. The real question is, how can a writer reinvest dead forms and symbols with an experiential urgency. For an artist it becomes a matter of survival, to create dangerously, as Camus urged, to use whatever dramatic material is at hand. Brown in Life Against Death has remarked that there is a religious sense to the use of such terms and methods as ambiguity, tension, and irony in that these strategies are not merely means to order or as Ranson put it, "a desperate ontological maneuver," but are ways to describe an imagination entertaining the possibility of the disappearance of God. In the areas of negation and parody, religion and literature meet.

Before looking at specific works of Greene, some general overview of the religious element in his fiction is in order. We

know that Greene, probably encouraged by Mauriac's example, set out in 1938 to give his characters a supernatural dimension. I find it nothing short of remarkable that this English author, who professes with some deliberation simply an intellectual commitment to Catholicism when he started writing Brighton Rock, could invoke, almost as superbly and devastatingly as Mauriac, the secret world of bourgeois, sentimental Catholicism. In some specific ways Mauriac in A Kiss for the Leper, Destinies, and Genetrix; and Greene in Brighton Rock all dramatize the heart of a secular Catholicism born out of piety and nursed on violence. It appears only vaguely understood by critics that when the negative, fleshless, platonic qualities of this religion are dealt with, there is little possibility (except if one happens to be a James Joyce) to avoid the twin and equally destructive poles of violence and carnality. Pinkie, the "Boy" protagonist of Brighton Rock, is an embodiment of a negative, suicidal Catholic psychology that makes it difficult to transform libidinal energies into something better than a luxurious narcissism. Greene is getting his fictional and religious feet wet in his first "Catholic" novel. He demonstrates that he understands Church psychology very well indeed.

Within the course of the two or three years between Brighton Rock and The Power and the Glory Greene joins the major twentieth-century literary traditions. Though the world of his whisky-priest is still dangerous, gone is the limited Christian world defined by the rude boundaries of carnality and violence. His protagonist is a picaro, who operates beyond the pale of theological niceties, but

one who is infinitely secular and modern because his temporal imagination allows him to participate in Yeats' beautiful "tragic joy." More than anything else The Power and the Glory is a frontal assault on the essence of orthodox Catholicism. Still, this should not be construed as a criticism of religious extravagances. Because of the priest's participation in the brutal, criminal, "incarnational" aspects of Christ's life, because he is a willing witness to transcendent negation, he discovers that corrupt human love is a profound index to a less than popular God. The moment of grace in the novel is not the customary flash of awareness outside time, it is the existential, almost Barthian comprehension that the character God can be no less or no more than unselfish, compassionate love. Thus the religious vision in The Power and the Glory is determined by the quality of love released in limit situations.

By the mid 1940's it becomes increasingly clear that Greene's interest in religious subjects will not be in the restless Jansenism of Mauriac, the masochistic spirituality of Bernanos, the Christian satires of Waugh, or the petty utilitarianism of Powers' preachers: his interest after The Power and the Glory will be in the theme of love as it is theologically proposed and psychologically disposed. Again, as we saw in Mauriac, there is a tension between the psychology and theology of love. Greene, far more thoroughly and compassionately than Mauriac, describes the psychic deterioration that results from the conflict between an emotional and spiritual comprehension of God. Ironically, when man brings God into time to suffer

His own fall, absolute notions become victim to the highly concrete and individualistic notions that represent the full, dramatic human. Naturally, if Greene's fiction reveals the precarious nature of human love in our time, the character God will suffer the consequences, as he does in The Heart of the Matter and The End of the Affair. God, one is tempted to say, due to his own perfection, arrogantly tempts man to imitate Christ and usurp his own history.

Scobie and Bendrix, the protagonists of The Heart of the Matter and The End of the Affair respectively, come to learn the ambiguity of any kind of supernatural love and to believe that the disastrous invasion of human life by Christ is not love but torment. Therefore, these characters believe that in the structural sense the Christian faith tempts man to suicide and self-sacrifice. Possibly one of the most compelling aspects of the theology of love is that once it invades the life of Scobie in particular, it tempts him to pathological behavior. Greene, unlike Mauriac, does not present a forced dialect between body and soul, time and eternity. He gives full reign to libidinal energy. Sarah Miles of The End of the Affair, being literally chased by God, is reluctant to trade ordinary, corrupt human love for some higher psychic activity. She is slow to accept the love of God if it will mean the suppression of earthly love. If God has not yet disappeared from Greene's fiction, He is certainly not present in any orthodox guise.

Though my discussion of A Burnt-Out Case is not intended to be conclusive, rather a transition to the fiction of Flannery O'Connor,

I will show that the novel does mark the author's partial repudiation of the major systems of knowing and existing. This novel, in its treatment of the themes of alienation, nothingness, and the absurd places Greene in the company of the Christian existentialists. But rather than a leap of faith Query's is more of a leap backwards to a kind of Eliade primitivism. In A Burnt-Out Case Greene entertains the possibility of the disappearance of God and all Christian phenomena. Man must start again without expecting help from outside systems.

Brighton Rock: Religion Discovered

Undoubtedly, Philip Stratford suggests, Greene's "reading of Mauriac in the early thirties helped to encourage him to change the plan of Brighton Rock (which he had begun in 1937 as a simple thriller) and to recast it as a spiritual drama dealing with the metaphysical implications of crime."[12] Whether Stratford is correct about "the metaphysical implications of crime" is a subject that will await my analysis, but Mauriac surely helped him to convey a sense of evil, which he also found in James, religious in its intensity. His reading of Mauriac provided him with absorbing insights into the psychology of a Jansenist Catholicism. Demonstrably, the French author offered sufficient evidence as to the dramatic material in a deterministic psychology.

Yet at the same time Brighton Rock is peculiar to Greene in its use of the grotesque and the melodramatic. Flannery O'Connor

has remarked that you suffer The Lime Twig like a dream, and I think the same description can be applied to Brighton Rock, which consists of two worlds structurally fused but barely touching; when they meet the connector is violence and murder. The element of the thriller is disturbingly present: the whirl of the race track world, the lack of causality, events out of focus, needless violence. Evil, as the author learned from Bowen's novel, does walk the world. Pinkie the protagonist displays a masochism of Alex in A Clockwork Orange, an arrogance of Haze in Wise Blood, and a brutality of Sergeant Croft in The Naked and the Dead, as he suffers sex like a death act, leans ambiguously toward God, and plucks the wings of a yellow-jacket moaning, "She loves me, she loves me not." He is, as Robert O. Evans acknowledges, a spiritual cripple adrift in a secular Wasteland (apparently Greene was greatly indebted to Eliot's poem).[13] In a religious sense he inhabits that ambiguous territory between good and evil. And the quality of his response to concrete situations is measured by the discrepancy between Pinkie's thinking and acting.

C. C. O'Brien in Maria Cross states that "corruption and the cross are for the Catholic the two central facts: the point where they come together is the Redemption, when Christ on the cross bore the sins of the world."[14] This is a very interesting and illuminating observation and might well provide a starting point for a consideration of the religious themes of Brighton Rock. When the themes of corruption and the cross are examined for their psychological corollaries, we find the twin poles of violence and carnality. The cross

is criminal wood stained with violent metaphors; the corruption is carnal violence. "La passion est unie à la croix," Prouheze remarks. It is not uncommon for Catholic authors to link in a special but ambiguous way the Passion of Christ with human passion.[15] The link is the terrible significance given to violence and carnality in Catholic literature.

There is probably no better example than Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man to demonstrate the telling relationship between the psychological and theological attributes of the Catholic imagination. Daedalus, because of his ties to his mother and the Church, bears a sexual cross which assumes its full weight during the sermon on hell. Ultimately, however, his cross is redeemed through art, no matter how unconvincing his aesthetic may be. Joyce did what no other nominally Catholic writer of this century could do: find an ambiguous personal redemption in the essence of theology. Stephen's religious sexuality is transformed into creativity. Yet when we consider the portrait of a non-artist such as Studs Lonigan in the trilogy or Pinkie in Brighton Rock, the elements of the equation and resolution are far different. Violence is what joins corruption and the cross. There is no way to escape these poles.

Pinkie is truly stuck in the oedipal phase of Christianity as he wars with his father, both of them: the one who "ploughs" his mother on Saturday night and the other Father who tempts him to salvation. For Pinkie his confirmed brutality is a protection

against love and carnality. He will "plough" other people with guns, knives, brighton rocks, bannister pieces, and his "ploughing" approaches suicidal proportions. The result is alienation and a grotesque parody of sentimental, psychological Catholicism.

The obvious conflict in Brighton Rock is between the ethical and religious planes. Ida, the protagonist, the big-breasted Sarah Monday of the ouija board, can smell Pinkie's crimes all the way across Brighton. Assuming her fitful place in this allegory of retribution, she stalks Pinkie and his girlfriend Rose, completely oblivious to the tangled web of the "Boy's" mind. She fulfills the role of a Nemesis sent by God to punish the wicked. And she pompously puffs herself up for this role. She, however, acts for the sake of inquisitive meddling and not out of love. So when she claims to her prey that "I know the difference between right and wrong," "I've always been on the side of Right," we must assume that although justice is served, Greene is not primarily interested in the ethical theme of the novel. She is a self-righteous device, firmly satirized by the author, in the fittingly melodramatic service of God. She is extravagant in her sentimentalism and possesses the intuitive sense of a harem. She stands in relation to Pinkie in the same way, or nearly so, that Enoch Emery does to Haze in O'Connor's Wise Blood. She both controls and parodies his actions. A secular Goddess, with the limbs of a Hecuba, Ida is warm testimony to the unconscious, though dangerous, narcissism of the profane world.

Pinkie, on the other hand, is not concerned with questions of right and wrong but of good and evil in a strictly religious sense. And he has committed himself to total evil. Yet he thinks like a schoolboy; thus he is fittingly called Boy. Thinking of his girl-friend Rose, Pinkie muses: "What was most evil in him needed her; it couldn't get along without goodness ... She was good, he'd discovered that, and he was damned: they were made for each other."[16] While Ida does not believe in heaven, hell, mortal sin and the like (she prays to ghosts and ouija boards), Pinkie believes in his absolute damnation and consciously wills himself to the devil.

All the same there is something troublesome and inconclusive about the Boy's posturings as they lend a comic or parodic note to a novel which purports to be a serious treatment of the metaphysics of crime. Apparently for this reason R. W. B. Lewis finds an initial confusion in Brighton Rock between what Greene calls an "entertainment" and what he finally offers as tragedy.[17] Robert O. Evans in "The Satanic Fallacy of Brighton Rock" disagrees and asserts that the book should be properly considered a tragicomedy and goes to Jacobean drama for his rationale. In Witch of Edmonton by Dekker, Ford, and Rowley, Evans argues, "Thorney marries Susan Carter, for low motives, and subsequently murders her. In Brighton Rock Pinkie marries Rose for equally reprehensible motives--so that she cannot testify against him--and presently attempts to murder her, by persuading her to enter a suicide pact."[18] While his analogy is helpful, I do not think Evans resolves the serious and parodic elements

of the work. Only when it is understood that both Ida and Pinkie are figures of fun, that is, there is a discrepancy between their actions and beliefs, can we begin to discern Greene's overall design. Neither character represents the norm. Ida is a plump, passionate Pharisee. She is a dangerous foe for Pinkie because she does not perceive the serious dimensions of the drama. The Boy for whom "hell lay about him in his infancy," because he has been a reluctant witness to the unbearable carnality of his parents' primal scene, substitutes violence for sex. He repudiates God for giving him a body. Yet I think there is good reason to believe that Pinkie confuses the consequences of his actions and therefore, when he risks damnation, his behavior signifies a style which must be separated from his intentions.

Approximately midway through the novel Pinkie, in answer to Rose's assertion that she will do anything to keep her Boy from being implicated in Hale's murder, proclaims quite out of fashion with his character, "It's not what you do, ... it's what you think. ... It's in the blood. Perhaps when they christened me, the holy water didn't take. I never howled the devil out."[19] The Boy, partly to satisfy her own egotism and to force his superiority over Rose, mockingly puts the devil into his blood stream. Since the author writes that Pinkie makes these claims boastfully, we can conclude that his pessimism has a comic analog. Possibly more important is the first part of the quote where he emphasizes the significance of thinking rather than action. The claim is all the more intriguing

because she is most definitely a person of action, criminal action. Whether this is true or not, it is the conception he has of himself. "He knew the traditional actions as a man may know the principles of gunnery in chalk on a blackboard, but to translate the knowledge to action, to the smashed village and ravaged woman, one needed help from the nerves."[20] Though he does translate his knowledge to action, he nevertheless believes that the two realms exist separately, that, in a sense, he is not responsible for his actions. Likewise, the quality of his perception is held in the forefront throughout the novel. He consistently misreads the obvious danger signs associated with Ida's "investigation." Frequently he is described as being blind. After murdering Spicer the Boy confronts a blind marching band. "The boy walked up the side of the road to meet them; the music they played was plaintive, pitying, something out of a hymn book about burdens; it was like a voice prophesying sorrow at the moment of victory. The boy met the leader and pushed him out of the way, swearing at him softly, and the whole band ... shifted uneasily a foot into the roadway."[21] After Pinkie boisterously proclaims that he should not move for a beggar, Greene writes, "But he hadn't realized they were blind; he was shocked by his own action. It was as if he was being driven too far down a road he wanted to travel only a certain distance." Following a painful marriage to and an equally painful sexual initiation with Rose, to escape the nightmare he seeks the night air and "felt like a blind man watched by people he couldn't see." I submit that he is symbolically blind, that only after the

marriage does he begin to fathom the import of his actions. But now it is loo late. Because he had suffered the weekly "ploughing" of his mother by the father, he consciously damns himself rather than experience sex. Accordingly, his libidinal energies are associated with his sexual obsessions. His murders and acts of violence all possess a sexual or phallic dimension. To silence Hale, who has gone over to the opposition, he stuffs a stick of Brighton rock candy down the throat of the newspaperman, he kills Spicer with a long narrow piece of bannister wood, he cuts various people up with his knife, and attempts to get Rose to use his gun to kill herself. He will kill them all sexually. Violence is a defense against the "scramble." He is like a violent child caught in his own narcissism. The sex act to him is the very edge of the universe. Marriage only compounds things. When he confronts the girl's father to arrange an early marriage, "he heard his father speaking; that figure in the corner was his mother; he bargained for his sister and felt no desire." Marrying Rose is no better than appropriating his sister, which leads one to wonder whether his incestuous desires or acts hold him in horror of his childhood. He is effectively joining his past. When he thinks of his childhood, he sees the period as a cross. The Boy believes that if he could escape it and its consequences, "It was worth murdering a world." And Pinkie does no less.

Somewhat in the manner of O'Connor's Hazel Motes, Pinkie, though he may feel that he is Satan incarnate, in spite of his blasphemy, criminality, and obsessions, possesses an unconscious

desire to be saved. When he discusses "the rules of the game" with Dallow, the Boy remarks angrily, "You can't teach me the rules ... I watched 'em every Saturday night, didn't I? Bouncing and ploughing." After contemplating the horror of the scene, he says in a low voice: "When I was a kid, I swore I'd be a priest." Given the context, we must assume that the priesthood would be refuge from his childhood. Appropriately his vocation now has a criminal edge. Since he cannot forget his childhood, he will kill it. Nonetheless, he exudes an unconscious urge for salvation. "In his voice," the author writes, "a whole lost world moved." During his reign of terror he was nostalgic for the confessional. Soon after, "for a second time he felt a faint nostalgia as if for something he had lost or forgotten or rejected." Consciously, Pinkie blasphemes God relentlessly; on another level he desires him, but the twin crosses of his childhood prevent him from comprehending his genuine needs. As in other stories and novels of Greene, a priest enters at the end, not to pass judgment, but to present an alternative to the preceding squalor. Soon after Pinkie's death Rose, apparently pregnant, goes to confession. She is naive and unaware of the true characters of Ida or Pinkie. To relieve her grief the priest mentions Péguy, who "decided that if any soul was going to be damned, he would be damned too. He never took the sacraments, he never married his wife in church. I don't know my child, but some people think he was--well, a saint." Pinkie, to be sure, is no Péguy, though this is probably not the point. The priest wants to remind Rose of the "strangeness of the

mercy of God." Greene was not tempted, as Mauriac so often was, to disrupt a realistic narrative to imply the presence of irresistible grace. He asks the reader to give no more of an ear to the priest than he has given to the action. So compared, the priest's assertion should be judged as a sentimental formula that embraces any wrong-doing. The fate of the Boy is conjectural with or without any theological pronouncements. He has confused psychology and simplistic theology; his life is witness to the cross he has unwittingly claimed. The "whole smoky childhood" he has carried with him has blinded him, as does the acid in his face as he plunges over the cliff "out of any existence."

The Power and the Glory: Religion Transfigured

The aesthetic development of Greene in the short two or three years between Brighton Rock and The Power and the Glory is nothing short of remarkable. While in earlier novels he has shown the destruction wrought by inadequate ethical and religious systems, in The Power and the Glory, which in atmosphere and particular themes, shares many similarities with Malcolm Lowry's Under the Volcano, Greene discovers beyond the naturalist's pale the unbearable twentieth century angst that resulted from the forceful death of God and the unreliable substitutes. Greene reverses the heaven-hell dialectic, transforms the profane world, and postulates a religious view that, if it points toward the eternal, finds its metaphors and meanings in the limit-situations of man. In a superficial way this

appears to be a case of dramatic inversion. The sinner becomes the saint--a technique for waking up the secular world. I do not believe this is any truer of Greene than Flannery O'Connor. Mauriac, because of temperament and artistic inclination, tended to invoke the profane as a stopping-place on the way to the holy. Greene and O'Connor inhabit the profane world but rather than transforming the world, they transform religion itself.

That this is a theoretical consideration which has made its way into the Catholic imagination in the last few years is attested to by William F. Lynch's Christ and Apollo: The Dimensions of the Literary Imagination. The author "moves against the idea of the absolute autonomy of literature," but more significantly, asks and attempts to answer the questions: is there a theological or Christic imagination? Is there a kind of imagination which can be recognized and defined as Christian? Is it possible for an artist who is a perfectly orthodox Christian in his conscious beliefs to exhibit a heretical imagination in his art?[22] Lynch goes to the central Christian mystery, the Incarnation, for the substance of his argument. He defines Christ as a completely definite man who took on human nature completely and suffered time. And time is an important aspect of the theological imagination. According to Lynch it is a common practice for twentieth century writers, particularly religious ones, to be released from time. Mauriac, he feels, is a good example of this because he seems to say that it is the function of grace to release us from time, to help us transcend it. For Lynch Greene in The Power and the Glory

and Eliot in Four Quartets are profound religious writers since both know that only through time is time conquered and both works are alive with points of intersection and descent where the conflict between the time and timeless is resolved in a dynamic way.

While I think Lynch's study is lacking in specifics, he does have some interesting things to say about the Catholic imagination. The core is the Incarnation where the natural and supernatural meet. Significantly Lynch argues that there should be no rejection of the profane world. Religious fiction should deal in some way with the temporal world in all its completeness. What is fascinating about the study is that Lynch seems to imply that it is necessary for the author to take on the styles and the modes of a particular age. The finite must not be viewed as a bag of tricks to be played in order to send the soul shooting up. If there is to be a spiritual dimension, the movement must be imperceptible without violating the natural order. God can only be reached by a direct path through the finite. "The Catholic imagination," he concludes, "does not force me to imagine that at the end I must free myself from all human society to unite myself with God."[23] God is in man in the temporal flow. Where Lynch stops short is with such a work as Kazantzakis' The Greek Passion, in which the author proclaims the right to make, manipulate, and destroy reality.[24] The critic contends that this is a parody of ritual, a triumph of Narcissus. Ironically, and this is the critical gap in the book's argument, Lynch will accept the form of many novels but not the content. He cannot very well argue for a concrete

imagination that resists intrusion of the supernatural without acknowledging that one of the realities of man's so-called incarnational awareness is the possibility of denying an existence to God or better still, to invoke Him to punish Him for His first entrance into time.

What Lynch neglects to say is that there is a danger in the type of imagination he proposes; it might turn on itself, and I think it tends to in both Greene and O'Connor. Any form will eventually parody itself, and this is equally true of Christian mythology. Theodore Ziolkowski in Fictional Transfigurations of Jesus writes that the Christ story "grew through increased psychological insight, ironic understatement, and technical sophistication to become a pliable means of fictional expression."[25] By the time of Giles Goat-Boy the form inevitably became inverted into self-parody. And there exists a three-way conspiracy of irony: the hero knows he's not Christ, the author knows he's not Christ; we know he's not Christ. "But this very willingness," Ziolkowski remarks, "to contemplate Jesus in any and all of his transfigurations, this substitution of mere interest for the commitment of love or hate, suggests that we have attained a new peak of alienation. Proceeding from the flesh-and-blood Jesus of social criticism and psychiatry, we have moved beyond the attenuated figura of myth and parody to arrive at a bland construct twice-removed from its Gospel source: the scholar-critic's Jesus. And that, as Faith might concede to Skepticism, is perhaps the only Jesus we deserve."[26]

The Power and the Glory and Silone's Bread and Wine are probably two of the last works in which the fictional transfiguration of Jesus

served a generally serious function. Mauriac felt that Greene's book is addressed providentially to a generation that the absurdity of a crazy world is clutching by the throat. To the young contemporaries of Camus and Sartre, desperate prey to an absurd liberty, Graham Greene will reveal, perhaps, that this absurdity is in truth only that of boundless love.[27] The novel is addressed, Mauriac continues, "to the virtuous, to those who do not doubt their merit and who have ever present in their minds several models of holiness, with the proper technique for attaining the various steps in the mystical ascension. It is addressed in particular to Christian priests and laymen, especially to writers who preach the cross but of whom it is not enough to say they are not crucified. A great lesson given to those obsessed with perfection, and those scrupulous people who split hairs over their shortcomings, and who forget that, in the last day, according to the word of Saint John of the Cross, it is on love that they will be judged." Though Mauriac tends toward the polemical and to judge Greene's fiction in light of his own intentions as a Catholic writer, he nonetheless, as I will show shortly, realizes that in The Power and the Glory a radical Christian love takes precedence over the temporal and institutional aspects of the Church.

Donald P. Costello reports that the Catholic press was almost universally favorable in its reaction to The Power and the Glory. "Yet if we are to rate The Power and the Glory as the favorite of the Catholic press it is more from what was not said about it than from what was actually stated. The Power and the Glory escaped the

raging controversy that swirled around both The Heart of the Matter and The End of the Affair, a controversy that had little or nothing to do with purely literary considerations."[28] For most The Power and the Glory was the author's last fling at orthodoxy before he went astray.

Structurally and thematically the novel is one of Greene's most accomplished. In Brighton Rock he juxtaposes the circuitous mental and sentimental routes of Pinkie and Ida as the Boy sets out to murder the world. In the later novel he accomplishes the same thing by juxtaposing the plight of the whisky-priest with a number of other characters who populate this fallen world. Before we know very much about the priest we are treated to the parallel stories of Mr. Tench, a dentist, who is kept in the buzzard-infected Mexican sun by the continued devaluation of his money, of Padre Jose, a fat old priest who married to save his life and who now feels he lived on an "abandoned star," of Captain Fellows, a Conradian skipper who is lost on land, of Juan, who represents the pious Catholic willing himself to martyrdom (his story is being read to the children at the Academia Comercial), of the lieutenant who strives to murder his childhood, the Church and anyone who ascribes to the falsity of a loving God.

Greene, one must argue, has given a convincing voice to the opposition. As is true of Lowry's Under the Volcano the world conspires in both atmosphere and design, and this can be seen in the very first paragraph of the novel.

> Mr. Tench went out to look for his ether cylinder: out into the blazing Mexican sun and the bleaching

> dust. A few buzzards looked down from the roof with shabby indifference: he wasn't carrion yet. A faint feeling of rebellion stirred in Mr. Tench's heart, and he wrenched up a piece of the road with splintering finger-nails and tossed it feebly up at them. One of them rose and flapped across town: over the tiny plaza, over the bust of an ex-president, ex-general, ex-human being, over the two stalls which sold mineral water, toward the river and the sea. It wouldn't find anything there: the shark looked after the carrion on that side.[29]

This is a dying world that confines man and frustrates any attempts at escape. It is a place devoid of love, where the only reality is time's passage. Mr. Tench is psychologically closeted with the buzzards and sharks. His is a geography that feeds on itself.

I think it is important to note that Greene does not polemically argue the quality of his own metaphors and dramatize a cause and effect relationship in The Power and the Glory between a sinful world and the absence of God in any orthodox sense. All major characters in the novel are estranged from themselves, from each other as well as from God. The structural counterpoints and spatialized arguments form the psychological significance of the private worlds of the participants. The political theme centering on the new, atheistic, destructive regime represented by the lieutenant provides a public dimension and philosophical rationale for the interior struggles of the major characters. In each case love has failed in some way. Tench "couldn't remember his wife clearly--only the hats she wore." As occurs frequently in Greene, the death of a child is a signal for the parents to assume a suicidal and destructive contract. "There had been one letter written by each of them since the little

boy died," the dentist recalls. On the other hand, as the novel closes, Fellows and his wife, stung with grief over the loss of their daughter Cora, witness the intervention of the absurd and at the beginning of wisdom realize all they have is each other. These extremes provide a thematic outline of the action proper. In the absurd world where the historical God is largely absent and the basis for institutional power is a destructive cynicism, little remains except personal belief in possible love, and if God is to be admitted, it must be on those terms.

Greene, it has been suggested, gives substantial play to what he regards as the opposition, embodied in the lieutenant. R. W. B. Lewis, describing the novel as "a potent allegory of one of the major intellectual debates of our time," feels Greene has been fairer to the antagonist of his novel than Camus is in The Plague. "Camus," Lewis remarks, "contrasts Paneloux, and his helpless appeal to divine irrationality, with the rational and dignified Rieux and Tarrou; while Greene joins the upright police officer in a contest with the wavering and incompetent whisky-priest."[30] When the work is judged primarily in a political sense, the policeman not only seems attractive; he also seems right. Somewhat like Pinkie, the lieutenant desires to escape the religion of his childhood. When he thought of the priest he must capture, something moved in him that was close to horror. "He remembered the smell of incense in the churches of his boyhood, the candles and the laciness and the self-esteem, the immense demands made from the altar steps by men who didn't know the

meaning of sacrifice. The old peasants knelt there before the holy images with their arms held out in the attitude of the cross: tired by the long day's labour in the plantations, they squeezed out a further mortification."[31] The officer is a Marxist revisionist of sorts. He is also an empiricist. Given the evidence of his boyhood and the state of the Mexican church, he completely believes that religion is inimical to the people. His wish is that one day the people would forget there was once a church there. While he shows his Colt No. 5 to eager children, he senses that it was for them he was fighting. "They deserved nothing less than the truth--a vacant universe and a cooling world, the right to be happy in any way they chose. He was quite prepared to make a massacre for their sakes--first the Church and then the foreigner and then the politician--even his own chief would one day have to go. He wanted to begin the world again with them, in a desert."[32]

When the priest leaves jail the policeman gives him five pesos. The priest responds: "You're a good man." He is a good man. He attempts to kill a false god and a destructive Christianity, but like so many of his revolutionary brethren, in attempting to rid the world of ideologies and abstract forms, he unintentionally rids it of any semblance of love. The gun-symbolism is probably unfortunate since the weapon implies the officer is a violent man. He is not, even though he has killed a number of hostages in trying to capture the renegade priest. The primary difference between the priest and lieutenant is that through suffering the former learns love and

the latter hate. And love is Greene's answer to alienation.

Ziolkowski's Fictional Transfigurations of Jesus establishes the Christological emphasis of the novel, which need not be gone into here in any detail. Suffice it to say that specific New Testament parallels (Judas, Gethsemane, the temptation, Calvary, etc.) while employed ironically (to show how far man really is from that sacred ground) serve a serious purpose. Actually no fictional transfiguration of this kind can be more than a puny re-enactment of the original. The important thing is that, while the priest might believe in the efficacy of the Passion, he knows full well that his passion does not deserve an audience.

From a psychological point of view The Power and the Glory represents the priest's renunciation of the temporal church and his gradual recognition that he has cut himself off from man and then God, not by his more sensational and extravagant crimes such as fornication, drunkenness, and the like but hypocrisy, pride, falsity, and lies which in the end are the only sins. The priest's "power" is not, as many have said, his strenuous efforts, which excuse an occasional transgression, to deliver the word of God to primitive believers in a society that conspires against any form of religion. I contend that his priestly duties are not as significant as is usually believed. He cannot join God until he joins man, and this is the substance of the novel.

Like the protagonist of Invisible Man the priest's quest takes him away from vestiges of his past. The Invisible Man loses or

relinquishes aspects of a false, imposed self: Greene's picaro gives up under pressure vestiges of his ministry that he has ill-presented. His life is marked by a series of surrenders: "feast-days and fast-days and days of abstinence had been the first to go: then he had ceased to trouble more than occasionally about his breviary--and finally he had left it behind altogether at the port in one of his periodic attempts at escape."[33] Still, he fights for the opportunity to say Mass. Yet his five years' wandering has left him with little regard or understanding of the abstract principles of the Church. On his return to the village where he fathered Brigida, he realizes that his mind is full of simplified mythology: "Michael dressed in armour slew a dragon, and the angels fell through space like comets with beautiful streaming hair because they were jealous, so one of the Fathers had said, of what God intended for men." Under threat of arrest he says Mass for the villagers, but once again the merit of his priestly teachings is in doubt. Pride-fully, he feels he can at last speak of suffering without hypocrisy. His sermon is an admonition for the people to "suffer more and more and more," that is, suffer in his image. By this point it becomes more apparent that the priest as a priest is not entirely reliable. While the police close in around the town and as he continues to admonish his audience to accept all the pain the authorities provide, "literary phrases from what seemed now to be another life altogether --the strict quiet life of the seminary--became confused on his tongue: the names of precious stones: Jerusalem the golden." The

priest, at least in his understanding of religious matters, is reverting to a sentimental Christianity which is symbolized, structurally, as a play-within-a-play, by the story of pious Juan the Mexican martyr.

Greene repeatedly furnishes thematic evidence and motifs to remind the reader that the priest's falsity to his fellow man has greater consequences, within the context of the novel, than his falsity to God. The emphasis is on the priest's humanity. R. W. B. Lewis thinks that it is the laughter, self-mockery, and sense of humor of the priest that make him so different from Greene's other protagonists. "It is the laughter, almost more than anything else, that distinguishes The Power and the Glory: laughter based on the recognition of God's image in man, evoked by the preposterous incongruity of it and yet leading naturally to a warmth of fellow-feeling."[31] In addition, the priest's giggles and humor remind him as well as us that there is something of the actor in him. When he safely crosses the border and is befriended by Lehr, a plantation owner, he thought: "What a play-actor I am. I have no business here, among good people."

Similarly, so we do not construe his actions as a herculean effort in the service of Christ, we need to explore his own interpretation of his motivation. Considering that he has journeyed for five years evading the police and delivering the sacraments to the poor, on the surface the priest's activities appear laudatory, despite an occasional slip. Many characters in the novel believe this. He, however, is more honest with himself. During his frantic efforts

at escape he has confronted the mestizo, his eventual betrayer, and satisfying the formal requirements of Christian love, he offers the man his shirt to help against the cold. And he thinks of the reasons for his behavior: "This was pride, devilish pride, lying here offering his shirt to the man who wanted to betray him. Even his attempts at escape had been half-hearted because of his pride--the sin by which the angels fell. When he was the only priest left in the state his pride had been all the greater; he thought himself the devil of a fellow carrying God around at the risk of his life; one day there would be a reward."[35]

The preceding quote marks the beginning of the priest's slow analysis of his own motives. How closely he associates his fate and psychology with man rather than God is shown when he is captured with illegal brandy and thrown into prison. What he encounters is a genuine microcosm of the world of the state: the filth, the despair, the piety, the attempts at love are all overwhelmingly present. The Power and the Glory is the priest's confession of his sins against man. Earlier he has confessed privately to the mestizo that he is a priest; in prison he confesses publicly. Now his strangely inverted religious posture finds dramatic expression. A pious woman who is in jail for possessing "good books" is a visible reminder of his latent pride. Her tirade at two people copulating in the corner prompts the priest to express his belief that what they were doing was beautiful. Though the woman thinks the visible fornication is a mortal sin, the priest does not chastise: he laughs and knows now

that it is impossible to hate her. His is a completely empathetic identity with those in the squalor of the cell. He can understand nothing of God's mercy, but he is aware of his betrayal of his fellow man. From a position of orthodox Catholicism this should be regarded a heresy. Between the extremes of transcendence and the idea of a repressive Christianity that denies the body, death, and time, stands a truly remarkable statement. The Christian mystery that most intrigued the priest concerns the difference between mortal and venial sins: "it sometimes seemed to him that venial sins--impatience, an unimportant lie, pride, a neglected opportunity --cut off from grace more completely than the worst sins of all. Then, in his innocence, he had felt no love for anyone: now in his corruption he had learnt ..." Here Greene describes sin, in an existential sense, as a type of alienation. And clearly the author's point is that resolution of the causes of man's alienation and estrangement from man must take precedence over commitment to abstract concepts of faith. Ironically, religion as it is presented in the novel, along with the emotionless politics of the lieutenant, is an agent of estrangement and at the same time occupies a position of estrangement. The whisky-priest, previously acting in "bad faith," used the temporal Church to feed his ambition, vanity, and pride. When the persecution of the Church compelled him to relinquish the outward trappings of his religion and to undergo a Christ-like persecution within the limit-situations of man, he realized that he was an instrument of alienation. In recognizing his own hypocrisy, he

recognizes those attributes that the police officer is warring against.

The concrete fact that triggers the religious and psychological developments is the priest's daughter Brigida. She is the physical instrument that allows the priest to work from a basis of love rather than pride, in other words, in "good faith." His act of fornication puts him in touch with man. His genuine love for the daughter prompts him to offer up his damnation if the child of his sin could be saved. The night before his execution he prays, "'O God, help her. Damn me, I deserve it, but let her live for ever.' This was the love he should have felt for every soul in the world: all the fear and the wish to save concentrated unjustly on the one child."[36] The man's possible damnation is a theological question. But judging from the internal developments of the novel he has saved himself by his actions within time. After crossing the border to safety he noticed that his old parish voice was coming back and recognized the full extent of his self-deception and deception of God. When he risks his life by returning to a dangerous area to give extreme unction to a wounded American criminal, there is no trace of pride. He has come to learn the human significance of the phrase, "God is love." His theological arguments during his final interview with the lieutenant are no better or more convincing than they were before. But it is no longer a theological doctrine; rather, an existential reality. He is still fallible, as must be the case: he has just learned to love and can only manage to love

his daughter. No hint of abstraction is evident.

Possibly what is involved here is what Lynch described in Christ and Apollo as that "imperceptible movement" when time and eternity intersect. Mauriac's dramatization of the Lacordairean doctrine of "one love" consistently found resolution in a reluctant yet implied transcendence. This difference marks the superiority of Greene's handling of the theme. So if this is Catholic literature it is a radically different kind. The central Christian mystery is man. The abstraction "God is spiritual love" cannot be understood without reference to the beautiful squalor in the jail cell, which means loving man in his baseness, hate, and triumph. I believe Mauriac is right in his assumption that Greene presents the theme of love as the answer to alienation; not simply the love of God, but the love of man.

The Heart of the Matter and The End of the Affair: For the Love of God

The Heart of the Matter and The End of the Affair, written within approximately four years of each other, show an appreciable development in Greene's continued efforts to satisfy the aesthetic demands of his expansive religious vision. For all practical purposes, he has left the outsider, the criminal (though he will get back to both of these on another plane in A Burnt-Out Case). The frantic, often inverted search for Christ is no longer present, nor is the dramatic inversion of Christian values. He has moved from

a radical Christian or post-Christian view of the world to a dramatization of the loveless, estranged world within society. Thus the religious question becomes internalized. Though these novels represent a more philosophical treatment of previous religious themes, they are not merely testimonies to good men and women falling far short of the demands of orthodox teachings, though this has often been the estimate, particularly in the Catholic press. On the contrary, both novels are about man's war with God. Like the Misfit of Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," Scobie and Bendrix admit with varying degrees of blasphemy that "Jesus thown everything off balance." Fictionally, the wonder of God entering time becomes the conspiracy of the Incarnation. God has conspired to save man whether he likes it or not. This is the cry of the protagonists of The Heart of the Matter and The End of the Affair. Man in his thanklessness conspires to kill God all over again. Yet, as in other instances discussed, I do not think this should be considered a simple heresy. Man does not only say he does not believe; he claims he does not want God and to prove the assertion, particularly in Scobie's case, he will try to usurp the role of God in time, not in any obvious Faustian sense but as a way of re-asserting his mankindhood. Scobie's "incarnational" awareness prompts psychological reminiscences that have been nurtured by a fossil Catholicism. And in his reduced state of corrupt love and narcissism he repudiates the possibility of a suffering God. Likewise Bendrix, the narrator-novelist of The End of the Affair, buffeted by the antagonist-God,

desperately fights to avoid the supernatural. Thus in both works God is pictured as the Master Instigator who ironically turns man back on himself to practice his narcissistic love which represents a grotesque perversion of the Lacordairean doctrine of "one love." The hierarchy of love becomes undone. What is left but pity, cruelty and pain--all parodies of Christian love. Man is a parody of God's best intentions. In Camus' The Plague Dr. Rieux cannot believe in God while children suffer; in The Heart of the Matter Scobie takes Rieux's argument to its logical conclusion. He taunts God with the evidence of his own suffering. He will suffer the death of all children. Scobie will lie and die for innocence. The historicity of the crucifixion recurs eternally and loses its meaning; God is too available. True arrogance and criminality should be an event re-enacted. So Scobie will by-pass Christ and imitate the Father. This is his rebellion against the Father, his usurpation of history.

With the publication of The Heart of the Matter the Catholic critics tended to place themselves on either side of Greene's theological thriller. Some saw it as an example of faulty theology; others praised the author's dramatization of the psychology of the sinner. Evelyn Waugh was in the forefront of the attack on Greene's religion in his famous review published in England by the Tablet and in America by The Commonweal:

> We are told that he [Scobie] is actuated throughout by the love of God. A love, it is true that falls short of trust, but a love, we must suppose, which

> sanctifies his sins. That is the heart of the matter. Is such a sacrifice feasible? To me the idea is totally unintelligible, but it is not unfamiliar. Did the Quietists not speak in something like these terms? ... To me the idea of willing my own damnation for the love of God is either a very loose poetical expression or a mad blasphemy, for the God who accepted that sacrifice could be neither just nor lovable.[37]

Waugh provides the elements of the critical equation: The Heart of the Matter represents loose poetry or blasphemy, and this strikes me as the problem with much conventional criticism of Greene. It does not take into consideration to what extent the metaphorical design modifies the general religious tone. Scobie's theology is a product of his mind, childhood, and total psychology, not formal scholasticism.

In a larger critical context there is little real agreement or understanding of the character Scobie or of the nature of the religious themes, other than the customary pronouncement that the novel shows the complex relationship between pity and love. As Francis Kunkel acknowledges in The Labyrinthine Ways of Graham Greene, "No character of Greene's has received such extremes of interpretation as Scobie. In judgments which mock consistency we hear him called a saint or murderer, a self-sacrificing Catholic and a bad Catholic--in fact almost any pair of contraries that can be imagined."[38]

For the sake of my study I will not be so much interested in the character of Scobie or in the question of whether he is saved or damned, though that will be considered, as in the relationship

between the psychology and theology of love and in important critical questions raised by Kunkle and C. C. O'Brien as to whether the theological and emotional levels are properly fused.

Though the intoxicating physical atmosphere of Brighton Rock and The Power and the Glory are gone, there is a strangeness, an obliqueness to The Heart of the Matter that never seems to be fully explained. The African setting has bothered some commentators who feel that the religious drama might as well take place in Fleet Street since the setting appears to make little difference. Early in the novel Scobie asks himself, Why do I love this place so much? "Is it because here human nature hasn't had time to disguise itself?" "Here," he adds, "you could love human beings nearly as God loved them. You didn't love a pose, a pretty dress, a sentiment artfully assumed. He felt a sudden affection for Yusef (the Syrian merchant)." Apparently Scobie loves the decay of the place, the lack of disguise (though everyone is wearing a disguise of some sort, even he). He loves the darkness, the dark men; he has a patently maternal affection for the area, which, borrowing a phrase from Welty, both defines and confines. It is the prison of the place that Scobie is in love with and where he may presumptuously, and narcissistically, love nearly the way God does. This is his province, his parish; he will suffer for his parishoners. Strangely, the only time he ever senses genuine peace is when he is closeted with Ali, his boy, or Yusef. Both represent Leslie Fiedler's dark men of the forest, both comfort him with a kind of maternal affection.

From some of the hints in the work we can assume that his wife Louise is the disruptor of his life with Ali. His boy had been with him one year longer than his wife. Ali provides more comfort and consolation than Scobie's wife or mistress Helen. When Scobie injures his hand on a door, "He held his hand out over the wash-basin, while Ali poured the water over the wound. The boy made gentle chuckling sounds of commiseration: his hands were as gentle as a girl's."[39] Later, when Ali accompanies him to the interior to investigate the suicide-death of Pemberton, their movement into the forest is a journey back into time, reminiscent of the old days. "He could see in the driver's mirror Ali nodding and beaming. It seemed to him that this was all he needed of love or friendship. He could be happy with no more in the world than this--the grinding van, the hot tea against his lips, the heavy damp weight of the forest, even the aching head, the loneliness."[40] After he sends Louise to South Africa for a holiday, he again senses a quality of silence, security, and serenity with only Ali present. Before she left, his wife asked him if he loved anyone except himself; he replies with mock-seriousness, "Ali." Scobie reaffirms his love for his boy after he has been murdered. So his love for Ali can be considered a natural, though faintly homosexual, affection removed from responsibility. He appears to be afraid to love women because his interest soon degenerates into pity. Maternal men are his protection: child-like women are his cross.

Scobie demonstrates an extreme sensitivity to both children

and women. Marcel More, Greene's distinguished French critic, thinks Scobie suffers from neurasthenia, an exaggerated sensibility.[41] The mother in Scobie combined with his narcissism will make him lord over all the ugly and grotesque in his West African paradise. It is the death of his own child Catherine, however, that is the thematic center of the work and around this fact cluster the religious and psychological concerns. Three years previous the girl died and the father tersely recorded the event in a diary. For some particular reason, and one which will become clearer as the novel develops, he feels disproportionately guilty for the death of the child. Though he would not have cherished the experience, he believes he should have been at her bedside to share in the suffering. Rather than help his wife with the pain of her loss, Scobie unnecessarily punishes himself for his own failings. But this is motivated by narcissism and not love. He wants desperately to suffer for all. Deprived of this fulfillment he begins to see or has seen for some time all events in his life in light of this significant occurrence. The references to Hotspur and Coriolanus in the text imply that he is both a boy of tears and an actor. It is a pure act of troubled egotism and misplaced guilt that forces him to respond this way. He internalizes the doctrine of the Incarnation. He will suffer for women and children and in turn make people suffer on the egotistical cross of self-pity that he has constructed.

The deaths of Pemberton and the girl in the lifeboat spark the latent pity in Scobie. When he turned down the sheet to examine

Pemberton, "he had the impression that he was looking at a child in a night-shirt quietly asleep: the pimples were the pimples of puberty ... 'Poor child' he said aloud."[42] Catherine and Pemberton merge. Scobie will imitate the suicide of Pemberton to atone for the death of his daughter. His guilt is conceivably prompted by the joy he felt at his wife's absence. When the child died he was closeted with Ali.

On a superficial level this is Christian charity, but since the outcome of Scobie's journey into the forest with Ali triggers sensations of his own death, we cannot separate his Christ and his cross. As soon as he attempts to take the suffering of others on his shoulders, his desire becomes a death-wish.

The death of the child who spent forty days in the lifeboat is more difficult for him to accept and provokes memories of his daughter. Looking at the child "he saw a white communion veil over her head: it was a trick of the light on the pillow and a trick of his own mind. He put his head in his hands and wouldn't look. He had been in Africa when his own child died. He had always thanked God that he had missed that." Contemplating the agony that parents must experience since they perpetually watched their children die, he invokes the doctrine of substitution and prayed: "Father, look after her. Give her peace. ... Take away my peace for ever, but give her peace." The identification is complete when the dying child addresses him as "Father."

Psychologically the girl represents his dead daughter. He

offers atonement in absentia. Though there are reasons for this "offering," Scobie appears to be too quick to sacrifice and without sufficient cause. The girl who is near death, at age six, is not in danger of damnation, at least from a Catholic perspective, and that is what Scobie is presumably operating from. No, his exchange is a bogus one born out of guilt and narcissism. He is not upset merely about the girl or daughter; like Quentin Compson he is worried about any child getting older. He might as well pray for time to stop.

A direct thematic relationship exists between the death of the children as they work on his psychology and his love for Louise and mistress Helen. Scobie's fifteen years in Africa have helped the deterioration of his psyche. Rather than leave his wife, whom he obviously does not love, he collects other women so he can perpetually, masochistically writhe on the maternal cross. Conor Cruise O'Brien writes that in a theological sense the story of Scobie is a record of his attempts to imitate Christ. "Scobie is a crucified man: he sees himself, as he saw Pemberton, as Christ on the cross. And the cross for him is female and sentient--Louise and Helen--and we have the equilibrium of pain inflicted and endured, the longing for death."[43] His wife and mistress must become his cross, turn into children, innocence. He inflicts pain by feigning love (he will even summon theological arguments for his position) and endures pain by having this fact made public.

From the first few pages of the novel the reader realizes that

Scobie's love for his wife is a veiled form of narcissism and masochism: "The less he needed Louise the more conscious he became of his responsibility for her happiness." He demonstrates a curiously inverted sense of love and Christian values. It is as if he needs someone beaten by experience so he can feed off a person's unattractiveness. Watching his wife through a muslin net he thought, "These were the times of ugliness when he loved her, when pity and responsibility reached the intensity of a passion."

He both invents and feeds on her inadequacies and finds the rationale for his own behavior in the failure of God's love and not in his own perverse psychology. In fact, he cannot tolerate a sign of strength or independence in women. As he contemplates suicide and Louise in the same breath he silently pleads, "Let me pity you again, be disappointed, unattractive, be a failure so I can love you once more without this gap between us." Thus he requires a woman to be servile, dependent. Accordingly, because of his need to suffer at the hands of a woman, he makes his wife miserably dependent, for this is the only way he can love. Since he is guilty, nailed to the cross of his daughter and his own general infancy, he sees all things "childishly," and most of all, he loves like a child, narcissistically. In his dismal paradise he will not only stop suffering, he will stop time, until he mounts his own cross to stop the world forever.

Scobie's adulterous affair with Helen Rolt while Louise is away is childish from the start. When he meets her after a ship-

wreck, he immediately sees her as a child: "Her arms as thin as a child's lay outside the blankets." Though this is Greene's authorial description, it is soon clear that the protagonist wants her as a child; thus he brings her stamps, as if she were his daughter. "How could a child like that," he asks himself, "act the part of a woman whose husband had been drowned more or less before her eyes."[44] But she does mature, become a woman no less than his wife before his eyes. She recognizes that he is tied to her out of a destructive pity, that he refuses, in spite of his claims, to accept responsibility. She does not want him to treat her as a child. "'I don't want your pity,' she cried furiously, 'But it was not a question of whether she wanted it--she had it. Pity smouldered like decay at his heart.'"[45] Appropriately, he accepts her scorn as he would "penance." The Hotspur in him prompts him to write a note claiming he loved Helen more than anything, more than God. So finally he gets the supernatural into the picture. He will do anything to keep her where she is, not because he is reluctant to hurt her but because he has egotistically accepted suffering as his burden. He needs it. He is putting both women aboard his cross to satisfy his guilt and narcissism. The evidence of this is that Helen, with mature and sophisticated reasoning, hands him the peace he claims he is dearly seeking. Scobie has raised the matter of his religion as the reason he cannot leave his wife and his love as the reason he cannot leave Helen. Now his psychological state has a theological dimension. The question Helen raises, as must the reader, is whether Scobie is being honest about his Catholicism or is

whether he manufactures a ruse to perpetuate his colossal superiority, to rationalize his prolonged immaturity?

Scobie's Catholicism is a curious quality. We know that he became a Catholic to marry Louise, which is conceivably the advent of his forced anguish. Nonetheless, we do not hear a great deal about his beliefs until he uses them as a kind of untouchable antagonist in his private drama of suffering. While his wife is away and before he meets Helen, he goes to confession and admits to the priest that his faith is lagging. Ordinarily in a religious novel we would look for the subsequent incidents to determine the true quality of Scobie's faith. I am not sure that the development of the novel unfolds in such a manner. One senses that the protagonist, by placing all participants in his personal drama, is playing with his own damnation so he may continue to suffer and remain God-like. When he puts the terms of the psychic equation to Helen (his wife wants him to receive communion; therefore, his blasphemy will be proof that he is placing the love of his mistress above all else), she replies that she supposes his dilemma real. But then she asks, "Or is it just a trick? I didn't hear so much about God when we began, did I? You aren't turning pious on me to give you an excuse."[46] Of course Scobie denies these possibilities though it might be well to ask with Helen if this is not really the case. She is perfectly correct in her assumptions: not much is heard from him about God until the affair begins. Since there is overwhelming evidence that Scobie, with or without the help of Helen, can end the adultery, I think it is

reasonable to assume that he consciously stays in the state of tension to keep his suffering in the forefront, to maintain his hold on women, to keep in touch with his child, to languish maternally, to experience his cross. The point is that he needs to suffer more than he needs to make either Helen or Louise happy. And at the appropriate time he reinvests the Christian mythology, the sacramental and sacrificial habit of Catholicism, with renewed meaning.

It is my understanding of The Heart of the Matter that Scobie uses religion to heighten his masochism, to prepare for the climbing of his suicidal cross. This is religion as a device. At any time he can remove himself from the problem. This is the key consideration and possibly satisfies some of the objections of Kunkle and C. C. O'Brien, who feel there is something deficient about the religious element in the novel. It is deficient, not in any thematic or structural way, but in the way Scobie uses it. During a dialogue with God (his alter-ego, a projection of his fantasy?) Scobie hears:

> I am not Thou but simply you, when you speak to me; I am humble as any other beggar. Can't you trust me as you'd trust a faithful dog? I have been faithful to you for two thousand years. All you have to do now is ring a bell, go into a box, confess ... the repentance is already there, straining at your heart. It is not repentance you lack, just a few simple actions: to go up to the Nissen hut and say goodbye but without lies any more. Go to your house and say goodbye to your wife and live with your mistress. If you live you will come back to me sooner or later. One of them will suffer, but can't you trust me to see that the suffering isn't too great?[47]

Whoever is speaking, the above quote presents the essence of Scobie's problem. He assumes a judgment beyond God. Presumptuously he admits,

"I am the Cross." "He had never known ... so clearly the weakness of God." For him God is a dismal failure.

Though he views the work from a heretical and not a psychological perspective, David H. Hesla provides some useful remarks. "Scobie," Hesla maintains, "must impose his own will on history and make it produce the happiness which, if it were left to God, might not eventuate. The future does not belong to God; it is not the repository of the grace of God understood as 'possibility in spite of.' The future belongs to Scobie, and by his suicide he intends to extort from history the possibility of peace and happiness which in itself it does not contain. This means, however, that Scobie's suicide is not in fact an imitation of Christ: it is an imitation of God, for it is the usurping of God's reign over history."[48]

My primary objection to Hesla's very fine comment is that I do not think that Scobie imitates God to produce the happiness that might not eventuate if left to God. He is surely producing very little happiness under the circumstances. Guilt, narcissism, and a desire to suffer are the primary motivating forces in Scobie. Though he consciously and somewhat superficiously desires to bring happiness to others, his subconscious desire to suffer is a far stronger force. And this conscious intention is often a convenient way to rationalize subconscious desires.

At the risk of confusing Scobie with the author Greene I must say that the protagonist brings God into the conflict or He surfaces through the organic consciousness of Scobie because the man must live

in a state of tension. The loving Presence, when He becomes internalized by Scobie's perverse psychology, soon becomes the enemy God.

Greene in The Heart of the Matter, The End of the Affair, and Brighton Rock tends to have a priest-spokesman enter, though not intrusively, at the conclusion of the narrative to speculate on the preceding events and supply a suitable philosophical generalization. When Scobie's wife assumes the role of the "good" Catholic commenting on her husband's failings, Father Rank upbraids the woman: "For goodness sake, Mrs. Scobie, don't imagine you--or I--know a thing about God's mercy" and when she begins to quote the Church's teachings, he again reprimands her: "I know the Church says. The Church knows all the rules. But it doesn't know what goes on in a single human heart." This assumes that the mysterious nature of the human heart is known only to a merciful God. Rank's surmise that Scobie "really loved God" is no consolation whatsoever. I think I have shown that Scobie did not love God. For the complex of reasons given I believe Scobie, tied to the female cross, cultivated suffering so he could love the forlorn, the rejected nearly with the thoroughness of God. He has taken theology into his veins. His troubled psychology reinterprets Catholic doctrine according to his deepest needs. He conjures up God so he can humiliate Him all over again. Greene has gone about as far as he can go with the theme of God-as-antagonist-as-Enemy. A few years later in The End of the Affair he fittingly gives God back his traditional omnipotent guise.

In The Heart of the Matter God is called on by Scobie as reluctant witness to his self-love and degradation. As long as God is in man's image (Scobie nicely reverses the mystery), then He will necessarily be a failure. The End of the Affair is an example of Greene taking, with mixed results, this fictional technique one step further. A God triggered by the mind (orthodox or otherwise) is a splendid dramatic device. But a Jungian Wise Old Man who is also full-time Novelist, Creator, and Lover is another thing entirely. God is the omniscient artist with no respect for time, causality, or earthly love. Now it stands to reason that the author is stacking the fictional deck against himself. He holds no high cards. But Greene's God is far different from Mauriac's. In his discussion of The End of the Night Sartre jubilantly concluded that neither God nor Mauriac was an artist. That Greene was conscious of this charge has already been acknowledged. While The End of the Affair marks a natural growth in Greene's artistic techniques, it also appears to mark his efforts to accomplish what Mauriac had been unable to do but to avoid the charge of authorial meddling. His solution was to structure his novel on a confrontation between the Sartre-like novelist and the invisible but active God. In ways Sartre would probably never admit, the marriage is not altogether unhappy. Whether God is not doing his job or Bendrix has too much of the French critic in him, it is hard to say; nonetheless, the novel is not as disastrous as Sartre had "predicted."

In spite of all the pesky problems with miracles and the like

Frank Kermode calls it Greene's masterpiece, his fullest and most completely realized book. Kermode's accolade appears to rest largely on the character of the narrator-novelist, Bendrix, the natural man who sees God as unscrupulous rival, the corruptor of human happiness, the spoiler of the egg.[49] God's presence is disguised as love, which is the uninvited enemy. Though Kermode's remark seems to be more of a feeling than a thorough critical consideration, I believe there is some merit in what he says. I also think it is fair to say that in this novel Greene risked and failed the most. He was out of his league before he started. Yet he does give a convincing account of the struggle between the aesthetic and religious mind.

Possibly by 1952, having approximately thirty years of writing under his belt, Greene was more sure of himself so that without leaving the concrete, he was confident enough to tackle the philosophical aspects of belief in an enemy God who disrupts time. From Brighton Rock, where he dealt with the negative aspects of the entrenched Catholic psychology he moved to a point where he was ready to deal with some of the ontological considerations of Catholic or Christian belief. For these reasons it can be said that Greene risked more than both Mauriac and O'Connor.

The artist in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been given a privileged place in literature because of the profound interests in questions of subjectivism and personal perception. Yet in an age when absolutes are held in such distrust it is uncommon for an author to show a dialectical working out of the religious

and aesthetic views. Joyce, as mentioned previously, is probably one of the few writers of the century to achieve this mainly because he found his aesthetic in religious doctrine itself. Stephen must first go through hell to be rescued by Aquinian doctrine. Greene, to be sure, does not have such a firm sense of Christian aesthetic, so he decided on a different method. His way was to bring God wholesale into the fictional dialogue: God as interlocutor.

The End of the Affair, some claim, represents the end of the Catholic cycle. While this is not completely true it does imply that Greene moves close to a position where he acknowledges the possibility of aesthetic truth being inferior to religious truth; it is as if he were saying farewell to his vocation. The novel is narrated by Bendrix, a working novelist, who attempts, as befits his profession, to impose a structure on events but is continually thwarted by the precarious intervention of the miraculous. This prompts Kermode to write that "Bendrix's book is plotted by God, a testimony to His structural powers."[50] This is only partly true, even though one fancies at the conclusion that the exhausted narrator is ready to surrender to the machine god. Bendrix does fight to maintain control of his fictional and personal structure, to reinterpret the melodramatic miracles attributed to his dead mistress Sarah through the eyes of the author, who believes in psychological realism. This is his fight. But as the novel develops and as Bendrix begins to change his aesthetic, the strange events fit

more convincingly into his overall design. He retains partial control over his life and book.

The narrator's story is about love and hate. He is a probing, tyrannical artist in the Hawthornean sense. He is also an egotistical lover who is highly conscious of time and who knows the only way to avoid annihilation of personality is to fix oneself in the flux and the flow. So for a number of years he gets his very existence from his adulterous love affair with Sarah and from his demonic imagination. No love affair can interfere with his creative functions until he suspects his mistress of loving someone else. And here begins his torturous journey toward a confrontation with a supernatural goodness in a realm where his "art for art's sake" aesthetic is ineffective.

Bendrix's philosophy of art comes under attack when Sarah, with whom he has enjoyed a five year adulterous relationship, offers her heart and soul to an unknown and hardly contemplated God if He will let Bendrix survive a war-time bomb attack. In her diary she recounts the fabulous incident:

> I knelt down on the floor; I was mad to do such a thing; I never even had to do it as a child--my parents never believed in prayer, any more than I do. I haven't any idea what to say. Maurice was dead. Extinct. There was such a thing as a soul. Even the half-happiness I gave him was drained out of him like blood. He would never have a chance to be happy again--with anybody, I thought; someone else could have loved him and made him happier than I could, but now he won't have that chance. I knelt and put my head on the bed and wished I could believe. Dear God, I said--why dear, why dear?--make me

> believe, I can't believe. Make me. I said, I'm a bitch and a fake and I hate myself. ... So I said, I love him and I'll do anything if You'll make him alive. I said very slowly, I'll give him up forever, only let him be alive with a chance.[51]

Bendrix, however, lives. Convinced that her prayer had been answered, Sarah struggles to love someone she cannot see and to avoid her lover, whom she can.

According to Francis Kunkle, "As soon as Greene introduces God as a character and solves human problems by miracles he doomed his achievement as pure literature, for the machinery from which the rescuing God emerges is less the novelist's than the theologian's."[52] It is not so much Sarah's diary the critic objects to--this device has been used convincingly by Bloy, Mauriac, and Bernanos--because in it she reveals the very human aspects of her efforts to keep her bargain with God and stay away from Bendrix; it is, rather, the miracles attributed to her after she dies. Yet on closer analysis we as outside critics don't have to raise the questions surrounding the incredulity of the miracles; they are raised aptly by Bendrix himself. In a way he assumes the credulous position of the reader who fights against the acceptance of any belief. Bendrix does all he can to stop the incipient canonization of his mistress. He falsely denies her becoming a Catholic before her death, thus, in a sense, refusing her a Catholic burial. He would make her a whore, to love the men she slept with, rather than give her memory over to God. He would do anything to prevent a God from robbing him of the memory of corrupt human love. Ironically, his meddling, artistic

temperament forces her to leave home and take refuge in a cold church where she catches a chill that precipitates her death. Bendrix, arrogant human that he is, learns to hate in order to spoil God's victory. On hearing the narrator rave and lie about his memory Father Compton remarks, "You're a good hater." And he is, because this is all he has left. His last frustrated rebuke to the enemy God is filled, as R. W. B. Lewis has suggested, with premonitions of leaping. "You're a devil, God, tempting us to leap. But I don't want your peace and I don't want Your love. I wanted something very simple and very easy: I wanted Sarah for a lifetime, and You took her away. With Your great schemes You ruin our happiness as a harvester ruins a mouse's nest. I hate You, God, I hate You as though You existed." Bendrix, by his own admission, is too tired and old to learn to love. He does, however, move in with Sarah's husband Henry and is able to care for him and possibly to love him in an unselfish way, something he has been unable to do before. The novel closes with the two of them on an evening walk. The narrator puts his "hand on Henry's arm and held it there; I had to be strong for both of us now."

The essence of The End of the Affair is revealed by Sartre's criticism of Mauriac's use of the omniscient point of view. He considered neither God nor Mauriac artists. Greene through his narrator Bendrix fights to save the integrity of the "I," to save a personal, subjective world from the encroachments of the divine author. And the "I's" do not have it. He does, however, restore Sarah as a literary creation and experience a new beginning of love. He has ceased

to believe in the strict autonomy of art and moves initially out of his egotism. Bendrix is not creating structures and may be living a lie according to his own standards, but he is more sensitive, less egotistical. Kierkegaard placed the ethical stage above the aesthetic. Irony is traditionally thought to be the link between these two planes. While we cannot claim Bendrix is able to look ironically at his fate, he does satisfy the requirements of the ethical man who begins to define himself in relation to, rather than in opposition to, his fellow man. Still, nothing can be said to make the disruption of an Intruder God any less painful. He conspires to allow Sarah to sex herself out, and for Bendrix to write himself out. Sportingly Greene has given God the stage to usurp which He does without too many structural deficiencies.

Conclusion

Throughout his career Greene has demonstrated the different way the supernatural can convincingly enter the world of fiction. The moment of grace, the most melodramatic and Catholic way to note the presence of the divine, is as problematic in the works of Greene as in the works of Mauriac, and, as we shall see, in the fiction of O'Connor. Customarily Mauriac's protagonists, after fighting the good fight, at the novel's conclusion generally move at great price toward God. Mauriac, through his use of diaries, witnesses, and reliable priests practically exhausted the ways in which the religious theme could be expressed. Greene's treatment of these matters

is less predictable than that of his French counterpart. In a way because the melodramatic is a substantial part of his novels and was long before he turned to overtly Catholic themes, Greene did not have to strain his fictional devices quite as much as Mauriac did.

For the most part Greene's religious themes are part of the texture of the piece. What this means concretely is that an orthodox religious element is usually transformed by the restless mind of the protagonists. Greene does not only borrow from the symbology of Catholicism: he places it in a position of estrangement where it has to battle with other "epistemologies" for recognition. This is a natural development. Religion, once a defense against alienation, because of its internal make-up, becomes an instrument of such a state. No better example could be found than The Power and the Glory.

Kenneth Burke and R. P. Blackmur in their respective ways and styles have discussed the important role of negation--parody and critique--in modern literature. What is this, C. C. O'Brien notes, if not the dialectical collaboration with the demonic. He adds, however, that most of the Catholic writers of the century have not explicitly contradicted the Maritain doctrine. Though I believe his Maria Cross is one of the most informative and suggestive accounts of modern Catholic fiction, in this matter I do not believe he is on solid ground, especially as this argument might be applied to The Power and the Glory. Greene negates and parodies the substance of Christianity called Catholicism. His dramatic conceptions

take him closer to the Christian existentialism of Barth and Kierkegaard than Catholic thinkers. Greene demonstrated that religious literature of our time must accept the form, the content, and the fate of the secular world.

From the early 1930's Greene showed an interest in the theme of love and its supernatural dimensions. While, as demonstrated in my discussion of The End of the Affair, his conception of love was similar to Mauriac's, he was not always comfortable with the body-soul dialectic and a strained movement toward God. Reversing the Frenchman's position, Greene gave the sensualist the dignity of genuine existence. What is most interesting about the whisky-priest is not his latent love of God but his budding love of man.

A more important theme is the precarious nature of love in any form. The Heart of the Matter is a fine example of this and can be thought of as a representative twentieth-century novel in its description of the relationship between pity, cruelty, and narcissism. Here God is a formidable antagonist in Scobie's drama. The result is personal and psychic deterioration. It is the final irony of Greene's religious vision that some of his characters, so trapped in a Catholic psychology, will fight God in any way they can. Because his fiction is closer to the tradition of the psychological novel than O'Connor's, the psychological price his protagonists pay seems appreciably greater. The dramatic result of the conspiracy of the Incarnation is that man, petty in his love and sinfulness, confronts a God whose promises have doomed him to endless frustration.

The last novel that Greene thought to be in any way representative of religious fiction was A Burnt-Out Case, which reasserts the existential plight of contemporary man who has passed beyond the Kierkegaardian stages of belief to a position which implies the necessity of making a new start, a new beginning in a world where God might well be absent. Since I intend to use the novel, and especially Greene's use of the sacred and the profane, as a transitional work which links him with O'Connor, I will say little at this time except that by now the author has run the gamut of religious themes. He has explored the psychological, aesthetic, and ontological areas of the Catholic faith and Catholic doctrine. In Brighton Rock Greene lays the groundwork for his religious development as he explores the repressive poles of a negative Catholicism. The violence of Brighton Rock is an instrument of death; in The Power and the Glory it is an act of love. Greene does not embrace man because he is sinful; he embraces man because he is man. Theology is submitted to strict scrutiny. All that remains is love which may become corrupt if man allows an Absolute Love to dictate an earthly narcissism.

Though Greene's examination of the theology and psychology of love stands as one of the author's major contributions to the religious novel, given his artistic inclinations it was natural he would move in the direction of the philosophical novel. The result is A Burnt-Out Case, a novel that exists beyond all customary ways of knowing. Query, the protagonist, does not learn to love or laugh

by his interest in religious, aesthetic, or ontological matters. He becomes anthropologically interested in the African interior where he joins hands with Deo Gratias, his boy, for a night in the bush. He is no St. Julian: he does not cover the leper with his body. He does touch him, which is something, when there is nothing else.

CHAPTER FOUR

Flannery O'Connor

Flannery O'Connor recalls that when she "first began to write, my own particular bete noire was that mythical entity, The School of Southern Degeneracy. Every time I heard about The School of Southern Degeneracy, I felt like Br'er Rabbit stuck on Tarbaby."[1] To the time of her death in 1964 she repeatedly spoke of her literary efforts in the colloquial style of Br'er Rabbit encountering the Talmadge ham; which really means that she never lost her crisp (and lean) sense of humor or irony, even when she had been given critical respectability and rescued from the tar-stained and well-traveled nicotine road of Erskine Caldwell. O'Connor, probably to a greater extent than Mauriac or Greene, is one of the few contemporary writers who was able to express a profoundly religious vision without giving lie to her artistic inclinations. Suddenly, Maritain's stipulations concerning altitude and collaboration with the demonic cease to hold the old significance because O'Connor not only articulated a radical Christian (and at times post-Christian) aesthetic but also because she refused to separate herself from her creations or the incredible burdens of violence and responsibility her characters carry. She is behind Tarwater of The Violent Bear It Away one-hundred percent and chooses to live or die with him. O'Connor, who according to John Hawkes and others gave the devil more than his due and herself acknowledged that he was a

primary motivation force in her fiction, undoubtedly possessed a demonic imagination. But, as she makes clear in The Violent Bear It Away, the devil can not (or should not) be explained psychologically; he is a real threat, an ambitious representative of the profane, secular world. Like Greene, who dared to bring God into the novel, O'Connor dared introduce his counterpart. Both writers understood the risk involved but were determined to give the opposition, whatever his shade, proper voice. Similarly, both authors, in entertaining the possibility of the death of God, came close to usurping his function in their fiction. Hazel Motes of Wise Blood, in a more convincing manner than Scobie, blasphemes the unpredictable God of his own intense psychology and in demanding a concrete manifestation of Christ's presence looks for and becomes the New Jesus. O'Connor, who avowedly "saw by the light of her Christian faith," dramatized the paradoxical nature of the presence of the divine and her metaphorical language is testimony to the tension that exists between the supernatural and the secular.

Elizabeth Bishop, writes Robert Giroux in his "Introduction" to the Complete Stories of Flannery O'Connor, remarked that the author's books "will live on and on in American literature. They are narrow, possibly, but they are clear, hard, vivid and full of bits of description, phrases, and an odd insight that contains more real poetry than a dozen books of poems."[2] I do not think Bishop's claim should be thought posthumous idolatry; a perusal of O'Connor's stories would substantiate the claim. As a poet she has gone to the

natural world for her symbols (sun, moon) and to the field of vision for her perspective (one might even say her aesthetic since vision is such a major motif in her stories). Like Teilhard De Chardin and Theodore Roethke she sees all matter as sacred. Consequently, there is transcendence at every turn, where metaphorical vision threatens to become anagogic. Because of this sense of poetry, it is difficult to fix her works within the confines of the sacred and profane dialectic. Her devastatingly dramatic images, such as Hulga's wooden leg in "Good Country People," do not formally give way to transcendence, as they often do in Mauriac where the physical is invoked to be subdued. Rather, always present in O'Connor are those "imperceptible moments" that Lynch in Christ and Apollo sees as the essence of incarnational art. An appropriate example is in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," when the cliché-infected, abstract, and God-denying grandmother pleads with the Misfit not to shoot a proper Southern lady. The almost negligible movements of the Misfit, his digging a hole in the ground with his shoe while the old lady cackles and his covering the hole again while the woman assures him he is a good man, are filled with subdued violence and meaning, especially since the grandmother does end up in a ditch with the rest of the family. O'Connor indeed twists the screw and has the woman live and die a cliche. The grandmother has been digging her own grave. This cannot be correctly termed epiphany in the Joycean sense since there is no real "showing forth," no comprehension on the character's part. The essence of the previous scene is tension between the comic banality

of the banter and the tragic consequences associated with the belief that the Word is indeed the Thing. O'Connor first attacks our comprehension on the semantic level. The Misfit, hardly subtle in the linguistic sense, possesses a two-valued orientation of the world. He is not interested in the grandmother's scented, verbal waverings, her grossly adjectival perspective, her poetic exaggerations that pass as culture. A conscious and experienced empiricist who knows the limits of metaphor and the exact dimensions of a jail cell, the Misfit is assured of his own guilt because the authorities have the papers on him. "I said long ago," he remarks, "you get you a signature and sign everything you do and keep a copy of it. Then you'll know what you done and you can hold up the crime to the punishment and see do they match."[3] The Misfit, however, is troubled, because when he applies his own schematic to the redemptive aspects of Jesus, there is no happy resolution. According to him, "Jesus was the only One that ever raised the dead ... and He shouldn't have done it. He thown everything off balance. If He did what He said, then it's nothing for you to do but thow away everything and follow Him, and if He didn't, then it's nothing for you to do but enjoy the few minutes you got left the best way you can--by killing somebody or burning down his house or doing some other meanness to him." Imperceptibly questions of verbal accuracy take on an epistemological tone. How can the Misfit know the nature of the world that Jesus disrupted since he left no comprehensible sign or signature. For him as for the author, the connecting link between the manner and

the mystery, the fact and the image, the immanent and the transcendent, evangelism and atheism is verbal and actual violence. When the Misfit reminds the grandmother, "Nome, I ain't a good man," he empirically states his belief in the sanctity of the word. When he murders the family he does it as much for the woman's verbal failings as for her nervously obsessive references to the Word, whom she is ready to deny to save her own life. Although O'Connor has never in fact left the semantic level she, through the Misfit, raises questions about the nature of belief, the quality of evil, the existence of God, man's place in a Godless world, the reliability of language. One might argue that the technique of "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" represents the author's poetic signature because all images, descriptions reverberate with meaning and possibility. In her best work, Wise Blood, The Violent Bear It Away, "The Artificial Nigger," "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," and "The Displaced Person," she so exhausts the concrete, is so insistent about the significance of form, that the tension between her images and her levels of comprehension makes it generally impossible to abstract a religious statement from her work.

As I have demonstrated, Greene and Mauriac, somewhat reluctantly perhaps, gave credence to the psychological and naturalistic explanations of man's behavior. This is not to be considered a criticism because it is the tension between the religious and psychological elements which provides the strange beauty to their fiction. Thus Mauriac's dramatization of oedipal entrapment in Genetrix and Desert of Love seems to have more of a clinical than religious ring to it.

Greene, though he professed to being interested in reasserting a religious dimension to the English novel, comes close in Brighton Rock and The Heart of the Matter to sanctifying the tenets of behaviorism. One gets the impression from comments in Mystery and Manners that O'Connor was not entirely happy with the way Greene solved the problem of Catholicism in his fiction, though she obviously learnt from him. She opens her essay, "The Church and the Fiction Writer," with the statement: "The question of what effect the Church has on the fiction writer who is a Catholic cannot always be answered by pointing to the presence of Graham Greene."[4] She seemed to think that Greene gave too much attention to psychological, deterministic explanations of human conduct. Whether this is true or not, O'Connor ran in horror of such explanations, believing that "the social sciences have cast a dreary blight on the public approach to fiction." She was schooled enough to know that many contemporary readers and critics have established a kind of orthodoxy from which novels should be read. In "Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction," acknowledging her indebtedness to Hawthorne, she writes that he "knew his own problems and perhaps anticipated ours when he said he did not write novels, he wrote romances."[5] "The writer," she continues, "who writes within what might be called the modern romance tradition may not be writing novels which in all respects partake of a novelistic orthodoxy; but as long as these works have vitality, as long as they present something that is alive, however eccentric its life may seem to the general reader, then they have to

be dealt with; and they will have to be dealt with on their own terms."[6] A character such as Hazel Motes of Wise Blood, if he does not have a coherence to his social framework, at least in the author's opinion possesses "an inner coherence." Thus her fiction, in her opinion, leans away from typical social patterns, toward mystery, poetry, the unexpected, the incongruous, the grotesque. O'Connor asks that her fiction be judged on its own terms yet conveniently provides an unofficial aesthetic to assist in this judgment.

That she was well aware of the theological developments in the Catholic Church and Christian communities during the first half of the twentieth-century is attested to by her fiction, her critical remarks, her extensive book reviews, and her readings in non-fiction. Sister Kathleen Feeley discovered the following books, among others, to be in the author's library, some being well-used and annotated: Karl Barth's Evangelical Theology, Romano Guardini's The Conversations of St. Augustine, George Justus Lawler's The Christian Imagination, William F. Lynch's Christ and Apollo, Jacques Maritain's Art and Scholasticism, Jean Guitton's The Modernity of Saint Augustine.[7] Considering the reputation O'Connor has earned, with some justification, for her anti-intellectualism in The Violent Bear It Away and "Good Country People," the reading list is all the more remarkable. And since she reviewed many of these works for the Georgia Bulletin, it seems almost incontestible that she was fully aware of the theological and philosophical issues receiving attention in the 1950's and 1960's: existentialism, symbolism, ecumenism, and the need for

a scriptural dimension to literature. Though she proclaimed herself a "Thomist through and through," her fiction and readings indicate she is closer to the urgency of St. Augustine. The number of books she consulted about the possibility of a Christian imagination suggests she sought an aesthetic, not necessarily Thomistic, that allowed her to proclaim the supremacy of form without mitigating her Christian vision. In Jacques Maritain's Art and Scholasticism O'Connor marked the following passage: "Do not make the absurd attempt to sever in yourself the artist and the Christian. They are one, if you really are a Christian, and if your art is not isolated from your soul by some aesthetic system. But apply only the artist in you to the work in hand; precisely because they are one, the work will be as wholly of the one as of the other."[8] Sister Feeley, commenting on the above annotated passage, remarks that because O'Connor's "work is wholly 'of the artist,' it possesses artistic validity. Because it is wholly 'of the Christian,' it has what Flannery herself called 'an added dimension'--an exploration of man's relationship with the divine; a teleological thrust toward the mystery of death; and an anagogical (ultimate spiritual and mystical) level of meaning."[9] Feeley is so anxious to show O'Connor effected a fusion between matter and form that she appears to neglect the terrible struggle evident in the author's fiction, particularly Wise Blood. As Frederick Asals has noted in a very fine review of Feeley's book, the Sister tends to ignore some of the disturbing, and paradoxical results of the author's attempts to reconcile the artist and the Christian. The

following comment by Asals is worth quoting because it harks back to Mauriac and provides some possible biographical corroboration of evidence I have already detected in O'Connor's novels and stories.

> If Sister Kathleen's assumptions do not allow for these disturbing possibilities in the fiction (i.e. that unorthodox imagery is not merely a style but a key to the author's religious views), they also limit her response to some of the more suggestive documents she has uncovered. She writes, 'I found a paper in Flannery's handwriting. It said: Faith breeds faith but faith in this age appears as dead as Sarah's womb. When we believe today, we believe like Abraham.' The Kieregaardian overtones of such a statement, the suggestion that for O'Connor faith might have been a somewhat desperate endeavor, a ceaseless struggle with doubt and denial rather than a fixed and unquestioning conviction--this seems not to occur to Sister Kathleen, who comments cooly: 'Only the faith of Abraham--who believed the word of God when all human reality seemed to negate it' 'would be strong enough to form the spiritual basis on which these stories rest.'[10]

O'Connor, as my study will show, was not able to solve the relationship between the artist and Christian as easily as Feeley has asserted.

Mauriac, who found his way to the divine through the senses, risked simple blasphemy when he assumed the technique of psychological realism as his mode of expression. O'Connor, who found her way to the divine through the profane, the secular, risked the death of God, atheism, and nihilism when she assumed the techniques of parody, critique, and the grotesque as her mode of expression. Her view of Christ in Wise Blood, "The Displaced Person," and "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," provides insight to her fictional techniques. Christ, in all these works, is considered an upsetter of categories, a dis-

placer, a divisive presence; he is that ragged figure who moves from tree to tree in the back of Hazel Motes' mind. He represents no less than a paradigm of O'Connor's art: character, theme, and vision as oxymoron. If Mauriac's fiction dramatizes a war with the Mother, and Greene's with the Father, O'Connor's is a war with Christ, who was the artist of his Incarnation. Her test is to give equal voice to both God and Man and remain the author of her incarnational art. Ironically, though she is obliquely critical of Mr. Head of "The Artificial Nigger" for putting himself on the level of God, the strength of her finest work comes from her reluctance to admit the divine.

When O'Connor proclaimed in The Living Novel (1957), in the respectable company of Saul Bellow, Ralph Ellison, Herbert Gold, and Wright Morris, that "I am no disbeliever in spiritual purpose and no vague believer. I see from the standpoint of Christian orthodoxy. This means that for me the meaning of life is centered in our Redemption by Christ and what I see in the world I see in its relation to that," a forceful, incongruous critical aesthetic was pronounced.[11] On the preceding page of this essay, "The Fiction Writer and His Country," she remarks, paradoxically: "I have heard it said that belief in Christian dogma is a hindrance to the writer, but I myself have found nothing further from the truth. Actually, it frees the storyteller to observe. It is not a set of rules which fixes what he sees in the world. It affects his writing primarily by guaranteeing his respect for mystery." Neither Greene nor Mauriac asserted

such a bold Christian aesthetic. If there is any validity to these remarks, it seems clear that her understanding of "Christian orthodoxy" must be greatly different from that expressed by other Catholic writers of the century.

Though she was quickly heralded by the Catholic press and though she didn't specifically object to Catholic criticism, O'Connor was devastatingly honest and severe in her assessment of the temporal Church and of the influence of orthodox Catholicism on the art of fiction. Because she had the advantage of historical hindsight she could, to a greater extent than Mauriac or Greene, recognize the schism between religion and the artist. "For the Catholic," she observes, "one result of the Counter-Reformation was a practical overemphasis on the legal and logical and a consequent neglect of the Church's broader tradition."[12] She stands squarely with the thoroughly secular critic, Gide, in admitting that "in the last four or five centuries, Catholics have overemphasized the abstract and consequently impoverished their imaginations and their capacity for prophetic insight."[13] Like Gide, who leveled the same criticism at Mauriac and many of the French Catholics, O'Connor recognized and was troubled by the parochial aesthetic and cultural insularity of a Church which nurtured itself and its followers on a comfortable religiosity. No less than Nietzsche, she was able to distinguish between Christ and Christianity, which represented the stone on His grave. Her extensive readings, especially in non-fiction, suggests she sought a liberated view of the Church. And she found some help

in Teilhard de Chardin's The Phenomenon of Man. While she was obviously pleased with Chardin's assertion of the sacramental nature of all things, there is no reason to believe that she accompanies him to his Noosphere. She could not agree with his panchristizing of the universe or the general amelioration of evil. For her evil, the devil, and sin were facts. So, rather than move forward with Chardin to a cosmic evolution, she will find her symbolism and her aesthetic in what she calls the invisible Church.

Gene Kellog, in a study already cited, tentatively defined a Catholic novel in the following way: "Only a novel whose mainspring of dramatic action depends upon Roman Catholic theology, or upon the history of thought within one of the world's large Roman Catholic communities, or upon 'development' of Roman Catholic 'ideas' in Newman's sense, is regarded as contributing to the flowering of major literary achievement which began when the isolation of the world's Roman Catholic community started to break down in the nineteenth century, and which tapered off ... when Roman Catholics joined the modern world after Vatican II." Though I have already stated my objections to Kellog's general definition, it would be enlightening to consider his remarks in relation to some germane comments by O'Connor.

Kellog suggests that O'Connor's fiction represents the end of the development of the Catholic novel begun by Mauriac and continued by Greene because

> So much assimilation had taken place that there was a crisis of identity. Catholics, no longer

> so critical of secularism, became by an unfortunate corollary often also no longer critical of the inroads of secularism into Catholicism's own essence ... Flannery O'Connor was the last to protest--against meliorism--and she was virtually a solitary voice. For great numbers of Catholics, confluence by the mid-1960's became so complete that they were no longer sure what the true Catholic essence was. The primary and defiant Catholic emphasis upon the spirit, which for so many generations had generated the creative spark between the Catholic communities and the secular environment, virtually ceased.[14]

O'Connor, I am sure, would have been secretly delighted with the critic's thoroughly abstract pronouncements. The critic appears to forget that such intellectualism, divorced from the dramatic sense, is the subject of some of her fiercest satire. Contrary to Kellog's estimate, she thought she represented the beginning of a genuine Catholic tradition which had its roots, not in dogma, but in symbolism.

In "The Catholic Novelist in the Protestant South," O'Connor, criticizing articles that she collected from the Catholic press because they are long on theology and short on what religious fiction should be, remarks that the "Catholic novel can't be categorized by subject matter, but only by what it assumes about human and divine reality."[15] The crux of her argument is that Catholics have long neglected the invisible Church. Here she joins hands, however unconsciously, with Norman O. Brown, who thinks institutional Christianity exchanged for the ritual, magical repetition of Christ's passion, a purely mental invocation, a historical commemoration. And both would agree that the quest for the historical Jesus means a reanimation of the scriptural scenes in the mind only instead of a

dramatic reenactment. Brown, who claims that the rationalistic methodology of the Christian traditions has provided us with a spectral image of Christ, finds agreement in O'Connor. For O'Connor the essence of religion that has been lost and the essence of religion that the fiction writer must invoke if he is to write Catholic fiction is symbolism, prophecy, and mystery. On scrutinizing her most significant critical essays one can't help but notice the nature and quality of the author's critical vocabulary. Terms such as vision, prophecy, mystery, incarnation, participation (in Christ's death and redemption), the added dimension, the sacramental view constitute her critical and religious lexicon. Here she joins her religious vision and her aesthetic; the concepts of art and religion merge. By her own strict artistic standards there is no reason for the autonomy of art to be repudiated by a religious view because they find their substance and meaning in the same areas. Metaphor, not dogma, should be the fictional mode.

In her own way O'Connor has joined the artist and the Christian: she does it intellectually in her criticism and dramatically in her fiction. Yet in spite of her illuminating statements, there is little reason to suspect, as hopefully my analysis of significant work will show, that there was no tension between the two realms. O'Connor, to be sure, was the first to recognize this, and her struggle to reconcile the two realms in dramatic terms is far more exciting and engaging than Mauriac's. If the core of her work represents an orthodox Catholicism recovered, the form of her stories and novels is the

grotesque. And in rescuing the Church from the folly of abstractionism, she goes to her Southern brethren for her images and her style. Thus she joins the modern world and partakes of its paradoxes and irresolution.

Flannery O'Connor, in her treatment of religious concerns, surely accepts Allen Tate's reprehension of the religion of the half-horse. In his essay, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," Tate, while discussing religion in more of a cultural rather than a theological context, in his contention that "abstraction is the death of religion," is not far from O'Connor's portraits of empty secularists such as Rayber of The Violent Bear It Away, who she feels have taken the substance as well as the mystery out of religion. Tate, in the same article, attributes these secular attitudes toward religion to the modern preoccupation with utilitarianism. The "modern mind," he remarks, "sees only half of the horse--that half which may become a dynamo, or an automobile, or any other horsepowered machine. If this mind had much respect for the full-dimensioned, grass-eating horse, it would never have invented the engine which represents only half of him. The religious mind, on the other hand, has this respect; it wants the whole horse, and will be satisfied with nothing less."[16]

It is a mark of O'Connor's peculiar brilliance that she was able to discover in the literature of the South and the Southern mind in general those qualities that were amenable to her artistic temperament and those she felt the Catholic Church and much of recent Catholic fiction had neglected or lost sight of. Walker Percy, Eudora

Welty, and William Faulkner usually cite the element of the tragic (the defeat in the Civil War) and the firm sense of place as attributes peculiar to their fiction, and O'Connor echoes these judgments in "The Catholic Novelist in the Protestant South." In addition, she sees religious seriousness, scriptural awareness, insistent concreteness, and the possibility of an anagogical comprehension as aspects of the Southern mind that she as a Catholic novelist can use successfully. These are the "underground affinities" that the invisible Church shares with her region. And she comments, somewhat prophetically, "I look forward with considerable relish to the day when we are going to have to enlarge our notions about the Catholic novel to include some pretty odd Southern specimens."[17]

There is no reason to assume that O'Connor's Christian aesthetic is conclusive and that she did not display any sleight of hand in marrying the two traditions. She tends to skirt consideration of the heretical imagination or retreat to such terms as mystery and the like rather than provide examples. Nonetheless, she provides a working aesthetic for the Catholic novelist and is more sure and often more mature than Mauriac in her pronouncements. Mauriac's critical views are held within the confines of the God and Mammon dualism. Like Greene, Mauriac asserted the right to invoke the sensuous environment concretely. O'Connor thoroughly agreed with both in these matters but went beyond the two in her attempts to recover the symbolism of the original Christian imagination. The particular mode she chose was the grotesque which

became for her a full-fledged aesthetic.

Since an appreciable portion of this study will explore her peculiar use of the grotesque as an aesthetic category as well as attendant problems encountered in the application of this mode, some discussion of the form is in order. One can rarely scrutinize a critical article dealing with O'Connor without encountering the word "grotesque" used in all too many instances in the pejorative sense. The term "grotesque," as Lewis A. Lawson accurately states, has become, especially in regard to Southern fiction, almost synonymous with the word Gothic; thus the inclusion in Southern fiction of such violent acts as murders, suicides, rapes, castrations, of such weird settings as woods, swamps and abandoned houses, of such aberrant characters as the insane, the idiotic, the obsessed, the freakish, the perverted and the incestuous is cited as the unhappy penchant of Southern writers for cheap sensationalism or for monstrous and atypical forms of society.[18] In light of these attitudes and misconceptions, "grotesque" tends to assume only slanderous proportions in the manner of the much abused nineteenth century term melodrama.

From the time of her first publications O'Connor has been placed by many critics in the school of the "Gratuitous Grotesque." William Esty conveniently lumps her with Paul Bowles in the "Paul Bowles-Flannery O'Connor cult of the Gratuitous Grotesque."[19] Ignoring the author's remarks as well as many measured critical statements, Esty flippantly outlines the thematic framework of

"Good Country People," concluding that O'Connor, by her "overingenious horrifics," converts "the very real and cruel grotesquerie of our world into clever gimmicks for Partisan Review." Esty's charge is not only poor criticism--he is "overingenious" in his own way--but ignores the moral implications of her use of the grotesque.

Fortunately, many critics have since recognized that Flannery O'Connor's fiction is not gratuitously grotesque, and have largely refuted Esty's charge, though, demonstrably, the religious criticism tends to forget that the grotesque is also an intimation of the absurd. James F. Farnham in "The Grotesque in Flannery O'Connor" contributes some perceptive remarks on the subject, including his contention that the author employs the mode as her chief tool against sentimentalism which he finds so prevalent in much Christian art.[20] One of the main differences between Graham Greene's and O'Connor's handling of religious concerns in their respective fiction is that the former, especially in regard to his treatment of the suffering of children as measured against God's mercy and grace, has a tendency toward sentimentalism. Scobie, like Dr. Rieux in Camus' The Plague, uses the suffering of children to question the mercy and justice of God. O'Connor, though she is fully aware of the implications of the preceding argument,[21] never lets such questions interrupt her fiction. Her child characters are treated with the same compassionate severity that renders the rest of her characters so unsympathetic.

Farnham, anticipating other critics, implies that her artistic method is predominately negative; that "since her talents incline

her toward the portrayal of sin, she shows the effects of the redemption (i.e. grace) in a negative manner. She reflects the beauty of virtue by showing the ugliness of its absence."[22] Carried to its logical extreme, this suggestion implies that the author gives a positive value to evil in her efforts to recover the Holy. Fortunately, this is not entirely the case. If it were, she could be accused of employing hyperbolic expression to expose a sinful world. Her fictional technique became her demon that she found difficult to exorcise.

O'Connor's recorded reactions to claims that her fiction is inordinately grotesque are tinged with her characteristic irony. In a lecture delivered at a symposium on Southern fiction held in the 1960's, she attempted to answer some misdirected criticism by making a few general statements of her artistic purposes. According to her, the reading public usually views her grotesques as freaks, and "with its clinical bias invariably approaches them from the standpoint of abnormal psychology."[23] What the author thinks of social scientists and misdirected humanists is made amply clear in much of her fiction, particularly The Violent Bear It Away and "The Lame Shall Enter First." It does little good to look at her work from a psychological point of view as her fiction and statements verify. If her "donnée" is largely the grotesque, her vision is in the main theological (she feels Southern literature is on the whole theological), and it is because of this, that she and other writers such as William Faulkner can recognize the half-man, the man denuded

of spirit. "To be able to recognize the freak," she explains, "you have to have some conception of the whole man." In simple terms the equation is between physical freaks who maintain a religious sense and spiritual freaks who maintain a physical, secular sense. Here O'Connor shares a kinship with Greene, especially in A Burnt-Out Case, where he attempts "to give dramatic expression to various types of belief, half-belief, and non-belief, in the kind of setting, removed from world-politics and household-preoccupations, where such differences are felt acutely and find expression."[24] Nonetheless, there is an urgency to the religious experience in O'Connor that is not encountered in Greene. The only character in A Burnt-Out Case who displays any great urgency about his Catholicism is Rycker, and though a murderer, he remains a figure of fun. Deo Gratias, the protagonist's boy and a "cured" but mutilated leper, symbolizes an unconscious, primitive religiosity which Greene apparently feels is the starting point for the Church's new beginning. O'Connor, her fiction tells us, in spite of all her claims, is not so sure. Since she sees her freaks as figures of our essential displacement, her important characters, Hazel Motes, Francis Tarwater, and the Misfit, are not passively religious but actively, violently evangelical. Suffice it to say that Greene employs the grotesque as almost an allegorical technique while O'Connor employs it as an aesthetic category in itself.

According to O'Connor the grotesque mode, in part, has kept Southern literature "for at least a little while from becoming the

kind of thing Mr. Van Wyck Brooks desired, when he said he hoped that our next literary phase would restore the central literature which combines the great subject matter of the middle-brow writers with the technical expertness of the New Critics, and thereby would restore literature as a mirror and guide for society."[25] By the author's admission, the grotesque mode is both a reaction to Brooks' hopes and to some degree emblematic of Southern fiction. Also, she appears to be moving toward a position taken by Marion Montgomery, who argues that it is not particularly the grotesque which distinguishes "Northern" from "Southern" fiction, but whether fictional characters possess a grotesqueness which defines them as separate from mankind or "as a definition of their relationship."[26] And such a distinction concerns the presence or absence of "the burden of responsibility." In Montgomery's opinion, for example, the rape of Tarwater in The Violent Bear It Away by the citified homosexual is in many ways more "dangerous" than Tarwater's murder-baptism of the idiot Bishop because the homosexual--whose very language is in opposition to the concrete language of Tarwater--as impersonal as the city he represents, lacks the burden of responsibility for his act. Belief is so tenuous in O'Connor's world that violence is an act of love.

O'Connor and Faulkner differ from other Southern writers in their treatment of the grotesque in that they display a moral, although not a didactic, purpose in their use of the grotesque mode. The grotesque, Lawson notes, is especially persistent in Southern

fiction "because of the double transition that the South has been forced to make (cleavage of the old cultural frame as well as loss of regional identity)--a transition that perhaps is reaching its completion."[27] In this regard the grotesque becomes largely an expression of cultural and psychological chaos and this breakdown of cultural frames is ably exemplified in Faulkner's use of the mode. But this is where O'Connor's use of the grotesque differs from Faulkner's because, while her fiction is anchored in the localized South, the grotesqueness which pervades her stories is not the result of a confusion in or a collapse of cultural frames (i.e. "The Displaced Person") but the necessary condition when one is apart from the "true country" of the spirit. "Extra-literary evidence suggests that the South in the last fifteen years has rejoined the cultural union;"[28] Flannery O'Connor's fiction dramatizes the dearth of spirit which has partially resulted from this union. Her use of the grotesque is a form of religious hyperbole, but it is considerably more than that. Wise Blood, her first novel, is grotesque in both form and content; even the protagonist Hazel Motes is an extravagant example of incongruities and contradictions--"an oxymoron as character." However, Wise Blood, as made apparent by the elements of chance, chaos, and lack of causality (the policeman pushing Hazel's car off the bank, declaring it "not a car") which inundate the novel, shows O'Connor, in this work at least, has gone beyond a dramatization of a Dostoevskian confrontation of man with his primordial self, as Jonathan Baumbach asserts, to where she embraces, in part, the

philosophy of the absurd, a position which makes it difficult for the author to resolve plot and incident without undercutting her religious concerns.

Though Wolfgang Kayser in The Grotesque does not refer to O'Connor, his description of this mode fits her work precisely. The fusion of the organic and mechanical, the clash of the ludicrous and the fearful or the real and the fantastic; the reduction of human bodies to puppets and marionnettes; the "encroachment of things into the province fo being,"[29] for Kayser are all aspects of the grotesque mode which invokes, in hopes of subduing, the demonic. This is radical collaboration with the secular world. According to Kayser, when the structure, theme, and texture of a work are so oxymoronic in design, the result is an intimation of the absurd. And in spite of many of O'Connor's public statements about the nature of faith and critical aesthetic, it is this realm that she often approaches.

Wise Blood: Symbolism and the Religious Aesthetic

Even though certain stories in A Good Man Is Hard to Find represent abbreviated examples of some of the failings and splendid successes of O'Connor's art, only with a consideration of Wise Blood and The Violent Bear It Away does the reader enter the author's true fictional country which, despite its resemblance to Ralph Ellison's Harlem, acknowledges a germ of Christian hope. These works, by themselves, constitute a partial summation of a theme present in most of her major pieces: union with Christ demands mortification,

death, and denial, which points to a fusion of form and content since the author's very method of recovering the Holy is by giving evil and blasphemy a positive value. The development of both novels traces the protagonist's journey from guilt to the possibilities of redemption; the world he must traverse is the grotesque. In these works O'Connor gives full expression to the grotesque mode. So well does it temper the author's Christian concerns that at times her vision appears closer to the absurdist dramas than to the environs of Rome.

In Wise Blood O'Connor is able to accommodate a radical Christian vision in a convincing aesthetic form. This is extremely significant and in some respects marks the difference between the quality of the religious expression in Mauriac and O'Connor. While he is a remarkable stylist and craftman and has probably dramatized the repressive forces of Christianity better than anyone, in The Desert of Love, Genetrix, The Knot of Vipers, and A Kiss for the Leper, which are generally considered among his best work, Mauriac is unable to find an appropriate symbolic strategy to convey his religious point of view. The real appeal of Mauriac, particularly in the works previously cited, is gained from the author fictionally walking the heretical line: his texture of Manicheism, Pantheism, and especially his Jansenism. His best works are a dramatic working-out of the body-soul dialectic in harsh Pascalian terms. In true Jansenist fashion the body is presented as a symptom of and the primary reason for a persecuted psychology, and the tension in the above works is a result of the conflict between the theology and

psychology of love: that is, any attempt at a full-bodied expression of love is immediately thwarted by an incipient, though not always convincing, intrusion of a theological impulse. It would be overly harsh to call Mauriac's canon fictionalized dogma or anti-dogma, but his works come close to satisfying the accusation. The French writer had difficulty probing the transcendent aspects of the original Christian experience; he was also unable, in most respects, to articulate a daring aesthetic which could convey the particulars of a profound religious experience. O'Connor, who learned from Mauriac and was able to go beyond him in matters of aesthetics, also learned from her Southern brethren who taught her the nature of the concrete; thus her religious world, like that of Graham Greene, is man-centered and horrifying.

It might well be asked if the more engaging writers of the contemporary scene utilize particular symbolic motifs and patterns that are not only ambitious and meaningful in a profoundly religious sense but also contain, inherently, a quality of ambiguity and negation which is potentially and expectedly a critique of easy religious optimism (or any religious view) and, like much twentieth century fiction, contains the seeds of its own destruction. Quite possibly, the religious sense has indeed caught up with the aesthetic sense. For Kierkegaard Christianity was more of an existential movement than a doctrinaire system and contemporary theologians such as Barth and Tillich, as well as their Catholic counterparts, tend to agree. The new theological impulse of Christianity emphasizes existential

participation in what E. Brunner calls the "brutal facts" of the Incarnation, the Passion, and the death and Resurrection of Christ. And the emphasis on subjectivism or personal encounter in religion is matched in the religious literature of this century. To say that the religious sense, at least as I have defined it in this study, has caught up with the aesthetic sense is only partly fanciful. What I am suggesting is that when the symbolic mode found its way into the precarious religious imaginations of such writers as Graham Greene, Nikos Kazantzakis, and Flannery O'Connor, who all proclaim a salvation with diligence, the modern religious novel was born. Since Mauriac, for all intents, did not have a symbolic strategy, he failed to universalize the religious experience of the novels, though he came close to accomplishing this with the Maria Cross theme in The Desert of Love. This is not the case with the three writers just cited. They, and particularly O'Connor in Wise Blood, through an appeal to comic, parodic, and grotesque elements, are able to imply the extremely tenuous nature of religious commitment. For example, Enoch Emery of Wise Blood, who has long been considered extraneous to the novel or merely the protagonist's comic counterpart, effectively demonstrates how close the religious zeal of Hazel Motes is to pure parody. On one level this might be construed as the author's holding back, her unwillingness to be caught in optimism or commitment. On the other hand she seems to have all the trepidation of a Kierkegaard before his leap. Here comedy is restraint, indecision.

Flannery O'Connor in "The Role of the Catholic Novelist" has acknowledged the difficulty of writing religious fiction for a largely secular audience. In the same breath, however, she states an unwillingness to satisfy the patrons of false piety. She realizes that for philosophical as well as for religious reasons, she is unable, like Dante, to render the world in predictable slices. Thus her challenge is an aesthetic one. "When I write a novel," she remarks, "in which the central action is baptism, I know that for the large percentage of my readers, baptism is a meaningless rite; therefore I have to imbue this action with an awe and terror which will suggest its awful mystery. I have to distort the look of the thing in order to represent as I see them both the mystery and the fact."[30] The author surmounts this aesthetic hurdle in Wise Blood by articulating a symbolic mode which necessitates and justifies a blending of psychological and theological concerns. She, like many writers of the last few decades, realizes that religion, if it is to be appealed to in fiction, must occupy a position of estrangement, as it does in The Power and the Glory, and must fight with other epistemologies for recognition. And this is the struggle in the novel. Before eternity can be permitted to peep into time, the basic struggle must take place on the concrete psychological level but in a psychology that has been exposed to a religious temper. The symbolic patterns and motifs she invokes in the work involve a fictional transfiguration of Jesus (Christ as Southern cracker), the figure of Maria Cross (mother as the cross), the oedipal theme

Christianized, and a strategy of visual imagery suggesting the ambiguous nature of "seeing through" to Christ.

In Wise Blood a complex relationship exists between Hazel Motes' efforts to break away from his mother and his attempts to blaspheme his way to Christ. In simple terms this is an ambitious manifestation of the oedipal theme Christianized; Christ and the mother are beautifully linked in the impressionable psychology of the protagonist. Here, essentially, is the novel's structure and tension. Furthermore, these themes are directly related to Hazel Motes' primary character flaw, his inability to "see." As long as he is pridefully reacting to his grandfather's and mother's teachings, as long as he sees things through her eyes, as long as he sins sexually in order to cut the oedipal chain, he cannot move toward Christ; no redemption is possible. Only when he understands the grotesque consequences of his quest, can he begin, by acts of self-immolation, to see things in perspective.

When the novel opens, the manikin-like Haze is on a train to Taulkinham to preach his new religion, which he only intuitively understands. In fact, there is no convincing rationale for his Church Without Christ. It is a simplistic anti-Church born out of his desperate pride and his troubled mind. This is most evident later in the narrative when he is confronted with the bastardry of the blind man's daughter: "He couldn't see how a preacher who had blinded himself for Jesus could have a bastard." The philosophy of his Church is not subtle enough to resolve such obvious contradictions,

even if the blind man was not a false prophet. As the novel develops, his philosophy changes from an essential nihilism to a radical atheistic existentialism. At no time, however, is his religion more than a style, though there is a moral significance to his grotesque histrionics. He calls for a new Jesus, but actually does not desire one; the possibility that someone could mistake the style of his profane ministry with its genuine content terrifies him. "There's no such thing as a new Jesus," Haze admits to a religious charlatan, "That ain't anything but a way to say something."[31] His preaching mission to Taulkinham is an extended effort, prompted by his primary narcissism and his rural antagonism to original sin, to scare Jesus or some other concrete sign from the bushes. On an elementary level he, in his violent way, is searching for proof of the existence or non-existence of Christ. But his quest, ironically, triggers a complex series of memories and beliefs that are skillfully woven by O'Connor into a symbolic tapestry of psychological and theological truths that are far more significant and profound than the frenzied posturings of a Southern cracker.

The plethora of allusions on the first three pages to aspects of vision suggests the boy is looking but seeing very little. He is strangely oblivious to his surroundings. More than this, like Tarwater of The Violent Bear It Away, he seems compelled to go to the city: "He looked as if he were held by a rope caught in the middle of his back and attached to the train ceiling." This sentence raises important questions about the extent of his free will.

Is he, as the author implies, an unwilling and unwitting agent for his own redemption (such is true of Tarwater)? Is free will operative to any significant degree? While it seems in this place that his actions are somewhat determined, I believe the rest of the novel dramatizes, as O'Connor remarks in the second edition, the "many wills conflicting in one man." More important, Haze, like many characters in contemporary fiction, acts as if obsessed and to a large extent he is. He is an oxymoron and a classic example of the grotesque in which there is little resolution, predictability, or cause and effect.

Possibly more important than the question of his free will, given the complexity of his motivations, is the failure of his obsessive references to his personal quest and his exaggerated denials to elicit more than a whimper or a sneer from the people--all reflections of some part of his troubled psyche--he meets. From the beginning his mind is charged with allusions to the folly and absurdity of the redemption. With absolutely no provocation he remarks to Mrs. Wally Bee Hitchcock, a fellow passenger, "I reckon you think you been redeemed." Her interest, however, is in the weather and platitudes and directs his spiritual hunger to the dining car. Moments later he makes a similar statement to three other women passengers. "If you've been redeemed," he said, "I wouldn't want to be." Since this charge, which he intuitively feels to be the essence of blasphemy, earns merely a cackle, he must try again by increasing the temper of the charge. "Do you think I believe in Jesus," he said, leaning toward a woman and speaking almost as if he were breathless. "Well I wouldn't

even if He existed. Even if He was on this train."[32] One of them replies, in a poisonous Eastern voice, "Who said you had to?", a remark that forces him to withdraw.

These early scenes are filled with ramifications that the young man's mission will make apparent. But some conclusions can be drawn. Throughout his journey he misconstrues the dangerous and real secularity of his companions. He is not aware of this danger until his ministry conjures up, unwittingly, a new Jesus which he realizes is a grotesque reflection of his own blasphemy and the bastard religiosity of the novel's genuine charlatans. While we can be fairly certain at this point that the protagonist is primarily style, that is, his actions and assertions have a rhetorical dimension, we must acknowledge traces of narcissism in his character that he never quite loses, even at the time of his violent death. But, more important, there is an unstated, though implied, moral significance to his histrionics, namely, his evangelical desire to see some concrete manifestation of the existence of Christ. This is why Haze, a true alien in the profane world, waits at every turn for a blow to be struck in answer to his profanity. Though he might dare and taunt Christ to the eye teeth, he is shaken when other people don't take notice of his blasphemous delivery. He is always ready to pay the price because paying would mean vindication of his egotism. Yet the compelling irony of his short trip is that few understand or listen to his bombast except those who will use him for their gain and that his self-blinding goes virtually unnoticed.

He participates existentially and somewhat parodically in the brutal facts of Christ's ministry.

That his journey will be primarily one of "seeing," of showing him the folly of his blasphemy is attested to by the reactions of Mrs. Hitchcock to him. As she sits across from him on the train, his eyes hold her attention. The settings of the eyes "were so deep that they seemed, to her, almost like passages leading somewhere." To Hitchcock his eyes are full of possibilities and since in Wise Blood partial vision is an index to the partial man, it can be concluded that he lacks a spiritual dimension. His stare is divorced from him, as if genuine vision can not be part of his person. He is a blind man on an abortive mission to a desacralized city. He becomes, eventually, in true blindness his only convert.

Here Haze commits the first of a number of perceptual blunders. When he confronts a porter to ask about a berth, "He knew him to be a Parrum nigger from Eastrod." He continues in this mistaken belief until he leaves the train. The porter is not from Eastrod, the boy's hometown, but Haze most certainly is. He is nailed to his hometown and to his past by the nightmarish influence of his mother. By incorrectly assuming the porter to be from Eastrod, he reveals his own narcissism and his propensity for seeing his journey in terms of his past. While the character can sense it intuitively, the reader is soon to discover that the boy's past is dramatized in the form of a symbolic matrix consisting of the psychological and theological aspects of Haze's early childhood experiences. Since the point of view

in the chapters dealing with him is third person restricted, O'Connor must convey theological and psychological meanings symbolically. And the result is a beautiful tension. The boy is a fundamentalist; a literalist like Tarwater and Rufus Johnson of "The Lame Shall Enter First." He desperately wants an explicit sign of the existence of Christ. The problem: he must be ushered into symbolism and mystery. That is, the symbolism and the past which haunt him must be made conscious. He must become aware of the meaning of the dream sequences, his mother's glasses and the Bible. These are his story; they represent the center of the novel.

His mother's glasses and the Bible are particularly significant, especially in the early part of Wise Blood, because they provide in germ, the meaning of his mission. He retains two things from his past: the Bible and the glasses and keeps them in the bottom of his duffle bag. He carries them but rarely has reason to use them. When some of his friends in the Army invited him to go to a brothel, "He took his mother's glasses out of his pocket and put them on. Then he told them he wouldn't go with them for a million dollars and a feather bed to lie on." Though the men laugh at him, his mother is his protection and cross. But even here he attempts to rid himself of her influence. His friends had told him he did not have a soul: "He took a long time to believe them because he wanted to believe them. All he wanted was to believe them and get rid of it once and for all, and he saw the opportunity here to get rid of it without corruption, to be converted to nothing instead of to evil."[33] Haze's decision

is an ironic example of facile intellectualism. He might attempt to avoid Christ and his past, but his own psychology and rural theology will not permit such easy rejection. He is no more able to escape from his heritage than is Ralph Ellison's protagonist in Invisible Man.

The relationship between the symbols is clear. He is seeing Christ with his mother's eyes. The Christ he tries to avoid is the Christ she threatened him with as a young boy. A rejection of the mother naturally means a rejection of religion. He has confused her and Him and must eliminate his dependency on her vision. That he is tied to his mother and Christ is made apparent by the dream sequences, where the above symbols merge with the fact of death.

Once he is in the sleeping berth he experiences a series of numbing dreams about the deaths of his father, grandfather, brothers, and mother. His family lives in his memory. Both his father and grandfather possess a prideful nature and refuse to accept the finality of death. Haze dreamed he was at his father's burial again. "He saw him humped over on his hands and knees in his coffin, being carried that way to the graveyard. 'If I keep my can in the air,' he heard the old man say, 'nobody can shut nothing on me,' but when they got his box to the hole, they let it drop down with a thud and his father flattened out like anybody else."

Superficially these dreams dramatize the young man's morbid fear of and fascination for death. His prideful nature won't yet allow him to admit the reality of death because such an admission

would allow for the possibility of death in Christ. This would mean vindication of Christian theology and a denial of the purport of his quest. These are, however, other implications. After his younger brother died he imagined he was inside the coffin and the lid was closing on him. More revealing is the dream about his mother. He first recounts the day's events: a trip to his ruined shell of a house; a written threat to intruders not to disturb his mother's chifforobe on pain of death. He hopes these actions will keep her from sleep-walking. They do not and his mother invades his dream. In his half-sleep he thinks of his mother's death and sees her through the crack in the coffin:

> He had seen her face through the crack when they were shutting the top on her. He was sixteen then. He had seen the shadow that came down over her face and pulled her mouth down as if she wasn't anymore satisfied dead than alive, as if she was going to spring up and shove the lid back and fly out and satisfy herself: but they shut it. She might have been going to fly out of there, she might have been going to spring. He saw her in his sleep, terrible, like a huge bat, dart from the closing, fly out of there, but it was falling on top of her, closing down all the time. From inside he saw it closing, coming closer down and cutting off the light and the room.[34]

This passage is one of the most important in the novel because it dramatizes just how closely the boy is tied to his mother. But it is also extremely ambiguous. Should we conclude that the mother, bat-like, haunts the son, reminding him of his past and that death has not robbed her of her influence over him? I think we must concede as much though the psychological nature of the relationship is harder to fathom. In his sleep he sees his mother "dart from the

closing," but he also sees the coffin-lid closing on top of her. Is the bat a projection of his troubled consciousness? Is it a dream-wish that she should leave the casket before he joins her there? Or is it the boy's rejection of her bat-like religiosity and, implicitly, an embracing of her carnally? All these possibilities contain some truth. He certainly does join her in the coffin, in death as it were, and realizes as much in his sleep. In effect he becomes the mother. Also, by dreaming of her in this state, he unconsciously associates her terrible influence with his own death. So he is tied to the mother in death. The more he attempts to reach Christ through sin, the more he is pinned to his mother because his sin is invariably deathly sexual and is committed with women who "mother" him. Earlier he had believed that the way to avoid Christ was to avoid sin. Finding both parts of the equation impossible to follow, in his literal way Haze reverses the formula and decides, unconsciously, that the way to Christ is through sin. It is no mistake that Motes, on waking from the nightmare in the sleeping berth, cries desperately for Jesus, to which the porter triumphantly replies, "Jesus been a long time gone." Once again he links the figures of his mother and Christ. Only by a full acceptance of Jesus can he find his way out of his egotism, his past, and his blasphemy. He has to triumph over his own psychology and recognize the truths that exist in germ in his profane theology. And he is yet to learn all these things.

A direct thematic relationship exists between Haze's perceptual blunders and his intense denials of Jesus. As mentioned before, the

young fanatic carries a pair of his mother's glasses "in case his vision should ever become dim." Ironically, as long as he is chained maternally, his vision will be dim. He wears the clothes of a preacher but denies this aspect of his character to almost everyone he meets. When the taxi driver remarks that the prostitute, Mrs. Watts, does not usually entertain preachers, Haze insists, "I ain't any preacher." To emphasize his point he tilts his hat over one eye and again insists, Peter-like, "I'm not a preacher." Minutes later, when he has summoned the courage to enter the prostitute's bedroom "for the usual business," he excitedly exclaims for the third time in as many pages, "I'm no goddam preacher," to which the woman replies, with unintentional yet consummate irony, "Momma don't mind if you ain't a preacher." His mission and mother will continue to haunt him until he is able to recognize the relationship between the two.

Not only does the name Hazel Motes strongly imply foggy or faulty vision (or both), the previous scene shows that the protagonist is one-eyed, that his vision is not true. His exaggerated denials, plus the description of his ministry (blasphemy is the way to the truth), dramatize that he is blindly, blasphemously, and desperately moving toward Christ because of and in spite of his psychological dependency on his mother.

During his brief stay in Taulkinham, Haze continues to make perceptual blunders. Soon after his arrival a policeman scolds him for ignoring the traffic signal. His reply, "I didn't see it," is

true enough but it is also a general commentary on his quest. More specifically, it is his involvement with the religious mountebank, Asa Hawks, and daughter Sabbath that provides the soundest commentary on his sacraligious mission and his spiritual blindness. From the descriptions given, few would argue that the Hawks family represent little more than the usual representatives of the confidence game that Melville exposed in The Confidence Man. But the boy cannot see the obvious trademarks of the hustler in the pair, which is just another example of his inability to distinguish between appearance and reality. He is driven to the "blind" Hawks ostensibly to blaspheme the religious activities of a man that already border on parody. Actually he sees Hawks as a kind of prophet who will rescue him from despair, a savior who possesses the traits he needs to enable him to break out of his egotism and past.

The first real encounter between the blasphemer and the charlatan is when the daughter hands Motes a stack of religious pamphlets to pass out to the crowd leaving the chapel. His reaction is consciously systematic, gauged to invite attention, a fine example of deliberate defiance: "Haze didn't open his tract. He looked at the outside of it and then tore it across. He put the two pieces together and tore them across again. He kept re-stacking the pieces and tearing them again until he had a little handful of confetti. He turned his hand over and let the shredded leaflet sprinkle to the ground. Then he looked up and saw the blind man's child not three feet away."[35]

There can be little doubt that the boy, though he claims to be following Hawks so he can eventually seduce the innocent daughter (who is really a slut and seduces him), is actually following the blind man with the hope that the mountebank will fortify his gorging disbelief. In a very fundamental sense, because of his background, the perverse symbolic relationship between his mother and Christ, and the conspiracy of silence in the city he had hoped to set afire, Haze comically traverses this spiritual wasteland on his way to his petulant self-sacrifice and crucifixion. Enoch Emery, whose "wise blood" and "compulsive narcissism" compel him to journey back down the evolutionary ladder and wear the costume of a gorilla in order to find friends, is a hilarious commentary on the quest of Haze, who ultimately must rid himself of all vestiges of humanity (history, past, egotism, etc.) if he is to move toward "Bethlehem" as his landlady suspects.

Flannery O'Connor has never been reluctant, in any of her stories or novels, to let the devil or a religious fake accomplish for her work that is usually left to the pious or the holy. Though this technique is more prevalent in The Violent Bear It Away, where the author dramatizes qualities of the invisible Church, it is also a motivating force in Wise Blood. Hawks is an admitted fraud, a failed prophet, but he does say, ironically (and the irony is only half his), many things to his anxious disciple that disturb him out of proportion to the source. Haze unconsciously understands the potential truth in what the blind man says. When Hawks remarks,

"I can hear the urge for Jesus in his [Haze's] voice," "Listen boy ... you can't run away from Jesus. Jesus is a fact," "Some preacher has left his mark on you," Motes' disproportionate reactions, consisting primarily of a plaintive sigh such as "Jesus" or "My Jesus," hint that on a lower level what Hawks is saying is true and that the blind man, quite unknown to himself--he, of course, is walking parody --is predicting the outcome of the quest. Everything the charlatan says, to be sure, lives beneath a layer of mockery or sarcasm, nonetheless, the boy is reacting to the content of the remarks, not the delivery and this is no surprise since the man is a projection of his histrionics. When Hawks says, in a specific parody of the biblical passage, "I can see more than you .... You got eyes and see not, ears and hear not, but you'll have to see sometime," the reader can accept what he says as implicitly true because his reluctant disciple's actions in particular and the development of the novel in general serve as confirmation.

Definitely he sees Hawks as a way out of his past and his plight. For this reason he moves to the boarding house where father and daughter are staying and rents a room "a little larger than his car" which is itself symbolic of his spiritual condition and self-love. Because Hawks apparently blinded himself in witness to God, he cannot believe that the man would be capable of begetting the bastard Sabbath. That Haze refers no less than six times within the space of three pages to the disturbing possibility of the daughter's bastardry is proof enough of his incipient belief. To satisfy his pride he tries to explain

this phenomenon in terms of his Church Without Christ. He cannot. But more important than this is his less-than-reserved wonder at the possibility of a man, who was once evil, giving himself completely to Christ. The dimensions of the drama are articulated within the confines of his head; the daughter is more concerned with her own blighted sexuality. If the blind man can so commit himself, Haze can too. And just how much he depends on Hawks is demonstrated by a dream the boy undergoes, and, in Wise Blood, dreams are indexes to reality.

Before this dream can be discussed, however, another significant dream which defines the protagonist's oedipal entrapment must be explored. The early parallels he draws between his Calvinist mother and Christ are central to the later perceptual blunders and to the validity of his martyr-like death. After he joins Mrs. Watts in bed, following an unsuccessful first night encounter, during which he felt "like something washed ashore on her," she snatches his "Jesus-seeing hat" which prompts him to take her in the darkness. Then, in a very revealing flashback, the author shifts the narrative to a childhood visit he made to a "Sinsational" carnival tent where he saw a naked woman in a black-lined coffin. On returning home he confronts his Calvinist mother dressed in black. In another example of transfer, reminiscent of the dream episode in the train, the boy imagines his mother in the casket at the carnival. While he is imagining this scene, his mother, who has "a cross-shaped face," hits him with a stick as he tries to hide behind a tree. When she hits him, "he was

like part of the tree." Immediately he forgets "the guilt of the tent for the nameless unplaced guilt that was in him."[36]

It seems clear that the "unplaced guilt" that he experiences is a direct result of the oedipal urge. The scene is worth looking at in some detail since it is the crux of the novel and shows a fusion of psychology and theology far superior to The Desert of Love, Brighton Rock, or The Heart of the Matter.

When Haze is in the carnival tent, he hears his father jokingly remark about the naked woman in the box: "Has one of themther built into ever casket ... be a heap ready to go sooner." Now the many allusions to death, sex, and coffins become apparent. Sex is a death act for the boy, possibly a form of sacred-sinning practiced by Pinkie of Brighton Rock, Mauriac's Thérèse, and other "sanctified sinners."[37] From an early age Haze has associated women/sex with death, so in some respects his trip to Taulkinham is to both escape and find death. When he returns home he sees his mother as a conscious reminder of his guilt, but out of desperation or desire, he imagines her in the box. "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. He stood flat against the tree, waiting. She left the washpot and came toward him with a stick. She said, 'What you seen?'" What he has seen, made clear by a comparison between earlier descriptions of his mother and those given in the above quote, is his mother naked in the casket. Since his

father connected the carnival woman with death, there is every reason to believe that Haze does wish his mother dead or that he unconsciously wishes to join her in death. By imaging her to be the naked woman in the box the son sexually appropriates the mother, and this incestuous thought is associated with his own physical and psychological crucifixion. But as Conor Cruise O'Brien argues in Maria Cross--not in relation to O'Connor, but the parallel is pertinent--such a crucifixion is always a double one: "Thus the idea of suffering is conjoined to the idea of punishment."[38] Haze suffers numerous acts of self-emasculation. He punishes others in his maniacal quest of Christ. Sex becomes a punishment that he must suffer in his pursuit of Him.

While it is, I think, obvious that the "unplaced guilt" is a reference to the boy's unconscious sexual appropriation of the mother, it is also a reference to his sin against Jesus, which he tries to expiate by putting stones in his shoes. If Jesus dies to redeem him, as his mother charged, Haze, like so many O'Connor characters, demands a sign of this redemption. Through a process of blind, irrational reasoning--his wise blood, I suppose--Haze, since he did not receive this necessary sign after his act of childhood penance, turns to sinning, tempting Christ to prove that He redeemed him. He desperately wants to be visited by a sign; he is constantly awaiting, especially after a particularly profane act, some acknowledgment from above. Yet his blasphemy produces its own kind of irony because in his sacred sinning he remains nailed to his mother. Defiance is punishment. So while he unconsciously takes his mother sexually, he

consciously desires to eliminate her influence over him. Yet as long as he is searching for Christ--and he always is, one way or the other because his mother is so closely identified with Jesus--he cannot reach Him until he is free of her. Wise Blood is Haze's war with his mother. When he tries to break off the maternal cross, to get rid of that "nameless unplaced guilt," when he tries to reach Christ by sinning sexually, he invariably encounters women who "mother" him. O'Connor's irony is relentless. The more he seeks Christ through sex, the only "real" sin, the more he is pinned to the mother. Thus when he later retorts, "Blasphemy is the way to the truth," the statement has a double meaning. First it implies a conscious effort to escape the net of his mother. Second, it is an unconscious expression of the oedipal urge since his blasphemy is sexual and with mother-figures.

As Haze continues to make perceptual errors and to deny Jesus frenetically, he is also besieged by women. After his conscious sin with Mrs. Watts, the despoiler of his arrogant virginity, a number of women, in a dream-like, fatalistic way, seems to haunt him, even when he does not seek their company (It is O'Connor's joke: God is paying him back for contemplating blasphemy in the first place). When Enoch Emery, on his evolutionary spiral, takes him to see the "new jesus" (a shrunken mummy) which Enoch, prompted by a psychic compulsion, has discovered during his work at the zoo, Motes is confronted by his temptress.

> All he [Enoch] could tell was that Hazel Motes's eyes were on the shrunken mummy. He bent forward

> so that his face was reflected on the glass top of the case. The reflection was pale and the eyes were like two clean bullet holes. Enoch waited, rigid. He heard footsteps in the hall. Oh Jesus Jesus he prayed, let him hurry up and do whatever he's going to do. The woman with the two little boys came in the door. She had one by each hand, and she was grinning. Hazel Motes had not raised his eyes once from the shrunken man. The woman came toward them. She stopped on the other side of the case and looked down into it and the reflection of her face appeared grinning on the glass, over Hazel Motes's.[39]

Seconds later, "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. In a second Enoch knew it had." The scene ends on a violent note. Haze hits Enoch on the head with a rock and excitedly runs to the home of the blind Hawks, the false prophet.

All significant themes of the work are crystallized in the above sequence. The boy's mother still haunts him, reminding him of his mission. That the woman's face is superimposed on his suggests that he is still seeing things from the mother's point of view. Notably, Haze (and his gaze) is placed dramatically in the company of the new Jesus. He is beginning to realize the consequences of his quest, thus his violent attack on Enoch and his rush to the bedside of Hawks for help. Motes' profane search produces only false or grotesque prophets; his blasphemy has ironically brought him closer to his mother.

When he sleeps and dreams in his Essex, which like his religious philosophy is full of holes, he is again haunted by women. His dream is an example of unrefined and partly comic nihilism. In his coffin-car "he dreamed he was not dead but only buried. He

was not waiting on the Judgment because there was no Judgment, he was waiting on nothing." But while he is "waiting on nothing," three women with paper sacks looked in at him as if he were a piece of fish. Then the woman with the two little boys who encountered him in the museum looked in. "After a second, she pushed the boys out of view and indicated that she would climb in and keep him company for a while, but she couldn't get through the glass and finally she went off. All this time Haze was bent on getting out but since there was no use to try, he did not make any move one way or the other. He kept expecting Hawks to appear at the oval window with a wrench but the blind man didn't come."[40]

As in other key dream-sequences in Wise Blood, all central themes merge. While he is pridefully denying the fact of the redemption, his temptress indicates she would like to counter his nothingness. This figure of the Evil Mother is inextricably linked with the fact of Haze's denial. It is as if he has dreamed the mother alive. Though he is trying to flee her, he unconsciously sins with women who "mother" him. And as an active extension of that, certain figures rise up to haunt him. While this scene is somewhat similar to the sleeping berth scene, the difference is that here the mother desires to join him in his coffin--another obvious reminder of his oedipal entrapment. Significantly, he is bent on getting out and waits for the false prophet to unlock his dream. He desperately wants to leave the oedipal bed. And at this time he makes a symbolic commitment to do so.

After the dream he decides to investigate the truth of Hawks' blindness: "The two sets of eyes looked at each other as long as the match lasted; Haze's expression seemed to open onto a deeper blankness and reflect something and then close again." Surely, as indicated by the previous dream and his subsequent actions, he is ready for help but puts his faith in a false or failed prophet. After his discovery that the man is a fraud--a sobering experience rather than one of elation, which would be the case if he wanted vindication for his proclaimed nonbelief--he is genuinely troubled and this points to his incipient understanding of the enormity of his own denial. Ironically, he appears to suffer for the man's duplicity, in this scene and in his later self-blinding. Again, the discovery of the charlatanry is further evidence that Haze's blasphemous mission is in search of Christ, though the event in itself does not convert him. He has still to break with the past and to cut the oedipal chain. But it does, at least on the unconscious level, force him to arrive at some tentative conceptions of the falsity of the quest. Soon after this he murders Solace Layfield for not being true.

The juxtaposing of Haze's and Enoch's ministries (actually, a parody of the quest motif), the tragic and the comic, produces in Thomas Mann's terms a form of the grotesque. What Haze does seriously, Enoch does comically. Enoch, whose father looks like Jesus, and who himself "knows a heap about Jesus," is a product of the Rodemill Boys Bible Academy; thus he feels capable and compelled to offer his Jesus-experience to his friend. When he brings the

new jesus (a museum mummy) to Haze, Sabbath Hawks, who has seduced and mothered him, makes it in Caroline Gordon's terms a grotesque member of "a most unholy family." At last the prophet is witness to the consequences of his search. The scene is worth looking at in some detail. While Sabbath fondles the mummy, the unofficial husband puts on his mother's glasses for the second time and his perception of things becomes distorted. "The little silver-rimmed glasses gave him a look of deflected sharpness, as if they were hiding some dishonest plan that would show in his naked eyes. His fingers began to snap nervously and he forgot what he was going to do. He saw his mother's face in his, looking at the face in the mirror. He moved back quickly and raised his hand to take off the glasses but the door opened and two more faces floated into his line of vision: one of them said, 'Call me Momma now.'"

As with the previous vision, this one also brings together a number of themes. With the aid of his mother's glasses, he can get a glimpse of his own psychology. It is when he actually wears the glasses that he realizes how much he is tied to her. The mother that haunted him becomes, in some ways, the instrument of his redemption. He suspects that his blasphemous mission has taken him closer to his mother and farther from Christ. The "Dishonest plan" the spectacles seem to hide is his profane journey. Most important, he comes face to face with the results of his plea for a Church Without Christ--a dried-up mummy stolen from the museum, a place of the dead. The mummy is a symbolic child of his symbolic incest.

By destroying the new jesus (he does it cautiously, "as if he were bracing himself for a blow"), and throwing his mother's glasses out the door, he has abandoned this phase of his preaching and is largely free of his mother. The oedipal chain has been forcefully broken; Haze is ready for Christ.

If his destruction of the new jesus kills an impersonator of Christ, his brutal murder of Solace Layfield kills an impersonator of himself. The grotesqueness evoked in this instance is accomplished not particularly through the act itself but by the incongruities summoned by the clash between, in Baudelaire's terms, something real and something imitative, the tragic and comic aspects of the death (after all Solace, who finds no peace, is forced to jog and strip while Haze runs him down with the Essex), and even the clash between the act itself and the religious implications. The murder, for cold calculation, is no less shocking than the Misfit's destruction of an entire family in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find." He accosts Solace, forces him to strip on the run and proceeds to flatten him twice with the car, declaring "you ain't true." O'Connor's description of this is terse, the tension is sustained and there is little catharsis. After he runs down the prophet, he squatted down by his face to listen to what the man was trying to say. "'Give my mother a lot of trouble,' he said through a kind of bubbling in his throat. 'Never giver no rest. Stole theter car. Never told the truth to my daddy or give Henry what, never give him ..'" Before his false reflection dies, he confesses his

sins to Haze, a captive priest, ministering in a sense the last rites. "When the double, suffering from guilt and pain, prays to Jesus for help, Hazel slaps him on the back stopping his breath."[41] The act is an ambivalent one: is Haze putting Solace out of his misery or is he merely killing him to silence him? After all, he kills his double for stealing part of his personality. Psychologically, the young fanatic destroys that projection of his false self as a prelude to his self-blinding.

After his sacred murder of Layfield, he decides to begin preaching the Church Without Christ in a new city where his message will not be modified by the interpretations of false prophets. However, before he can leave Taulkinham, he must repair the Essex, which was damaged, its spiritual qualities sapped, during his bloody encounter with his religious counterpart. The spiritual state of the Church Without Christ is akin to the mechanical condition of the Essex. While a young attendant inspects the car, the owner bombards him with church doctrines and blasphemy, which the attendant answers with a check-list of the car's faults. The Church Without Christ is as unable to attract and keep disciples as the Essex is to hold gasoline and water. The car cannot get him to a new city and his blasphemous religion cannot keep him from Christ. So, though he has broken the oedipal chain, he is still committing perceptual blunders. He believes his car "is just beginning its life." Shortly thereafter a policeman, for no apparent reason, pushes the car off a cliff into a partly burnt pasture presided over by a buzzard. If we call the

policeman's actions absurd, we must also consider them a legitimate outcome of Haze's quest. He has been on an absurd journey since the outset because he vainly attempted to shun his past and psychology. Now he appears to recognize this. "Haze stood for a few minutes, looking over the scene. His face seemed to reflect the entire distance across the clearing and on beyond, the entire distance that extended from his eyes to the blank gray sky that went on, depth after depth, into space. His knees bent under him and he sat down on the edge of the embankment with his feet hanging over."[42]

This is almost the end of the blasphemous journey for him. Like the buzzard he presides over his own wasteland. He sees where his ministry has been taking him. There is no more need for blasphemy since it neither helped him forget his mother nor get to Christ. For these reasons it is not surprising that Haze drops his arrogant stance and blinds himself in an exaggerated form of his childhood penance. His wearing barbed wire under his shirt and putting stones in his shoes are acts of atonement. Previously he had looked for signs when he performed an act of penance. This was to satisfy his pride. Now he looks for no sign that Jesus is watching him; his egotism has at least diminished. Yet, all the same, O'Connor's irony is never quite relaxed. Haze's suffering and death at the hands of two anxious policemen cannot, as he desires, be ultimately of his own volition but by the machinations of his landlady, Mrs. Flood, who nails him in death to the maternal cross. He is still able, however, to breathe that final act of defiance: "I want to go on where I'm going."

Paradoxically O'Connor suggests that true vision might come only through denial, mortification, and death. When he had his eyes open, Haze saw little. Blindness, as a way of looking inward, enabled him to see himself clearly. The possibilities that Hitchcock saw in his eyes on the train are seen by Flood. The difference now is that he has caught up with the pin point of light. As O'Connor would have it, he has seen the light and become the light. In some respects the end is the beginning. When the reader first sees him, "The outline of a skull under his skin was plain and insistent." At the end of the novel the author repeats the phrase in almost identical fashion: "The outline of a skull was plain under his skin." Similarly, in the middle of the work he remarks to a waitress, "If Jesus existed ... I wouldn't be clean." It follows according to the internal logic of the novel and his logic, that when he tells Flood, "I'm not clean," he also admits to the existence of Christ. Nonetheless, his arrogance and narcissism are never completely diminished so it is problematic whether the boy experiences a victory over Christ rather than a death in Him. O'Connor, of course, does not tell us this. She has constructed a devastatingly concrete world that is true to her best insights. Haze has traveled a violent road, the end of which is truly symbolism and mystery.

O'Connor remarks in her preface to the second edition of Wise Blood that it "was written by an author congenitally innocent of theory, but one with certain preoccupations." It came from the blood, before she could be tempted to "tidy up reality," and before

she articulated a Christian aesthetic. In the same preface she writes, "That belief in Christ is to some a matter of life and death has been a stumbling block for readers who would prefer to think it a matter of no great consequence. For them Hazel Motes' integrity lies in his trying with such vigor to get rid of the ragged figure who moves from tree to tree in the back of his mind. For the author Hazel's integrity lies in his not being able to." Thus, as in the Power and the Glory, Christ is the center of her novel. From an analysis of some of the stories she incorporated into the novel it is apparent that she, in addition to the above preoccupation, sought a pattern of imagery to allow the presence of Christ.[43] And this she found. But in employing the grotesque mode, replete with parody, incongruity, and irresolution and allowing her character to practice an exaggerated existentialism, and by giving full reign to the demonic, she intimates many qualities of an absurd universe. If style is the key to Haze's character, it may also be to the novel in general and there is something more intoxicating about the style than the content.

This means that O'Connor, who apparently began with many of the preoccupations of Mauriac and Greene, would settle for nothing less than an aesthetic answer to the questions of a religious presence in fiction. She came to realize that she couldn't invoke the so-called profane world without sensing its peculiar beauty. Wise Blood is her successful war with the art of the novel.

It is not as easy, or desirable for that matter, to trace the evolutionary relationship between O'Connor's religious vision and her aesthetic strategy, as it was with Mauriac and Greene. Part of the reason for this is that O'Connor was primarily a short story writer whose development and output was a little uneven. While there is no reason to suspect she ceased linking *religion* and *violence* after the publication of *Wise Blood* in 1952--such was her method in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," (1953), "The Displaced Person" (1954), and other works--there is sufficient evidence to argue that, although the writer never ceased to claim, in undisguised Christian terms, that "death is the brother to my imagination and I can't imagine a story not ending in it or in its forshadowing," she did try to temper the demon somewhat and to relax, occasionally, the grotesque mode that she used so successfully in *Wise Blood*. There is little reason to think that this resulted in inferior fiction. "The Artificial Nigger" (1955), apparently her favorite work, is a powerful and intriguing story about pride and narcissism, about the comic and deadly consequences of a man trying to become his own God in a veiled usurpation of the Father. It is through irony and subtle use of natural symbols and the evocation of the recognizable social and psychological world in the mythic terms of Dante's *Divine Comedy* that O'Connor exposes the all-consuming egotism of Mr. Head. In "The Artificial Nigger," "Good Country People" (1955), "Greenleaf" (1956), "The Enduring Chill" (1958), she is most concerned with epiphany, the moment of

grace which she evokes through symbolism; she so structures these stories that it is not necessary to refer to particular aspects of religious doctrine or aesthetics to explain them. But it is also evident that, in the mid-1950's, as her Christian aesthetic began to find mature expression, she again turned her sights to another treatment of the difficulty of prophecy in the modern world. She contemplated introducing a full-fledged prophet, without the psychological complexity of Haze, into a secular environment. The Violent Bear It Away, started in 1955 and published in 1960, probably comes closest to dramatizing those qualities of the Invisible Church O'Connor took pains to define and for that reason is not such a powerful novel as Wise Blood.

Within an eight year period François Mauriac, Graham Greene, and Flannery O'Connor published works that can be thought of as a partial or final summation of their attempts to solve certain problems encountered in writing religious fiction: The Lamb (1953), A Burnt-Out Case (1961), The Violent Bear It Away (1960).[44] Greene, it will be remembered, according to his own intentions, was interested in dramatizing certain stages of belief. He obviously thought that there was little possibility for personal or societal redemption to be found in organized religion or humanitarianism. His hope was in a return to primitivism; his invisible Church existed beyond dogma or definition. Mauriac and O'Connor, on the other hand, apparently set out to write Catholic novels, though their understanding of this phrase was radically different.

After publication of The Lamb Mauriac lamented that "I have lost faith in the novel," that "I have become a preacher." By his own admission he intended The Lamb to be a novel that was especially designed "to illustrate Catholic doctrine." Mauriac, it will be recalled, is probably too hard on himself because the religious element of the novel is the structure. He has tried his hand at a fictional transfiguration of Christ but unfortunately, he doesn't seem to have learned anything from Greene's The Power and the Glory or Kazantzakis' The Greek Passion. The Christ-figure, Xavier, is more of a meddler than a savior, more of a suicide than a redeemer. Ironically, Mauriac's failure is the novel's gain: Xavier is at least psychologically interesting. Yet, more important here, is that the author, ostensibly in deference to Maritain, tends to equate Catholic literature with piety. If the novel is a failure it is not because it is Christ-centered or that it represents incarnational art: it fails because Mauriac employs the Christ parallels without an accompanying sense of urgency. Though he acknowledged some thirty years before in God and Mammon that a certain exaggeration is essential to get a religious vision across to a secular world, in The Lamb he is unable to follow his earlier dictum.

Mauriac and O'Connor used much the same type of critical terminology and general statement to explain their articulation of a religious fiction. Both are firmly planted in the concrete. Both felt they existed in a world in which a religious sense was negligible; thus, in a way, they saw themselves as Christian artists whose

"duty" was to decry secularism, exaggerated rationalism, and other forces that rendered the Christian imagination ineffective. No more than Mauriac did O'Connor accept naturalistic, sociological, or strictly psychological explanations of human conduct. But even though one gets the impression from reading God and Mammon and other critical pieces that the author abhorred a narrow Catholicism and felt that a successful religious novel must flirt with the apocalyptic, the profane, and the devil, however, characterized, Mauriac was unable, with exceptions, to go beyond a dramatic critique of the repressive forces of Christianity. While it is clear that O'Connor shared many of Mauriac's attitudes toward religious fiction, thematically and technically she was able to go beyond him. For her, to write Catholic fiction did not mean flirting with the pious, but meant to imbue it with a sense of prophecy, Eucharistic symbolism, apocalyptic imagery; in all, a scriptural dimension.

That O'Connor's artistic vision and Christian aesthetic substantially matured during the writing of The Violent Bear It Away is attested to by a comparison of the original first chapter, published in 1955 as "You Can't Be Any Poorer Than Dead" with the final version as it appears in the novel. Since "You Can't Be Any Poorer Than Dead" was written at approximately the same time as "The Artificial Nigger," it is not surprising that in theme, characterization, and motifs these stories are similar. Both are about the relationship between a young boy and an older male relative that is strained by their respective pride, narcissism, and general comic estrangement. Nelson of "The

Artificial Nigger" and Francis Tarwater of "You Can't Be Any Poorer Than Dead" depend on their foster parents for moral leadership and for evaluation of experience. They both feel it is necessary to test the validity of their educations. Their respective trips to the city are to test concrete experiences against the generalizations they have been supplied. Nelson, ironically, comes to the understanding that the city is really hell, that though his grandfather betrayed him, he knew enough to save them both. Tarwater, partially convinced by a devil-friend that his great-uncle tricked him, that he possibly taught him a system of figures and notions of religion that no one else used or believed, doesn't realize the truth of the old man's contentions until he is violated by a stranger. While Tarwater does not travel to the city with his uncle, he does, like Nelson, become reconciled with his surrogate father. Yet, unlike his counterpart, he will return to the city and transform it.

The changes O'Connor made between "You Can't Be Any Poorer Than Dead" and chapter one of the novel are illustrative of her deepening interest in the religion of estrangement, in the prophet as eccentric outsider. As suggested above, the original story concerns a revolt against the father. "You Can't Be Any Poorer Than Dead" involves young Tarwater's refusal, prompted by his own need for independence and by temptations of an inner voice, to bury the uncle. There are no real attempts to extend the religious dimensions of the plot. Like Robin Molineaux, he is easily fooled by what he thinks is his better self and the reader is led to believe

as the story concludes that the boy will make many mistakes and suffer the consequences. This "first" conclusion is difficult to reconcile with the rest of the story because, psychologically, considering the characterization of the uncle, Tarwater is performing a positive act by refusing to bury him. Only in the novel does O'Connor make it apparent that this refusal, while on the surface a declaration of independence, is the boy's actual and symbolic ouster from what she reveals as the invisible Church.

Such significant changes in design are not, however, unusual with her. "The Train," for example, which is the original first chapter of Wise Blood, has little of the "possibility" and beautiful tension of the final piece. Hazel Motes, far less arrogant than his later cousin, is simply trying to escape from his hometown, Eastrod, to Taulkinham. The past, his mother, or Christ do not really haunt him. Thus O'Connor, without altering the literal sense of "The Train," transforms plot and character, giving them both a religious urgency. This is not to say that in her conception of Wise Blood she grafted a religious superstructure on the original stories. "The Peeler," published a year after "The Train" (1948), demonstrates that Haze is somehow obsessed with Christ, but there is little hint that the author will be able to fuse so successfully the psychological and theological concerns. A perusal of her early stories suggests that O'Connor quickly became discontent with stories that displayed no more than the usual artistic resolution. This she could do very well and could have probably spent the rest of her

life writing for The New Yorker. But what she was after was a psychological and symbolic framework which could convey a profoundly religious point of view in a world where this attitude is not only held suspect but is often rejected. So, the changes between the first and final versions of chapter one of The Violent Bear It Away, is a natural consequence of the author's attempting to expand her religious vision, to dramatize what she so frequently called the "added dimension."

In a footnote to an O'Connor article Sumner J. Ferris asks rhetorically: "Did Miss O'Connor change an originally picaresque conception of the novel to a theological one?"[45] Though he doesn't provide much of an answer to this, it must be, with clarification, yes. The term picaresque, however, is not very appropriate. O'Connor, in "You Can't Be Any Poorer Than Dead," Wise Blood, "The Artificial Nigger," "The Lame Shall Enter First," and other pieces found dramatic possibilities in the oedipal struggle. And like Greene, Joyce, Mauriac, and others she soon realized that a logical extension of this situation could include, without any loss of intensity, the symbolic structure of the Church and an intimation of man's relationship to the divine. Thus theology enters the psychology of the characters, and the result is Stephen Daedalus and a Hazel Motes.

The actual changes O'Connor made in the first chapter of The Violent Bear It Away between 1955 and 1960 are worth some attention since they directly parallel some of her fully realized critical concepts. In addition to the changes already noted, the most obvious

one is in the characterization of Mason Tarwater. She remarked to Granville Hicks in 1962 that old Tarwater "lacks the visible Church, but Christ is the center of his life."[46] This is true in the novel but not so much in the original version. The original Tarwater is a much flatter character than his descendant. Within the five year period, whether influenced by Andrew Lytle's discussion of the role of the prophet in "The Hind Tit," one of the essays collected in the radically conservative I'll Take My Stand (1930) or not, she added significant passages that unashamedly trumpeted the prophetic role of Mason Tarwater. Among others, she included the following: "The old man, who said he was a prophet, had raised the boy to expect the Lord's call himself and to be prepared for the day he would hear it. He has schooled him in the evils, that befal prophets; in those that come for the world, which are trifling, and those that come from the Lord and burn the prophet clean; for he himself had been burned clean and burned clean again. He had learned by fire." Yet while she might be behind her prophet one-hundred per cent, she is also able to find humor in his prophecies and eccentricities.

> He had been called in his early youth and had set out for the city to proclaim the destruction awaiting a world that had abandoned its Savior. He proclaimed from the midst of his fury that the world would see the sun burst in blood and fire and while he raged and waited, it 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 that turned from green to white and green to white and green to white again. It rose and set and he despaired of the Lord's listening. 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.[47]

It is not unusual for O'Connor's religious prophets to demand a sign of the Lord's presence or the validity of their penance or proposed ministry. Tarwater is no exception. He waits patiently for the natural order to be interrupted, yet his narcissism is not directly answered. Instead of breathing destruction on a world that has abandoned its Saviour, the finger of God touches him and in a sense destroys him. From this description and others in the chapter it appears that the author wanted to present the old man farcically but without undercutting his essential seriousness of purpose or the legacy he is to leave to his nephew. Artistically, this is a difficult risk. Undoubtedly a comic pettiness exists between old and young Tarwater. Mason is a wily old bird who, having been tricked by his daughter and committed to an asylum, has learned to be crafty yet reluctantly acknowledges that he is getting a little old to do any more kidnappings for Christ. His defense of Powderhead against Rayber and the school inspector, his lengthy (and dramatized) instructions for his burial, his complicated efforts to baptize Bishop are presented with a mixture of comedy and farce. The old man belongs to a previous age; he is a hilarious thief in the night as he drifts in and out of the city in seek of baptismal prey. Notably, this air of farce tends to diminish as the novel progresses. Though it would require a close examination of individual manuscripts to

investigate in totality certain changes in tone, I don't believe this signifies any failing or uncertainty on the author's part. She seemed to understand, according to Miles Orvell, with Thomas Mann, "that an air of farce, of theatrical performance, is appropriate to a character who is subjectively conscious of his role in an epic."[48] Then to emphasize the awe and seriousness that marks the beginning of young Tarwater's vocation, Orvell believes O'Connor "abandons the comic tone of festival farce and brings out instead, with great effect, the solemnity of the festival epic."

Orvell's is a very sound suggestion, though there is more to the problem than the mythic dimensions. Old Tarwater's frequent associating of himself with biblical figures (all the prophets since Elijah who had escaped death), reveals a genuine touch of narcissism. So his Church, despite its apparent orthodoxy, is one of self-love. His becomes a private war, a dramatization that is closer to rhetoric than significant action, and this is revealed in his constantly retelling of the familiar stories to his nephew. He is presented as a not-so-Wise Old Man presiding over a comic order. He is more interested in the style of prophecy than the content. O'Connor initially presents a comic prophet but then gives birth to a new, more serious one before the reader's eyes.

Another important difference between "You Can't Be Any Poorer Than Dead" and the subsequent version, which gets to the core of O'Connor's incarnational art, is her characterization of the child Bishop. It will be remembered that the great-uncle's admonition is

for Tarwater to bury him in a Christian way. Added to this in the novel is another charge: to baptize Bishop, who is in the clutches of the aetheist Rayber. In the original account there is mention of the child: "He was a white-haired child and wore steel-rimmed spectacles and had pale silver eyes like the old man's."[49] Here Bishop is an extraneous detail because there is no reason for his existence. It is an expected development that the abstract Rayber, who is cut-off from God and love, should give birth to a dim-witted child. But in the novel Bishop is more than this; he is the center of mystery to the old man and a conscious reprobation to young Tarwater. So Bishop, like Faulkner's Benjy, is enlarged to a sacred figure. When the boy first meets Bishop, a mystical relationship is established between the two. Tarwater remarks, something in the manner of Christ addressing Pilate, "Before you was here, I was here." Thus the terms of the drama as finally expressed, become clear. By seizing on the act of baptism, O'Connor opened up all sorts of possibilities, especially since she saw the act of baptism as transcending any human act. The religious element takes on an entirely new meaning. By refusing to bury his great uncle, he does not let him enter death; by refusing to baptize the child, he does not let him enter life. With these changes, O'Connor could make the struggle a more intense one and in turn she is able to enlargen the character of the devil. In spite of what the stranger says to the contrary, Tarwater must choose among Jesus, the devil, or himself. O'Connor has increased the odds and provided herself with the opportunity to again

wed the theme of religious initiation with the method of violence.

To summarize the religious element in the first chapter of The Violent Bear It Away, Tarwater has been admonished by his great-uncle to bury him and baptize Bishop. His refusal to bury him (he gets drunk instead), his listening to the stranger-devil, and his symbolic (he thinks actual) burning of the old man's corpse have a number of implications. First of all, he burns vestiges of his entrapment--both the person and the house. He believes, on his return from town, he can construct his own life. In burning what he thinks is the corpse of his uncle, he symbolically performs the act the rational school-teacher would and does sanction, and also, since he yields to the devil (and his own inclinations) and fails to give Mason Tarwater the Christian burial his uncle has so humorously rehearsed, that is, in orthodox terms, the possibility of redemption (here O'Connor appears to follow strictly orthodox lines), Tarwater places himself outside the Church--a fact which will become clearer when his spiritual hunger is emphasized. The grotesqueness accompanying the actual fire and symbolic sacrilege is suggested by the inherent incongruities. Since we know the old man's body has been removed from the house by the Negro Buford Munson, there is a strange blending of effects: ludicrous and fearful, tragic and comic. An obvious tension is produced by the conflict between the grotesque and religious implications in this instance yet with no loss of effect. Whatever Tarwater's actual motives (drunkenness, the devil, narcissism, desire for a "sign"), it does not alter his symbolic ouster from the

Church. Tarwater's subsequent journey to the city is not expressly to fulfill his great-uncle's legacy, but for knowledge, to verify what he has been taught against what he finds in the observable world. Having destroyed the symbol of his confinement, the boy, as will be demonstrated, is vulnerable to a physical exchange of love although Rayber's fear of emotionalism destroys this possibility. O'Connor, in a rare exception, treats the relationship between the love of man and the love of God. She at least raises the possibility that a genuine human love could well "save" Tarwater from fulfilling the proposed mission although her characterization of the school teacher will not allow such a fruitful development.

Tarwater's conflict with Rayber concerning the spiritual state of Bishop constitutes the center of the novel. Rayber, according to Irving Malin, can be seen as a third "father" to the boy and tries to fashion him in his image. Rayber teaches rationalism; if he can convert Tarwater, if he can turn him from the false prophecy of the old man he will exalt in his power.[50] The struggle between Tarwater and Rayber is at once both narcissistic and religious, and the object and receptacle is Bishop. The religious conflict is adequately stated in the epigraph to the novel: "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away (Matthew 11:12)." This passage is taken by various Catholic exegetes to have two possible meanings: either that, with Christ's ministry begun, the faithful may attain the kingdom of heaven or (less commonly) parenthetically anticipating

verses 16-19 of the same chapter, that the Pharisees, despite John's prophecy and Christ's ministry, still remain unbelievers and try to influence others in this respect.[51] These attitudes are represented respectively in Tarwater and Rayber, the believer (though he denies it) and the unbeliever, the saved and the damned. By this reading the boy becomes the unwitting vehicle and dispenser of God's grace. When he reaches his uncle's house and confronts the child, Tarwater "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." Although he repeatedly cries "No," it was like trying to shout out in his sleep. While on the surface it appears that Tarwater's actions are determined, the narrative reveals that while he tries desperately to fight his great-uncle's prophecy Rayber ironically keeps it in the forefront. So the school teacher unintentionally enters the conspiracy on the side of the old man.

The actual macabre drowning-baptism of Bishop, which is reminiscent of Haze's murder of Solace Layfield in Wise Blood, is a highly symbolic act complicated by the multi-dimensional battle between Rayber and Tarwater involving religion, self-love, and the muted desire for human love. The grotesqueness is produced primarily by the

juxtaposing of such a sacred, initiatory rite as baptism with the profane finality of violent death. The theological implications of the act are enlightening. Tarwater becomes an instrument of Divine Providence even though he himself is not yet of God's company. Bishop, like Norton in "The Lame Shall Enter First," is a martyr who gives his murderer the opportunity for redemption, either human or divine. It is Rayber's refusal to baptize Bishop that forces the mission on Tarwater. As soon as they meet, the child was "sticking out his hand to touch him." The boy recognizes that Bishop "was the forced servant of God come to see that he was born again." Twice he jumps into the fountain, immersing himself in the waters of the baptismal font. The second time the child is transfigured:

> The child stood grinning in the pool, lifting his feet slowly up and down as if he liked the feel of the wet seeping into his shoes. The sun, which had been tacking from cloud to cloud, emerged above the fountain. A blinding brightness fell on the lion's tangled marble head and gilded the stream of water rushing from his mouth. Then the light, falling more gently, rested like a hand on the child's white head. His face might have been a mirror where the sun had stopped to watch its reflection.[52]

Tarwater starts to baptize him but senses that the "old man might be lurking near," thus he resolves with the help of his devil friend to drown rather than baptize the child.

During a boat ride they both fall into the water and Tarwater drowns Bishop but also baptizes him. He tells the truck driver who picks him up after the murder that the act was an accident: "The words just come out of themselves but it don't mean nothing. You

can't be born again." On the contrary, theologically and dramatically, it does mean something. According to the logic of the novel Rayber's passivity and refusal to baptize his dead sister's child has put his soul in jeopardy. In scholastic terms, the sacrament of baptism supercedes the physical act of murder (the technical question of intent might be raised) since Bishop, like Bevel in "The River," has been thrust into the kingdom of heaven. The baptismal act does not redeem Tarwater: it takes further denial as well as his own spiritual and physical rape to make him eligible. This scene is the novel's climax but it is also ambiguous as Haze's murder-redemption of Solace Layfield is questionable. Since both Rayber and Tarwater compete for the body and soul of the child, the drowning can be seen as the shocking outcome of this competition. Undoubtedly Tarwater wants it to be construed this way as indicated by his repeated claims that he is free and that he can act. And this is true to a degree. In a moment of despair Rayber took the child to what he thought was a deserted beach with the intention of drowning him. Before he could complete the act, "he envisioned his life without the child," and rushed for help in reviving him. Later, unable to restrain the urge to confess, Rayber admits to Tarwater that "Once I tried to drown him." Ironically, this well-intentioned admission serves as vindication for old Tarwater's prophecy as the boy replies, "He always told me you couldn't do nothing, couldn't act." Rayber unwittingly provides the boy with a conscious expression of a thought that up to this time has remained unconscious.

During a scene quoted earlier, in which Bishop is transfigured, Tarwater, half-aware of the old prophet's presence and half-compelled to perform the act, is obstructed by Rayber. Then he notices a gaunt, cross-shaped, starving face--his own reflection merges with the devil --which appears to question him or at least to provoke the following unspoken answer: "I wasn't going to baptize him, he said, flinging the silent words at the silent face. I'd drown him first." In turn the face appeared to say, "Drown him then." The devil-friend of chapter one has entered Tarwater's psyche and takes advantage of the boy's petulance and narcissism to have him cultivate the devilish water-sport to its grim conclusion. Thanks to his great-uncle, Tarwater is eager bait. "You can't just say NO," he repeatedly says, "You got to do NO." Rayber is unable to do NO and his admission feeds Tarwater's need for violent action. In spite of a general absence of self-awareness until the end of the novel, Rayber understands the significance of the dimwit in his life. He knows "that his own stability depended on the little boy's presence. He could control his terrifying love as long as it had its focus in Bishop, but if anything happened to the child ... the whole world would become his idiot child." The school teacher recognizes to an extent his own vulnerability. Tarwater still believes he can perform a pure act without any consequences, without his ministry haunting him. He is very wrong, as the development of certain motifs and image patterns during the remainder of the novel indicates.

As noted earlier, Tarwater can be considered an unwitting

vehicle for the dispensation of God's grace even though he himself is not of the elect. Tarwater's spiritual hunger or deficiency is artistically reinforced by his physical hunger. His increasing inability to digest and receive nourishment from food during his stay with Rayber forceably underlines his spiritual state.

The Violent Bear It Away is framed with references to "bread and fishes." Early in the novel old Tarwater, instructing his nephew on the ritual of burying, remarks to his horrified nephew that when he dies he will "hasten to the banks of the Lake of Galilee to eat the loaves and fishes that the Lord has multiplied." After the boy has returned to Powderhead he envisions the old man among the five thousand and at last is aware of the object of his own hunger. It is because Tarwater's journey to the city is essentially for knowledge, complicated by his new-found or freshly inspired sense of self-assertiveness, that he denies the trappings of the spiritual life. He repeatedly denies the old man's influence--his seed, which is bread in cryptic form--and asserts with conviction his ability to determine his own life. Despite his propensity to act, no course satisfies his hunger. The face of the boy gazing at a single loaf of bread in a bakery window looked to Rayber "like the face of someone starving who sees a meal he can't reach laid out before him." The strangeness in his gut, diagnosed incorrectly by his devil-friend as worms, is actually a spiritual pain. Before the macabre drowning of Bishop, Tarwater satiates himself with "six buns and three cans of beer" in an apparent effort to summon strength.

Although Rayber accurately describes his problem when he says, "Something's eating you on the inside" or "You can't eat because something is eating you," the remedy he offers--a secular education--does not ease the pain. Following the drowning, the boy tacitly acknowledges that his hunger can be satisfied only by the "bread of life" in his pleas to the truck driver for food. "'I ain't hungry for the bread of life,' the boy said. 'I'm hungry for something to eat here and now.'" With an exaggerated denial similar to Hazel Motes', Tarwater accepts the drugged whiskey from the homosexual, muttering "It's better than the Bread of Life." It is clear that the refusal of the woman to sell him a "purple drink" in addition to his stomach's rejection of physical food serves a symbolic function. His refusal to bury his great-uncle as well as his denial of his spiritual life in general completes his ouster from the Church. His rape by "the pale, lean old-looking young man with deep hollows under his cheekbone" is akin to his spiritual rape by Rayber. And since the homosexual's description has been applied to the boy at various times, it is O'Connor's joke that he must get into himself to learn the real truth. In a violent scene in which he consumes his adversary with fire by burning the trees and grass, Tarwater experiences his moment of grace or at least is sure he cannot escape his uncle's legacy.[53] When he returns to the grave he realizes that his hunger is the same as the old man's "and that nothing on earth would fill him." While there is no reason to suspect, as he moves toward the dark city, where the children of God lay sleeping, that he will have

any more success than Haze in finding and changing these people, he is, unlike Haze, at least sure of his mission. Because there is no irony directed at Tarwater, as there was at his great uncle, the reader should probably assume O'Connor was altogether serious in this final characterization. In fact, the concluding scenes exude a still and certain beauty, free of most verbal tension, that is truly remarkable in O'Connor. Tarwater, who smears dirt from the grave on his forehead to signify his diminished egotism, transcends the present and enters time and history: "He felt his hunger no longer as a pain but as a tide. He felt it rising in himself through time and darkness, rising through the centuries, and he knew that it rose in a line of men whose lives were chosen to sustain it, who would wander in the world, strangers from that violent country where the silence is never broken except to shout the truth." This is no petty prophecy but a mythological, apocalyptical comprehension.

It appears certain, as I have demonstrated, that O'Connor's growing awareness of the relationship between the aesthetic and the religious mind found some kind of final expression in her articulation of qualities of the invisible Church and in her dramatization of these in The Violent Bear It Away. Obviously uncomfortable with any type of intellectualized religious theme, she discovered that by fictionalizing a sense of prophecy, the character of the devil, the effects of secularism; by utilizing scriptural imagery and motifs, eucharistic symbolism, and the essence of the sacraments; and by employing the grotesque mode as a full aesthetic, she was able to

solve the problems encountered when religion is dramatized. The Violent Bear It Away can be considered a perfect blending of the religious and the aesthetic. Nonetheless, it appears less powerful to me because possibly it betrays too much consideration. Miles Orvell believes it is not entirely successful because there was "too much reason in making it."[54] Orvell is referring, in part, to the length of time it took O'Connor to complete the novel and it is difficult to disagree. But possibly more important, as I have already mentioned, was O'Connor's bringing of her fiction into line with her critical views or at least being more deliberate in her use of artistic techniques. For these reasons The Violent Bear It Away marks a conclusion of efforts by O'Connor to write what might be called a radical Christian or Catholic fiction.

Everything That Rises Must Converge (1965), the volume published posthumously, shows, I think, a shift in emphasis from almost a singular preoccupation with characters who experience emotional, evangelical encounters with Christ to characters who are moved to Christ in a believable social context, where the conflict is largely between scornful intellectuals and less-prideful good country people. This shift is most evident in relation to the grotesque mode. In Everything That Rises Must Converge O'Connor does not explore to any great extent the beautiful depths of the grotesque. "The Lame Shall Enter First" and her last published work, "Parker's Back," are exceptions to this generalization. "Parker's Back" is particularly instructive in regard to the author's development as it points back thematically

and technically to Wise Blood. It is indeed possible that the author realized she was becoming somewhat repetitious in her treatment of certain themes in her later short stories and decided to return to the form of her earlier works but with some important modifications. In her most recent collection the theological concerns emerge from conflicts more traditional in nature where a character's moment of grace is often inseparable from tragic recognition. A considerable number of stories in Everything--I refer specifically to the title story, "The Enduring Chill," "The Comforts of Home," and "Revelation" --like "The Artificial Nigger," can be appropriately termed theological dramas of pride, self-love, and the intellect. The intrusion of grace in these stories is no less mysterious than before, but most noticeably, there is a consistent breath of optimism which, due to the inevitable ambiguity and incongruity present in the grotesque mode, was not so obvious in O'Connor's earlier works.

It is no small irony that the more O'Connor became conscious of some of the demands of religious fiction or the Catholic imagination, the more difficult it was to satisfy the requirements of her craft. There is probably no finer, no more intense rendering of the relationship between the psychological and theological aspects of religion in contemporary fiction than Wise Blood. On the other hand, neither Mauriac nor Greene came close to risking or writing a novel like The Violent Bear It Away, a truly Catholic work. So Wise Blood and The Violent Bear It Away represent, with varying degrees of intensity, the polar aspects of O'Connor's religious

imagination, and if the first is preferred to the second, it might mean no more than that contemporary man is more comfortable with paradox than with parable. And this is a deficiency in belief, not in design. Before her death O'Connor, as a writer, began to feel superfluous, since everyone could write short stories. Everyone is still writing stories, and her reputation is still safe. Though, like Mauriac, she could not give up her religion, she made it hers, the way the fog reclaims the night that has been out to sea.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

In the preceding pages I have attempted to answer the question, as it applies to François Mauriac, Graham Greene, and Flannery O'Connor: what is the relationship between a religious aesthetic and the fictional strategy that the individual author formulates to convey his religious vision. To answer the question I have gone to theological trends of the twentieth-century, to Christian aesthetics, and to the novels themselves. I have shown that in this century there is a theological as well as a literary emphasis on subjectivism, existential participation, symbolism, and the necessary recreation of central Christian imagery. In addition I have documented what appears to be, in the thinking of Norman O. Brown and Flannery O'Connor, a general agreement about the nature of Christianity man must return to if he is to recover a genuine religious dimension.

By considering François Mauriac, Graham Greene, and Flannery O'Connor as a "customary critical grouping," I have discussed them within the confines of the Catholic literary tradition. Without trying to propose a prescriptive formula, I have suggested that in the significant works of the three authors, there is an increasing tendency to recover the sacred, scriptural, apocalyptic, and symbolic dimensions of the original Catholic or Christian imagination. To substantiate my claims I have made frequent, though often peripheral,

reference to Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Norman O. Brown, and others who have sensed and observed a general convergence in religious and artistic thought. As dogmatic theology reaches back into time to find those aspects of the sacred that have been denied or neglected during the religious turmoil of the last few centuries, religious writers, particularly Flannery O'Connor, go to the same sources for their Christian aesthetic. Not only does this represent a re-thinking of Maritainian aesthetics but also a satisfactory solution to the question asked at the beginning of this "Conclusion." Once the religious mind can accept the profane content--which allows for the possibility of the death of the sacred--the religious and literary sensibilities become one.

What I have proposed, then in Chapter 1 and in the remainder of the dissertation, is a descriptive, evolutionary definition of Catholic fiction. In a modest way I have tried to put to rest the nagging question of "What is a Catholic Novelist"--a question that has received few satisfactory explanations, especially in relation to the authors under investigation. François Mauriac and Flannery O'Connor express polar strains of the Catholic imagination. The former dramatizes the infantile, negative, non-symbolic, non-transcendant attribues of Catholicism; the latter recovers those qualities of original Christianity that Mauriac could not invoke. Graham Greene, in chronology and perception, stands between his American and French counterpart. In Brighton Rock he quickly got Mauriac's brand of Catholicism out of his fictional veins and, although he

did not articulate a conscious Catholicism, as O'Connor, in his attention to symbolism, existential participation, and Christology he was very close to the Southern writer in fictional technique. While some of Greene's characters move toward God at a great price, the English writer in his best work (The Power and the Glory and The Heart of the Matter) is concerned with the psychic deterioration that results when man, rightly or wrongly, sees the Incarnation as an unforgivable intrusion into human space and time. When psychology and theology were joined in the area of symbolism, as they were in The Heart of the Matter and Wise Blood, the modern religious novel was born. Therefore, it is no longer necessary to speak of the Catholic novel in any sectarian sense. It is no less modern, less arresting, or less artistic than the modern Jewish novel.

It will be observed that the inductive, descriptive definition of Catholic fiction proposed, though central to my argument, essentially furnishes a framework for my discussion, which remains aesthetic. I have tried, simply, to enlarge the critical boundaries and to consider a novel within the religious, psychological, and philosophical context. But though I have supported my analyses with appropriate generalizations from other disciplines, I have treated individual works as organic pieces. With each author I have traced a growth and decline in religious sensibility by concentrating on how the religious elements satisfy the internal aesthetic demands of the fiction.

Contrary to much of the criticism of the last forty years I

show that Mauriac's superior novels are a dramatic critique of an infantile Christianity which condemns man to a destructive psychology and theology of love. Though he does have some difficulty avoiding the body-spirit dualism, Mauriac does formulate a post-Freudian critique of Christianity. He intimates that Christianity has alienated itself from man and in its contemporary form has imposed a paradigm of psychological violence on the faithful.

Greene, profoundly influenced by Mauriac, in Brighton Rock, The Heart of the Matter, and The End of the Affair, showed that he understood the theologically-inspired psychological violence but showed the perversity in man and not in God. Though Greene, at least in character and theme, was more consciously Catholic than O'Connor, his primary interest was in dramatizing the high cost of dying in Christ. He could bring his whiskey-priest around to unselfish, human love which for Greene was very close to God.

Neither Mauriac nor Greene could integrate psychological and theological matters as successfully as O'Connor was able to do in Wise Blood. Here the modern religious sensibility emerges. Wise Blood evokes a tension between a radical commitment to Christ and an intense parody of this desire. O'Connor's Catholic art contains the seeds of its own negation.

I concluded my "Introduction" with this statement of promise: "If one would draw an imaginary line from François Mauriac, through Graham Greene, to Flannery O'Connor, one could discern a steady movement away from fictionalized dogma and theological critique

toward a man-centered, existential fiction which involves a sense of risk, commitment, an eschatological reality where essential truths of the Christic phenomenon become meshed with profound psychological and aesthetic concerns. In light of my concrete proposals, I will attempt to draw that line."

I conclude with the hope that I have fulfilled my original promise without too much sinuous sailing.

FOOTNOTES

Introduction and Chapter One

[1]William F. Lynch, S. J., Christ and Apollo: The Dimensions of the Literary Imagination (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960), p. 12.

[2]Wallace Stevens, The Palm at the End of the Mind, ed. Holly Stevens (New York, Random House, 1971), pp. 257-258.

[3]Frederick J. Hoffman, The Imagination's New Beginning (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), pp. viii-ix.

[4]Amos N. Wilder, Theology and Modern Literature (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), pp. 21-22.

[5]Gene Kellog, The Vital Tradition (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1970), p. 99.

[6]Carl J. Armbruster, S. J., The Vision of Paul Tillich (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), p. 201.

[7]Bernard G. Murchland, "Theology and Literature," The Commonweal, 71 (October, 1959), 65.

[8]The Vision Obscured: Perspectives of Some Twentieth-Century Catholic Novelists, ed. Melvin J. Friedman (New York, Fordham University Press, 1970), p. 1.

[9]Kellog, p. 12.

[10]Ibid., p. 25.

[11]Note: Since Kellog sees the major works of Mauriac, Greene, and O'Connor as critiques of secularism or false Christianity, he really never gets to the question of the integrity of a work of art and exactly how a religious sensibility orders a profane content. As historical and sociological criticism, however, it is a helpful and necessary book.

[12]Felix Hope, "Modern Catholic Literature," Blackfriars, 16 (August, 1935), 606.

[13]Flannery O'Connor, "The Role of the Catholic Novelist," Greyfriar, 7 (1964), 6-7.

[14]Kellog, p. 1.

[15]Richard Sullivan, "A Definition of Catholic Fiction," Books on Trial, (January-February, 1954), pp. 157-158, 191.

[16]Sister Mariella Gable, O.S.B., This is Catholic Fiction, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1948), p. 13.

[17]Ibid., p. 19.

[18]Note: Since Sister Gable wrote this pamphlet before either Greene or O'Connor had emerged as serious religious writers, it is not surprising she goes to Bernanos for an example of unsentimental Catholic fiction.

[19]Nelville Braybrooke, "Catholics and the Novel," Renascence, 5, No. 1 (Autumn, 1943), 30.

[20]Jacques Maritain, Art and Poetry, trans. E. de P. Matthews (New York: Philosophical Library, 1943), p. 41.

[21]Martin Turnell, "The Religious Novel," The Commonweal, 55, no. 3 (October, 1951), 55.

[22]Art and Poetry, p. 59.

[23]Turnell, p. 55.

[24]Ibid., p. 56.

[25]Jerome D'Souza, "What Constitutes a Catholic Novelist," The Month, 68 (October, 1931), 315-326.

[26]Wilfred Sheed, "Enemies of Catholic Promise," The Commonweal, 77, no. 22 (February, 1963), 563.

[27]Michael Novak, "Prophecy and the Novel," The Commonweal, 72, no. 22 (February, 1963), 569.

[28]Norman O. Brown, Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1959), p. 309.

[29]Ibid., p. 313.

[30]Norman O. Brown, Love's Body (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 191.

[31]Ibid., p. 200.

[32]Thomas J. J. Altizer and William Hamilton, Radical Theology and The Death of God (New York: Bobbs-Merril Co., 1966), p. 96.

[33]Jerome Hames, O.P., Karl Barth, trans. Dominic M. Marcuca, S.J., Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1962), p. 234.

[34]Wilder, pp. 4-18.

[35]Murchland, pp. 64-65.

Chapter Two

[1]Blaise Pascal, Pensees, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1966), p. 33.

[2]Philip Stratford, Faith and Fiction: Creative Process in Greene and Mauriac (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1967), p. xii. Note: Stratford's study of Mauriac and Greene is exhaustive and penetrating. My primary objection concerns his critical methodology. While it is important, especially when dealing with religious writers, to fully consider an author's intentions, to allow such "intentions" to dictate a critical methodology to be applied to individual works, is a questionable procedure.

[3]Cited in Stratford, p. 203.

[4]Conor Cruise O'Brien, Maria Cross: Imaginative Patterns in a Grouping of Catholic Writers (California: Academy Guild Press, 1963), p. 5.

[5]François Mauriac, Flesh and Blood, trans. Gerard Hopkins (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1954), p. 28.

[6]Ibid., p. 158.

[7]Life Against Death, p. 308.

[8]François Mauriac, The River of Fire, trans. Gerard Hopkins (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1954), p. 34.

[9]Ibid., p. 34.

[10]Ibid., p. 57.

[11]Kellog, p. 39.

[12]Kenneth Burke, "Version, Con-, Per-, and In-," The Southern Review (Spring, 1966), 330.

[13]Darcy O'Brien, The Conscience of James Joyce (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. viii.

[14]François Mauriac, The Desert of Love and The Enemy, trans. Gerard Hopkins (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1949), p. 242.

[15]Ibid., p. 279.

[16]Michael F. Moloney, Francois Mauriac: A Critical Study (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1958), p. 26.

[17]Ibid., p. 29.

[18]Stratford, p. 204.

[19]Ibid., p. 204.

[20]Kurt F. Reinhardt, The Theological Novels of Modern Europe (New York: Frederick Unger Publishing Co., 1969), p. 16.

[21]Ibid., p. 18.

[22]Louis D. Rubin, Jr., The Teller in The Tale (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967), p. 183.

[23]Jean Paul Sartre, "M. François Mauriac et La Liberte," La Nouvelle Revue Française, 52 (February, 1939), 212-232. Note: Although I have translated Sartre's article, I am relying on Stratford's more even and professional translation, p. 225.

[24]Claude-Edmonde Magny, Histoire du roman français depuis 1918, Paris, 1950.

[25]Rubin, p. 11.

[26]Graham Greene, "François Mauriac," The Lost Childhood (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1951), p. 70.

[27]François Mauriac, A Mauriac Reader: A Kiss for the Leper, Genetrix, The Desert of Love, The Knot of Vipers, Woman of the Pharisees, trans. Gerard Hopkins (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), p. 6.

[28]A Kiss for the Leper, p. 28.

[29]Stratford, pp. 211-212.

[30]A Kiss for the Leper, p. 60.

[31]Moloney, p. 81.

[32]Ibid., pp. 81-82.

[33]Ibid., p. 83.

[34]Maria Cross, p. 28.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Genetrix, p. 78.

[37]Ibid., p. 86.

[38]Ibid., p. 117.

[39]Ibid., p. 125.

[40]François Mauriac, Destinies, trans. Eric Sutton (New York: Covic, Friede Publishers, 1929), p. 185.

[41]Rubin, p. 182.

[42]Note: Though I have found no evidence that Mauriac read Studies in Classical American Literature (1923) before he wrote Destinies, his attitude toward morbid asceticism is very close to Lawrence's. Both writers saw false spirituality as a repudiation of life. Mauriac is as unflinchingly parodic toward Pierre as Lawrence is toward Benjamin Franklin.

[43]Life Against Death, pp. 14-15.

[44]Note: Fiedler, though interested primarily in the psychological elements that contributed to the insistent failure of love in 19th and 20th century American fiction, by perceiving that traditional Christian teachings insured the suppression of libidinal energy, announces the conflict to be found in the novel when it

attempts to articulate a Christian vision. Fiedler, like Norman O. Brown and Flannery O'Connor, realizes that denial of the body also meant denial of symbolism.

[45]Kellog, p. 45.

[46]The Desert of Love, p. 230.

[47]Ibid., p. 134.

[48]Ibid., p. 147.

[49]Ibid., p. 203.

[50]Ibid., p. 207.

[51]Maria Cross, p. 23.

[52]Ibid., pp. 230-231.

[53]Ibid., p. 233.

[54]Ibid., p. 231.

[55]The Desert of Love, p. 268.

[56]Philip Stratford, "One Meeting With Mauriac," The Kenyon Review, 21 (Autumn, 1959), 614, 616.

Chapter Three

[1]Radical Theology and the Death of God, p. 96.

[2]Cited in The Vision Obscured, pp. 34-35.

[3]Radical Theology and the Death of God, p. 95.

[4]Ibid., p. 31. Note: This is Hamilton's description of Altizer's "death of God" philosophy. It also accurately describes the fictional techniques of Greene and O'Connor.

[5]Ibid., p. 41. Note: Hamilton's thought, to be sure, is more complex than the reference suggests. More accurately, he begins with an affirmation of the death of God but proclaims an equally strong affirmation that the sacred, in time, will be

recovered. Greene and O'Connor, though they would not so boldly report the death of God, would concur with Hamilton's suggestions for recovering the Holy. Greene in A Burnt-Out Case provides dramatic evidence that he agrees with Hamilton's answer to the death of God: a marriage of Christology and ethics. O'Connor could not go so far.

[6]John Atkins, Graham Greene (London: Calder and Boyars, 1966), p. 69.

[7]Stratford, p. 22.

[8]Graham Greene: Some Critical Considerations, ed. Robert O. Evans, "The Catholic as Novelist," A. A. DeVitis (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1963), p. 115.

[9]John Currie Sheldon, "Supernaturalism in Graham Greene: A Comparison of Orthodox Catholicism with the Religious Vision in the Major Novels," Diss. University of Alabama 1967, p. 48.

[10]Charles Glickberg, "Graham Greene: Catholicism in Fiction," Criticism (Fall, 1959), 339.

[11]Robert O. Evans, ed. "Theological Ambiguity in the 'Catholic Novels,'" by David H. Hesla, pp. 103-104.

[12]Stratford, pp. 168-169.

[13]Evans, "The Satanist Fallacy of Brighton Rock," p. 155.

[14]Maria Cross, p. 210.

[15]Ibid., p. 228.

[16]Graham Greene, Brighton Rock (New York: The Viking Press, 1951), pp. 179-180.

[17]"The Satanist Fallacy of Brighton Rock," p. 151.

[18]Ibid., p. 152.

[19]Brighton Rock, p. 181.

[20]Ibid., p. 194.

[21]Ibid., p. 188.

[22]Lynch, p. xii.

[23]Ibid., p. 161.

[24]Ibid., p. 179. Note: Lynch sees Kazantzakis' theory that the artist has the power and the right to make, mould, manipulate, and destroy reality as a "parody of ritual and a triumph of Narcissis." This is the fundamental discrepancy in Lynch's argument: he does not allow for the possibility of a profane content possessing a sacred dimension. In other words, he does not allow for the autonomy of art.

[25]Theodore Ziolkowski, Fictional Transfigurations of Jesus (Princeton: Princeton University, 1972), p. 298.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Graham Greene: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Samuel Hynes, "Graham Greene," François Mauriac (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), p. 77.

[28]Donald P. Costello, "Graham Greene and the Catholic Press," Renascence, 12 (Autumn, 1959), 7.

[29]Graham Greene, The Power and the Glory (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1940), p. 3.

[30]Graham Greene: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Samuel Hynes, "The 'Trilogy,'" R. W. B. Lewis (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), p. 64.

[31]The Power and the Glory, p. 18.

[32]Ibid., p. 52.

[33]Ibid., p. 56.

[34]Lewis, p. 67.

[35]The Power and the Glory, p. 89.

[36]The Power and the Glory, p. 197.

[37]Costello, p. 7.

[38]Francis L. Kunkel, The Labyrinthine Ways of Graham Greene (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1959), p. 122.

[39]Graham Greene, The Heart of the Matter (New York: The Viking Press, 1946), p. 38.

[40]Ibid., p. 84.

[41]Marcel More, "The Two Holocausts of Scobie," Cross Currents, 2 (1951), p. 48.

[42]The Heart of the Matter, p. 88.

[43]Maria Cross, p. 236.

[44]The Heart of the Matter, p. 145.

[45]Ibid., p. 192.

[46]Ibid., p. 232.

[47]Ibid., pp. 289-290.

[48]Hesla, p. 108.

[49]Graham Greene: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Samuel Hynes, "Mr. Greene's Eggs and Crosses," Frank Kermode (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), p. 136.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Graham Greene, The End of the Affair (New York: Viking Press, 1951), p. 79.

[52]Kunkel, p. 131.

Chapter Four

[1]Flannery O'Connor, Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose, edited by Sally and Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969), p. xvi.

[2]Flannery O'Connor, The Complete Stories of Flannery O'Connor, ed. Robert Giroux (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971), p. xvi.

[3]Flannery O'Connor, Three: Wise Blood, A Good Man is Hard to Find, The Violent Bear It Away (New York: The New American Library, 1962), p. 142.

[4]Mystery and Manners, p. 143.

[5]Ibid., p. 139.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Kathleen Feeley, S.S.N.D., Flannery O'Connor: Voice of the Peacock (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1972), pp. 188-191. Note: Although Sister Feeley had access to the O'Connor library, she appears unable to integrate her findings with the critical estimates of the fiction.

[8]Ibid., p. 14.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Frederick Asals, "Review," in Flannery O'Connor Bulletin, 1 (1972), 61-65.

[11]Mystery and Manners, p. 32.

[12]Ibid., p. 205.

[13]Ibid., p. 203.

[14]Kellog, The Vital Tradition, pp. 227-228.

[15]Mystery and Manners, p. 196.

[16]James C. McCullagh, "Flannery O'Connor's Theology Viewed Through the Haze of the Grotesque," Unpublished thesis (Bethlehem, Pa.: Lehigh University, 1970). Cited as McCullagh.

[17]Mystery and Manners, p. 206.

[18]McCullagh, p. 9.

[19]Ibid., p. 10.

[20]Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[21]The Added Dimension: The Art and Mind of Flannery O'Connor, eds. Melvin J. Friedman and Lewis A. Lawson (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), p. 227.

[22]McCullagh, p. 11.

[23]Mystery and Manners, p. 44.

[24]A Burnt-Out Case, prefatory letter to Docteur Michel Lechat.

[25]Mystery and Manners, p. 46.

[26]McCullagh, p. 13.

[27]Ibid., p. 19.

[28]Ibid.

[29]McCullagh, p. 15.

[30]Mystery and Manners, p. 162.

[31]Three, p. 87. Note: Some of these comments on Wise Blood have appeared in my "Symbolism and the Religious Aesthetic: Flannery O'Connor's Wise Blood," The Flannery O'Connor Bulletin, 2 (Autumn, 1973), pp. 43-58.

[32]Three, p. 13.

[33]Ibid., p. 17.

[34]Ibid., p. 19.

[35]Ibid., p. 26.

[36]Ibid., p. 36.

[37]Martha Stephens, "Flannery O'Connor and the Sanctified Sinner Tradition," Arizona Quarterly, 24 (1967), 223-239.

[38]Maria Cross, p. 231.

[39]Three, p. 57.

[40]Ibid., pp. 88-89.

[41]McCullagh, p. 73.

[42]Three, pp. 113-114.

[43]Note: I refer to "The Train" and "The Peeler" discussed below.

[44]Note: In spite of obvious differences among these novels it seems evident that each author was interested in dramatizing a "purer" form of Christianity or humanism that enabled him to solve the formal aesthetic problem of the novel by an appeal to symbolism. But, as I argue in the text, especially in relation to Mauriac and O'Connor, the authors are self-consciously religious.

[45]Sumner J. Ferris, "The Outside and the Inside: Flannery O'Connor's 'The Violent Bear It Away,'" Studies in Modern Fiction, 3 (1960), 19.

[46]The Added Dimension, p. 257.

[47]Three, p. 306.

[48]Miles Orvell, Invisible Parade (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1972), p. 118.

[49]Flannery O'Connor, "You Can't Be Any Poorer Than Dead," in The Complete Stories, p. 302.

[50]McCullagh, p. 80.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Three, p. 401.

[53]McCullagh, p. 85.

[54]Orvell, p. 125.

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VITA

James C. McCullagh was born in London, England October 22, 1941, immigrated to America, and became an American citizen during his tour of duty with the Navy (1960-64).

He obtained his BS from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 1968, his MA from Lehigh University in 1970, and will receive his Ph.D. from Lehigh in 1975.

Since 1968 he has taught in a number of schools and colleges: Hollidaysburg Area High School, Lehigh University, the Allentown College of St. Francis De Salles, Northampton County Community College, Freedom High School, Bethlehem, Penna.

From 1972-73 he was a University Fellow at Lehigh. He is presently a writer for Rodale Press Inc. in Emmaus, Penna. and a poet with the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.

He has published articles and poetry in the following journals: Whitman Review, New England Transcendental Quarterly, Aspen Leaves, Sewanee Review, Studies in the Humanities (two articles), Flannery O'Connor Bulletin, Four Quarters, Scimitar and Song, Wind, Twigs, The Cooperator, Cardinal Poetry Quarterly, and others. During the last three years he has written numerous articles, book reviews, and poems for the Lehigh Alumni Bulletin.

He is married to Lee Ann McConnell, one child, Declan Blake.