

PORTRAIT OF SPIRITUALITY, MORALITY, AND REDEMPTION IN WISE BLOOD

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Abstract

Wise Blood, Flannery O'Connor's, a primary novel, a combination of tragedy and comedy version and the Hazel Motes, the protagonist, who is referred as Haze, lost his faith when he was in the army and becomes against the God. He moves from his native place Eastrod, Tennessee, which is in Atlanta, to teach the church of truth without Jesus Christ crucified. He has changed his costume by wearing bright blue suit and black hat. He comes across a religion-faker, called Onnie Jay Holy, who dressed himself as Haze and started preaching. By seeing this Haze murders the false prophet. Haze also met Asa Hawks, a false prophet and a fake blind man who pretends to have blinded with lime to defend his faith in Redemption and his daughter, who is fond of Haze and wants to seduce her. Haze buys a car after sometime it gives trouble and he meets Sabbath Lily, an illegitimate child, who wants to join in his church to go heaven. At the end Haze was left with blindness and was caught by the policeman on the road and met the death.

Keywords:Belief;Morality;Preach;Redemption;Spirituality.

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1. Introduction (10pt)

Wise Blood, a primary novel, is related to a modern pilgrim who does not want to progress, who is more fascinated in moving backwards than forwards. Hazel Motes, the protagonist, is a Jesus-denying preacher. Hazael decided to demolish the people who have faith in God by treating them with cruelty. The biblical Hazael (which means “God has seen”), King of Syria, demoralized the Israelites, the chosen people of God (2 Kings 8-13). Hazael required power and the fictional Hazel, ultimately and ironically, seeks God’s empowerment. Throughout the book, “Hazel” is most often referred to as “Haze.”

Haze had grown-up in his native place Eastrod and he lost his parents and after staying in the army for four years he came back to home to Tennessee. Bruce Gentry observes that “Hazel wanted to learn to die, and to die more willingly than his family did.”² Martha Stephens calls the novel a “bitterly serious, if sometimes outlandishly comic, version of the Christian travail.”³ On his journey Haze felt that his soul was not there in the army and he decided to come back to home and when he reached there he found only the skeleton of the house. Prior to his arrival Haze is denying Jesus and later he met Sabbath Lily, in both issues he evades Jesus and wants to do sin. In both his old and new attempts to evade Jesus (sin, decay, death) he denies he has a body and hopes to keep away from his mortality by looking to the outer world, a world that hovers between abstract thought and tangible, concrete things.⁴

The fable starts with the protagonist doing journey in a train. On his way he met the characters like Mrs. Wally Bee Hitchcock, where Haze was not interested to participate because he was always thinking of his childhood and his family. He was very much bothered to fulfill his desire to become a preacher like his grandfather as he had taught him about Jesus and his deeds and Jesus always “get you”;

... this *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* view of Christ leads Motes to view salvation as a form of punishment, so he decides that he can be saved from being evil by believing in nothing. That is, he can save his soul by having no soul at all. However, his nihilism becomes a positive belief. He is not an atheist, for his nothingness takes on the power of salvation. Haze believes in a vacuum as an alternative to a hunting, predatory Jesus.⁵

After reaching the town he went to the public bathroom where he got the address of Leora Watts, a local prostitute. He stayed with her in the night and it is his first experience with a woman. On the next night he went to the town and met various people like blind preacher Asa Hawks who pretends to have blinded himself with lime to justify his belief in Redemption. The blind preacher has one fifteen-year-old daughter, Sabbath Lily, who moves into Haze's bed, becomes the Madonna of the new Jesus, and eventually turns into a monster of sexual voracity and heartlessness. Haze was not in a position whether to follow this false preacher or to avoid him. He met Enoch Emery who works as a guard at the city park, and he has the notion of going to museum daily and pays his devotions to a mummy and he steals it, which he think of as the new Jesus, and he presents this gift to Haze but he smashes it.

In order to live besides Mrs. Watt's bedroom Haze decided to buy a car. As he has only very less amount with him, he searched for the cheapest car. For him redemption and movement had been as connected as they will be for Haze. Significantly, when Haze reaches Taulkinham, he will buy a car. In an exchange which shifts from the profane to the sacred, Haze bargains for the old rat-colored automobile in the used car lot. The cursing boy fills his tank before he drives the car and murmurs, Sweet Jesus, sweet Jesus, and sweet Jesus. At certain moment, Haze felt that by purchasing the car, he can run from Jesus and he atleast realized that nobody with a good car needs to be justified. After much dickering he buys an old heap with no back seat for forty dollars plus the cost of five gallons of gas, though the owner cheats him by only filling the gas can halfway. Haze then drives his car out into the country and looks at the sign for some time and he wants to get the address of the blind preacher by visiting Enoch at the zoo.

Enoch Emery is another sort of antagonist, who works as a guard at the city park, and has his own religious mystery. He has listened the voice coming from the man inside the case, when he had taken Haze to the museum. Enoch Emery does not know that Haze has started the Church without Christ and has been preaching it every night on the street. Near the end of the book the landlady correctly concludes that he shouldn't do the foolish things by naming the church and acting as an agent and doing certain funny things. At the last she said that he should have belief in Jesus.

The day of Enoch's begins at the park and he later goes to the swimming pool and watches the women swim and sunbathe, by hiding in the bushes. While he is going to the zoo he halts at the refreshment for taking a milkshake and all the time cursing the animals because as they eat better than he does and as he is having the habit of visiting the museum for the exhibit. He is planning to show this exhibit to Haze because when Haze asks for the address of Asa Hawks, Enoch put the proposal that he should visit the museum. Both of them visits the museum and Enoch is frightened by watching the exhibit and forgets the address. With this act, Haze got anger and threw stone at him and left the place and searched for Asa Hawks and her father and traced them and planned to take a room for rent and started teaching before the movie theatre for the people who are standing outside. Haze wants to prove that Christ is not real by seducing his daughter as he is not aware that in reality the preacher is not blind. Actually the preacher had promised to blind himself to justify his redemption. His daughter is fond of Haze so she plans to seduce him. Haze finds a problem in his car and he has found the repair shop and got it ready and while he was going to drive he had seen a girl sitting in the back seat by name Sabbath Lily, and she has the notion that the illegitimate child will not go to the heaven and she enquires to Haze that is it possible in his church to go heaven, as her mother, to whom her father was not married, died in childbirth. But Haze is not aware of this and the girl wants her to seduce even though he neglects her and go to home. Meanwhile a person by name Onnie Jay dresses like Haze and starts preaching. Haze got angry and murdered the false prophet by dicking the vehicle on him. At the end Haze was no more to get survival in the hands of police and he met the death. Hence the title of the paper is justified. At the end of the novel he is blind, but he sees; he is motionless, but he moves; he is a sinner and he is redeemed. Only Hazel Motes, who himself begins by judging people at "face value," learns how to look beyond the literal and thus understand the divine nature of the universe. Daniel F. Littlefield explores how the materialism of modern society shown in *Wise Blood* helps articulate O'Connor's major themes of Christian redemption and the grotesque.

The images of society that are reflected in Flannery O'Connor's fiction are complex and unified. But it does not mean that we read her fiction to forge a sociology of her fiction; we read them in order to appropriate the way in which they successfully function as lamps, that is, for the light they throw on the English socio-cultural problematic. Further, as Joan Rockwell rightly observes:

. . . fiction is not only a representation of social reality, but also a necessary functional part of social control, and also paradoxically an important element of social change. It plays a large part in the socialisation of infants, in the expression of official norms such as law and religion, in the conduct of politics, and in general gives symbols and modes of life to the population, particularly in those less easily defined but basic areas such as norms, values, and personal and inter-personal behaviour. The implications of this are that fiction can give us two types of information about society: firsts, in a descriptive way, facts about the state of technology, laws, customs, social structure and institutions. Second, more subtle and less easily obtained information about values and attitudes. These last become most visible when they are brought to the surface as the themes of literature in nodal periods when great changes are taking place in the basic institutions of society. Changes, for instance, in the structure and formation of the family or of economic life – changes which produce a conflict of values which finds its expression in literature.⁹

Frederick Asals has labeled the novel a “modern pilgrim’s progress of a blaspheming believer.”⁶ John Desmond sees the situation of Haze as connected with history, and though the novel’s action argues for a redemption vision, O’Connor has chosen to present “Haze’s quest obliquely as a *via negation*.”⁷ Haze at the initial stage refuses to accept the God so he run away from God but his individual is confronted by the presence of God. Death is a major agent of revelation. In *Wise Blood*. The Protagonist Hazael also meet death and he is very closer to death than he realizes. It is not until the car is destroyed that he recognizes his mistake and ceases to flee that which he knows he must accept. Similarly, it is only when Enoch delivers the manifestation of the new Jesus to Haze’s door that he recognizes its worthlessness. He realizes that his false idol is merely the incarnation of all people who reject the true God and make a god in their own image. This transformation of running away from God made the novel from comedy into redemption in modern world.

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4. Caroline Gordon, "Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood*," *Critique* 2.2Fall 1958): 76. Gordon sees the world of the novel as simply a world without Christ.
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