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## The Jeovah Imperative: Images of Incest and Blood Sacrifice in Walpole's "The Castle of Otranto" and Flannery O'Connor's "Wise Blood"

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THE JEHOVAH IMPERATIVE:  
IMAGES OF INCEST AND BLOOD SACRIFICE  
IN WALPOLE'S THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO  
AND FLANNERY O'CONNOR'S WISE BLOOD  
BY  
PENELOPE HOPE GOFF

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
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IN  
ENGLISH

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

1992

MASTER OF ARTS THESIS  
OF  
PENELOPE HOPE GOFF

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis compares and contrasts Biblical images in Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto (1764) and Flannery O'Connor's Wise Blood (1949), seeking to illuminate their common participation in Judeo-Christian philosophy (referred to herein as the Jehovah Imperative) and in the tradition of Gothic fiction. Although both books center on a religious hero who defies an "irreligious" authority, and both are resolved when a major character is murdered by a legitimate legal agent, historical and feminist perspectives will show: (1) the ways in which Walpole's Otranto manipulated Biblical images in favor of eighteenth-century Protestant ambition and the furtherance of the father-son inheritance chain begun in the Bible, and (2) the formula by which O'Connor's Wise Blood reverses the Gothic/Biblical "realities" to expose that manipulation in a "grotesque" mirror-image. Examining those acts of brutality -- specifically incest and blood sacrifice -- long legitimized by Biblical texts, and tracing their historical sexual dynamics to an inter-testamentary economic paradigm, this thesis will look at how those biases were fixed in place by the first Gothic novel, and transferred through history by similarly biased lexicological and critical exegeses, invisibly maintaining the social, economic and political sovereignty of the white Protestant (Gothicized) male in the western world.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Finally, thanks to David Stineback whose understanding of the American male as Melville saw him gave me the courage to seek the source of his heartache in the Bible.

## PREFACE

If we are now reading and sifting carefully through canonized texts in order to trace patterns of gender injustice, we are behooved by that commitment to critique most carefully those works -- such as Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto and Flannery O'Connor's Wise Blood -- which take their significance from the Hebrew-Christian Bible. The Bible is, of all canonized Western texts, most fundamental to institutionalized sexual misappropriations; it is, in fact, a collection of documents which have been used to make gender-discrimination a condition of conventional lawfulness. The re-creation of Biblical sexual themes in Gothic literature unites these two authors who are otherwise separated by two hundred years and vastly different cultural orientations, though in large measure they approach the Gothic construct from opposite points on the historical Protestant-Catholic divide. As Leslie Fiedler reminds us, "the Gothic novel [Walpole's invention] is Protestant in its ethos...blatantly anti-Catholic"(Fiedler 108). In contrast, O'Connor based her work on what she called "the Catholic sacramental view of life, the visible container of the invisible"(Fitzgerald xxi). This difference is reflected in their authorial treatment of sexual issues, though not entirely -- both works locate the source of social evil in the female.

Defining "Protestantism" as an economic philosophy and

a social/sexual moral code, as well as a religious stance, this thesis will investigate how its ethos was infused into fictional literature in eighteenth-century England. It will show how the bourgeois Gothic construct, first defined in The Castle of Otranto, was based on ancient moral dichotomies already legitimized by the Hebrew-Christian Bible. Specifically, it will address the patriarchal appropriation of the Logos as the way in which the father-son inheritance chain -- the inter-testamental, trans-cultural economic paradigm which forms the core of Walpole's seminal book -- was "fixed" in literature and law by Jehovah's (Moses') written injunctions regarding incest and blood sacrifice. This God-man economic coalition, born and reborn through the transfer of male authorial domination of the Hebrew-Catholic-Protestant "moral" evolution, will be referred to within this investigation as the Jehovah Imperative.

Through a grid of historical perspective and feminist criticism, this thesis will identify, analyze, and illuminate the ways in which Walpole's book participated in the Jehovah Imperative by manipulating Biblical images of incest and blood sacrifice in favor of eighteenth-century Protestant economic necessity. In contrast, it will show how O'Connor's book formulaically reversed those images, the "realities" of the Gothic construct, in order to display -- in mirror image -- the false morality of the social-moral Gothic vehicle which carried the masculine economic hegemony from

Pre-Reformation to Post-Reformation literary history.

Chapter One will trace the meanings and etymologies of the term which (critics agree) defines the Gothic novel -- the Apocalyptic Vision. The investigation will range from the time of Christ's death through the Dark and Middle Ages to the era of the Protestant Reformation, seeking to clarify how Pentateuchal social-sexual assumptions, passing from the Old Testament writers to Paul of Tarsus and thence to the Catholic Church, were established in modern Gothic literature by the Protestant paradigm, "eternalized" by hidden lexicological manipulation, and maintained for the last three hundred years by insufficient (or collusive) critical exegesis.

Chapter Two will examine the evolving priorities of Protestantized English royalty, focusing on the process by which the Roman Catholic European God died and was cut into testamental halves -- masculine (Mosaic aggression) and feminine (Christian passivity). Defining the long-range implications of two Biblical myths -- Abraham and Isaac, (the Book of Genesis) and the Levite and the concubine (the Book of Judges) -- this section will show how these myths were employed by Protestant writers to reconnect the halves of the dying God within the bourgeois Protestant marriage, with the male absorbing the persona of the jealous, self-serving Jehovah, and the female taking in the meek, forbearing aspect of a disempowered, castrated Christ. Analysis will



reveal how this sacramental equation transferred the privilege of ancient Hebrew "choseness" to the individualized Protestant, sanctifying his imperialist ambitions with Biblical precedent, as it tested and legitimized the hard-won Protestant, democratic "right to dissent." The last part of this section will look at how specific lexicological manipulations in Noah Webster's New American dictionary (c. 1828) distinctly reflect a Protestant political-religious slant, a bias which -- though its resolution of the intrinsic philosophical contradictions within Protestant Christianity is a false resolution -- continually renews the sacralization of the English Protestant male and his domination of the Western literary canon. It will be shown that Webster's etymological shifts, infusing the American culture on a subliminal level, bridged the gap between the canonized literature of the eighteenth-century and that of the twentieth, operating to transfer the "Will of God in history" from ancient Hebrew times to the present day, from Moses, through Christ and Paul, to the modern revolutionary male, the Apocalyptic Visionary who is the modern Gothic hero in and out of literature.

Since Walpole (and subsequent Gothic artists) affected O'Connor and not otherwise, Chapter Three will examine the cultural and geographical upheavals that shared the moment of Otranto's birth, "when England became the leading commercial nation of the world"(Mudrick, 5). Contextualization

will show that the book reflects not (as Walpole claimed) the values of twelfth-century feudal Italy, but those of the bourgeois, mercantile Protestant in his struggle to extend his newly won self-rule from its European beginnings to the American wilderness. Dissection of social relationships within the story will reveal the two Biblical myths -- father-son (Abraham/Isaac) and father-husband-wife (Levite/concubine) -- which drive the plot, myths which still form the basis for the popular Gothic literary experience. Gothic literature was a major carrier of those Biblical myths which eventually -- via a network of American-Protestant permutations and pragmatic social mores -- had a profound effect on religious-social-sexual dynamics in the twentieth-century American South, the setting of Flannery O'Connor's Wise Blood.

Chapter Four will look at Wise Blood as a carnivalized version of Protestant Gothicism and its double testamentary roots. Inverting the fixed sexual traits "eternalized" by the Jehovah Imperative, and basing her metaphor on the elements of the Catholic Mass, O'Connor masculinizes Christ in the character of Hazel Motes. His attempt to unite within himself a double morality -- the salvation of Christian love and the damning judgment of Jehovah -- drives him to commit Old Testament crimes of violence against false Christs, crimes which he justifies by an unshakable (though schizophrenic) faith in the redemptive power of Christian blood sacrifice. Through a like reversal, O'Connor castrates and carnivalizes

Jehovah by placing Him in females who are economically dependent on their "sexual corruption," and in Enoch Emery, a homosexual boy, an "animalized" parody of Old Testament priesthood. The inversions of gender-positioning illuminate the intrinsic opposition between the two Biblical testaments, and create the asymmetrical effects of Wise Blood which critics refer to as "grotesque."

A final section will briefly summarize the schizophrenic moral position of the Gothic Apocalyptic Vision, and suggest some reasons for the hiddenness of its true nature and purpose. In contrast with Walpole's Old Testament vision of the divinity of Man-conquering-matter, characterized and promulgated by lexicologists, literary critics, and modern publishers, O'Connor's vision of a world-under-construction, defined by the Catholic scientist Teilhard de Chardin (whose works influenced O'Connor though they were banned by the Catholic Church), will present an alternative point of view of "God's will" through history, a view in which Biblical gender definitions may be seen as a passing phase in human evolution.

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## CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND

### TRACING THE LOGOS

The act of reading, with its unmeasurable causes and consequences, lodges in the reader (besides the present text) the content of the author's textual library. The reader, a separate text with a separate internal library, is pre-marked by myriad infusions of the written or spoken logos. Given the number of possibilities for significant impact on any reader by any literary work, the attempt to trace a literary influence through history necessarily entails at least some speculation; the past is, in many ways, as unknown as the future. But because the values of authors long dead are still potent in their works, an effort must be made to assess them, to locate the author's ideology in time, place, personal history, general history, the texts on which authorial ideologies are ultimately based. Such ideologies, as Marxist literary criticism teaches us, are often hidden beneath the surface of the text, since their purpose is to hold the reader to certain sets of assumptions by which the power of the author, and the social group the author represents, is maintained over the reader.

When the written word became a holding place for spoken verities, the scribe and the storyteller shared the task of creating a continuing tribal history. Though separated by formal restrictions they created a past, and at the same time participated in the illusion that that created past was eternal (fixed in nature). The storyteller recounted the functions of culture while the scribe provided the forms of cultural passage. At first these were songs, dances, chants which were offered to a live audience that observed the performer's body language in order to either confirm or deny the verity of his word. But a modern reader, isolated with the disembodied book, cannot sound the verity of an author's word except by searching in the history of the word itself for signs of hidden authorial intent, and for historical twists in the linguistic exchange by which an untruth might have been literarily eternalized.

Since the literary crossroads between authorial intent and the reader's faith in that intent is the site of "meaning", it is also the site of false meaning, the source of deception. Thus, the act of reading is not merely complex but also potentially perilous. No text should be exempted from the search for hidden political strategies, especially the book which is most fundamental to Western literature -- the Bible. Modern Biblical critics, such as Robert Alter, are increasingly aware of the fact that subliminal Biblical influences on the modern state of mind are continually re-

infused: "Ancient Israel, subsequent Jewish history, and the Christian world have made the Bible the central document not only for...faith but also as moral guide and anchor for ethical and religious stability. The Bible...has shaped our law, literature, language, ethics, and social outlook. It permeates our culture"(Alter 175).

This thesis compares two Gothic novels in order to assess the Biblical sources of their social, sexual and religious assumptions. Specifically, it seeks to trace the influence of one work on the other and the Bible on both, by examining the cause/effect historical dynamics that made the Gothic literary influence politically significant then and now. An extension of this search will be the assumption that the Aristolian principle of cause and effect operates in literary history as well as in real life; not only can past causes of literary meanings be found, isolated, and identified in subsequent literary effects, but the effects themselves can be critically considered as causes of future meaning (and of future false meaning).

When we examine the Gothic literary experience, whether we focus on the Gothic elements in Post-Reformation romantic literature or the themes which define current popular Gothic forms, we invoke an authorial intent -- a literary assumption that seems to be intrinsic to the Gothic genus -- the quality that critic Leslie Fiedler and others -- notably Rubin, Holman, Quinn (Added Dimension) and Caroline Spurgeon (Preface,

Otranto xvii) -- have referred to as the Apocalyptic Vision. The term has a complicated history which is difficult to trace, but whatever reality it represents may certainly be applied to the two books which form the basis of this study: Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto, the first Gothic novel ever written (in 1764), and Flannery O'Connor's novel Wise Blood, a twentieth-century theological parody whose central character embodies the "apocalyptic visions of those who...preach fire and the plague"(Rubin, Added 53).

Except that both these Gothic novels have been canonized under the double rubric of literary significance and cultural import, they seem to have little in common. Walpole's book, set in twelfth-century feudal Italy, is a fantasy -- a romance involving a royal tyrant in a miraculous castle, a pair of generic princesses, a peasant hero, and the timely execution of an ancient family curse; O'Connor's book is a post-World War II "grotesquerie" about a young soldier from the American South who comes home to find his house and family gone, and so seeks comfort in squalid sexual encounters and acts of violence, expressing his existential torment in the theological jargon of a street-preacher. Wise Blood and The Castle of Otranto are thoroughly unlike in structure, mood, and cultural orientation, yet because they share the general designation "Gothic," and the signifier "Apocalyptic Vision" that marks the Gothic literary experience, they are, at least nominally, open to categorical comparison. Such a comparison



would naturally begin with the question: what is the nature of the Apocalyptic Vision which marks the Gothic essence?

The mysterious term breaks down into equivocal elements. The noun "Vision" is itself ambiguous; as it means both the ability to see and the thing which is seen, it is always unclear whether it refers to the faculty of sight possessed by the Gothic author (or character), or to the ideas which the visionary conceptualizes. Regarding "apocalypse," the common cultural understanding places the word in Scriptural mythology, but an examination of the Biblical logos leads the reader to a blatant contradiction. A search through the dictionary results in further mystification. Webster's entries for "apocalyptic" do not include any Biblical associations, although he lists the word "Apocalypse" as a proper noun, and directs the reader to the Bible Table for an account of its meaning. But the Bible Table has been omitted from the 1984 edition of Noah Webster's 1828 American dictionary -- there is only a list of the books in the Old and New Testament Biblical canon which ends not with the "Apocalypse" but with the Book of Revelation, as the Apocalypse of St. John the Apostle was renamed during the Protestant Reformation.

Even within the Biblical framework, ambiguities have accrued to the history of the signifier "apocalyptic." "Apocalypse" now denotes "a prophetic revelation" but it didn't always; the singular noun "apocalypse" shares a stem

with the plural noun "apocrapha," which originally (in the first century A.D.) meant "hidden or secret things." When the word was first coined, "apocalypse" -- from the Greek **kaluptein**, "to cover" -- was included within "Apocrypha" -- which comes from the Greek **kruptein**, "to hide"; the prefix "apo" in both cases means "away." So "Apocalypse" denoted a prophetic text which was covered, or hidden away, while the "Apocrypha" referred to a collection of these texts.

But language is an active thing, presupposing a speaker, an audience, a message, a forward motion; secrets will "out" and find lasting expression, particularly in written form which can live on long after the disappearance of its initiator. The same historical tensions that made certain prophetic texts "dangerous" in the first century A.D. also created a forum for them, so the shared stem split; while "Apocrypha" continued to mean "secret prophecies," the definition of "apocalypse" shifted to include its own reversal: an "apocalypse" became a prophetic text that could be both hidden and revealed, depending on the circumstances.

The shift in emphasis was almost certainly a result of the social, political, and economic upheavals in Israel which followed the death of Jesus, the popular Hebrew outlaw whose religious and political views contradicted those of the Hebrew ruling class, and whose site of discourse was not the Temple, with its associations of an elitist and sacralized past, but the unassailable public sphere of the

street corner. His personal participation in the historical logos was limited to the spoken word, but subsequent to his murder for the capital crime (in Mosaic Law) of blasphemy, the content of his life and sayings generated a barrage of texts which documented his social, political, and religious impact on hordes of followers, many of whom were weary of oppressive rule; the typical Christian convert was likely to have been impoverished by imperial Roman taxation, disillusioned by Greek cultural infringements, socially marginalized by the stringent Hebrew social and religious mores, or just bored by the eternal sameness of Jehovah's paternal scolding.

With the invention of a new sign of religious faith -- baptism by water as opposed to the scarification of the Hebrew male by circumcision -- the ancient Hebrew theology was democratized, redefined to allow the inclusion of women and even Gentiles as equal inheritors of "divine approbation" within a new moral scheme, a startling religious innovation which was instantly popular and widely textualized within the historical logos of the time. The new moral awareness worked against the ancient patriarchal, ethnocentric Hebrew theos, but once it was glimpsed it would never be erased; though it would be culled by Hebrew scholars and marginalized by European classicists, the theme of heroic rebellion against patriarchal oppression would be a driving force in both Western history and literature. Often censored, it

would live on in popular legends; it would be integrated into liminal literary forms as the necessary shadow-factor in the creation of the classical Western hero, as well as the necessary locus of conflicting meanings related to the heroic quest. This threshold as the site of heroic actualization is the major theme in Walpole's first Gothic vision and in Flannery O'Connor's Catholicized Gothic parody.

After the advent and demise of Jesus, popular writings reflected the new moral awareness of the individualized conscience. Thrilled (and terrified) by the Christian rejection of tribal loyalties, a generation of highly literate Jewish authors documented their experiences in works of "inspired composition" which both reflected and shaped their changing loyalties. Willis Barnstone, who has edited the Qumrun texts, found among them evidence of a "breaking open" of the Hebrew consciousness: "The failed expectations of the Jews for divine intervention [from a] Messiah...when the Romans burned the Temple and drove the populace into exile...provoked a turn away from apocalyptic Judaism"(Barnstone 289, emphasis mine).

The Jewish Pseudepigraphia, the Christian Apocrypha, and the Gnostic Scriptures contained personalized prophetic revelations that portrayed a psychological (and economic) threshold of mixed religious intentions. These new texts no longer emphasized (in fact they contradicted) the four-thousand-year old concept of the "chosenness" of the Hebrew race and culture, and the warrior-ideology of Mosaic Law

on which its imperialist justification was based: "The Lord thy God, he will go over before thee, and he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them...and the Lord shall give them up before your face, that ye may do unto them according unto all the commandments which I have commanded you...And Moses wrote this law and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord"(Deut. 31:3-9).

The reversal of the patriarchal status quo signalled a state of cultural and economic anarchy among the Hebrews, a debate that divided the Hebrew populace (and Hebrew literature) over the question of loyalty. The issue at stake was not so much the difference of theological opinion between Hebrews and Christians, but the long-range sexual and economic significance of the radical Christian political freedoms. The empowerment of the New Testament son over the Old Testament father had the effect of overturning the covenant struck between Abraham and Jehovah. This reversal challenged the essential nature and meaning of Jehovah's requirement for masculine blood sacrifice, the Hebrew ritual of the cutting of the penis that had always signified the submission of the son's will to the father's and the father's to God's. The new idea also allowed outsiders to participate in the social and religious evolution of Hebrew history: "The Old Testament insistence on circumcision, reversed by Saul of Tarsus around A.D. 35, transformed Christianity from



a religious movement within Judaism to a religious tradition that could embrace the non-Jewish world of the Roman Empire" (Alter 179).

Until Christ escaped the bonds of filial loyalty to an earthly father-principle, the creation and maintenance of the imperialistic Hebrew nation required the acquiescence of a young warrior who would do as he was told. Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac, resolved in the rite of circumcision, solidified the bond among Jehovah, the castrating father, and the castrated victim, insuring the aging patriarch against abandonment. Feminist critics have noted the significance of circumcision in an imperialistic culture: "The excessive cruelty...of the [Hebrew] fathers toward the sons constitutes a test of virility...Living through the anxiety provoked by the threat of being killed by their own fathers, makes the boys fit for a social life where fearless fighting is the male's part"(Bal 107-108). The penile blood-rite was kept intact for almost two thousand years before Christ's self-sacrifice nullified the rule of the earthly father over the son's sexual loyalty, an unprecedented act of daring that freed the young Hebrew male to choose his own sacrificial altar. This theme of the son's "betrayal" of the earthly father, documented in the Christian gospels and mythologized throughout the Dark and Middle Ages of European history, was re-enacted in the Protestant Reformation, providing a model for the English Protestant revolutionary in the eighteenth-

century, a model with an impeccable moral qualifications.

The idea of individualized morality was not original with Christ; as a reaction against traditional Hebrew "public" morality, it was already firmly based in Hebrew culture long before Christ's birth "The fulfillment of the Jewish apocalyptic hope...realized in Christianity, redeemed the dream of salvation through self-knowledge which had obsessed the Essenes"(Barnstone 289, emphasis mine). The Essene monks, probably Christ's teachers, coined the terms 'The Elect' and the 'New Covenant,' initiated new members with Baptism, began the custom of clasping right hands as a symbolic act for concluding legal documents, invented the social rite of the sacred meal, and wrote the Beatitudes; at the time of Christ, their influence on Hebrew literature had been growing steadily for generations.

Christ's self-knowledge, and the Essene emphasis on the private act over the public ritual, infused the Apocryphal Gnostic Manichaean doctrine which rose up eventually to become "...a serious rival to the Catholic Church...Pope Innocent III [d. 1216] ordered a crusade to clean the Manichaean 'scourge of God' from the earth, and effectively turned southern France into a gothic desert"(Barnstone 41). Barnstone's use of "gothic" to describe twelfth-century Catholic reaction to salvation-by-self-knowledge (though his meaning is unclear -- 'gothic desert' is almost oxymoronic) indicates a real connection between a self-knowing,

self-sacrificing Christ and the Apocalyptic Vision of the Gothic novel. The point is made doubly significant by the fact that The Castle of Otranto is set in twelfth-century Italy at the height of the Catholic economic hegemony in Europe; Theodore, Walpole's young hero, represents not Christian "virtue" (by that time the traits of Christian Virtue would have become feminine characteristics) but Christ's "sin"; Theodore stands for the power of a man to know himself, to own himself, and to defy with his life ecclesiastical and patriarchal rule over his moral and economic existence.

The Christian hero's struggle for self-actualization was a sexual struggle from its beginnings in the year 1 A.D. Intercultural temptations hastened the rift; the adolescent Hebrew male in Jerusalem was increasingly surrounded with opportunities to emulate the current (and fashionable) Hellenistic sexual practices. Greek sports and games were also seductive, but since the players were to be "completely naked, with the body covered only with a thin coat of oil..."(Keller 313) the rite of Hebrew circumcision drew mockery from non-Jewish spectators, and pushed the issue of filial obedience into quick, irradicable closure: "It was not long before Jewish athletes were guilty of a serious crime against the Law, they made themselves uncircumcised ...[they] sought a remedy [in] a surgical operation which restored the natural state" (Keller 314).



The young man's claim on his own sexuality was blasphemous because it augured economic disaster for a culture which was based on the father-son inheritance chain, the sexual coalition that defined every other gender role within the Hebrew culture. More than any other factor, the redefining of the father-son circumstantial truce disturbed the sexual/social balance of parts that had always been the foundation of family harmony among the Jews. These unprecedented father-son tensions, perhaps too painful to confront, may have found a common outlet outdoors in the streets and alleys of Jerusalem -- Jewish uprisings were increasingly fierce after Christ's murder -- but their bonding was short-lived as it provoked heavy Roman reprisals, ending in the final siege of Jerusalem in May 66. After that, the shattered and exiled Hebrew nation was forced to confront the father-son struggle over the son's new (and religiously based) sexual autonomy. Obviously, Hebrew "chosenness" could not last without some generational cooperation among the males whose dreams were diametrically opposed, as the Apocryphal writings reflected: "The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles were written...to free the enslaved psyche from its own bondage...to help the freed psyche to partake in the processes of life...to 'know'...to confront life and death with the whole being"(Westman 108).

This freedom was the beginning of a new "individualized" thread in Hebrew literature -- a new romantic impulse that rejected the elements of traditional group-morality: tribe

the new texts to share equal status with the Law. An answer lay in literary categorization; though Hebrew scholars had canonized the Torah (the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible) in 445 b.c., a second canonical judgement was made at the threshold of cultural dispersion: "...the Jews collected Hebrew writings [into two categories]: Halacha which was Law, and Aggada which was narration"(Dimont 160).

This split between doctrinal Hebrew Law and popular Hebrew commentary created diverging linguistic routes for all subsequent Biblical influence on Western literature. Since the Haggada (with the Torah, the Old Testament) was based on the eternal nature of the Hebrew law, it was fixed firmly in liturgical texts, scholarly treatises, statecraft. The Aggada, including the Apocrypha, absorbed whatever the Haggada censored, and became -- in binary opposition -- a literature of popular change that went beyond the intention of Christ; "preoccupied though the [Apocrypha] were with New Testament themes -- the appearance of the Son of Man, the immanence of the End, the **apocalyptic vision** in the Book of Revelation"(Barnstone xxi, emphasis mine) -- the Aggada also expressed (and perhaps inspired) the "illegitimate" progress of the social/sexual religious revolution in Israel in 1 A.D.

The evolving Christian works mixed readily with Greek and Roman legends, forming a new stream of Hebrew romanticism which was profoundly spiritual despite an increasing-

ly erotic content; "Apocryphal literature, blended with authentic Biblical influence, was exerted on later literary types such as saints' legends, sermons, and romances"(Thrall/Hibbard/Holman 29). Many recognizable elements of modern Gothicism rose out of the Hebrew moral/literary divide, as the Aggada drew to itself whatever material was rejected by the lawful texts and by the lawful, traditional, Judeo-Christian consciousness. In the Gospel of Philip Christ is openly sexualized: "The companion of the Savior is Mary Magdelene. But Christ loved her more than all the disciples and used to kiss her often on the mouth"(Gospel of Philip, qtd. Barnstone 92); in Bartholomew's Gospel Mary is made ferocious by the Incarnation: "Let us ask Mary...how she conceived the incomprehensible. Mary answered: Do not ask me. If I begin to tell you, fire will come out of my mouth and consume the whole earth"(Gospel of Bartholomew, qtd. Barnstone 351); in the nineteenth Solomonic Ode (written around the middle of the first century B.C.), the Creator of the universe is bi-sexual: "The Son is the cup/The Holy Ghost opened the father's raiment/and mingled the milk from the father's two breasts"(Psalms of Solomon, Henneke and Schneemelcher, qtd. Barnstone 268).

Meanwhile, a "legitimate" set of Christian texts was being gathered into an official New Testament that was canonized in Carthage in 397 A.D. Christ became the Logos then, a label first applied in 40 A.D. by a Jew, Philo of Alexan-

dria, who used it to label the Old Testament. The term was appropriated by the Apostle Paul who shifted it to signify his highly personalized vision of Christianity, the logos of Paul the Apostle. His indefatigable missionry succeeded largely because he spread a marital formula all around the Fertile Crescent at the very time that blood-inheritance had become a crucial political issue. Horace Walpole, in Otranto, provided the same behavioral formula -- a sort of "Christianized" social blueprint -- for the post-feudal Protestant bourgeoisie, whose democratic experiment would depend heavily on fixed gender roles.

The formula was a simple one: "Let wives be subject to their husbands." Its empowering of the married male was absolute; its chief modes of expression for the married (and marriageable) female were sexual modesty and silence. This formula bespoke a Christianity that the post-Essene Christ does not seem to have invented, although it would advance through history as though he had; sixteen hundred years later the prototypical Protestant, Martin Luther, would apply the formula to his own marriage: "[Martin] Luther ...reaffirmed the old idea that women...need to be controlled: '...when Katie gets saucy, she gets nothing but a box on the ear'"(qtd. Dobash and Dobash 53).

The connection between the Hebrew hero and his eternal place at the center of Western literature was forged by the first line of the Gospel of John (also the first line of

the Catholic Mass): "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." But as the Christian rebellion became more and more politicized, both the word and the hero gradually split into distinctly different (sexually polarized) personalities. The "masculine" nature of the two-Testament Logos had long since been canonized by Clement of Alexandria (d. 215) who wrote: "[Since] with women the very consciousness of their own nature [which is Godgiven, so eternal] must evoke feelings of shame, it is the will of the Logos that it befits women to be veiled in prayer"(Ranke-Heinemann 128). At about the same time, in the book The Acts of John (not the Gospel writer), Christ was said to have described himself as a logos with a far different nature: "You must know me as the torment of the logos, the piercing of the logos, the blood of the logos, the wounding of the logos, the fastening of the logos, the death of the logos. And so I speak, discarding manhood" (Barnstone 420). This associative portrait, equating the potency of the Word with the withdrawal of masculinity, was castigated in Clement's time, but it was not absolutely forbidden until the pronouncement of the Nicene Council in the year 787: "No one is to copy this book...we consider that it deserves to be consigned to the fire"(Westman 104). Why it drew such suspicion from a bachelor priesthood is clear; a Christ who is capable of discarding his manhood to demonstrate the Christian premise, who would be other

than man under any conditions, is useless as a patriarchal religious icon, and obviously unsuitable for inclusion in the Biblical canon.

Throughout the Middle Ages, as the Church of Rome evolved its social/sexual policies around Clement's idea of Paul's version of the Logos, all of the Biblical canon and its official derivatives ("God's will" in written history) were adjudicated according to a single economic (Catholic) interest. This hegemony, placing under its aegis philosophy, science, art, even literacy itself, became a fundamental basis of the European class and family structures, and thus the final judge of which literary works were to be published and which were to be banned. "In the...Latin Middle Ages... tax bands, a social division of citizens according to property qualifications...were adopted as a way of designating the prestige and rank of writers. Citizens of the...top rank came to be known as 'classici.' This development in the generic terminology of antiquity subsequently had an enduring influence on the European system of hierarchizing authors and works. It separated out a distinct elite set (the classici) from the commonality (the proletarius) and used this as a model for literary discriminations"(Stalleybrass & White 1; emphasis mine).

The classici/proletarius division was maintained by the Doctors of the Church whose lifeworks were offered in the service of the Catholic patriarchal acquisition of the



Hebrew Logos. By the late Middle Ages, the philosopher's pen had become the potent, comprehensive Word and will of God, a textualized voice which informed the sexual, social, and economic values of all of Western civilization. In the thirteenth century, Albert the Great combined scientific and theologigal jargon to fix an impenetrable barrier between acceptable and unacceptable Biblical meanings -- a characteristically Gothic threshold that would come to join the very elements -- pure philosophy and popular superstition -- that it attempted to separate. The philosophical thrust would evolve into Catholic doctrine, the Canon Laws which were largely rooted in the masculine terrors of femaleness, while the superstitious "feminine" content of rejected religious writings -- the dreadful burgeonings of the Catholic imagination that critic Mudrick would label (in a critique of Otranto) "the claptrap of Gothic horrors" -- would become the stuff of popular religion and romantic literature. Albert added considerable material to the marginalized romantic literary "sub-logos" with this quasi-scientific analysis of femininity: "Woman is less qualified than man for moral behavior. She contains more liquid than the man...is more easily moved...hence women are inconstant. Woman is a misbegotten man...her feelings drive her toward every evil, just as reason impels man toward all good" (Ranke-Heinemann 178). This "evil" is the possibility of female sexual autonomy, and -- perhaps worse -- the power

to speak for herself, the power to steal the Logos.

At that time the graphic and plastic arts began to express the sexual tensions within the fractured Biblical Logos that could not be expressed in classical literature. But what Rome supported Rome defined; Church-supported artists mixed erotic imagery with acceptable ecclesiastical sexual subjects, a blend which would be incorporated into Gothic literature. Though "...stories from the Apocrypha were commonly depicted...God the Father [was] often shown clad in papal attire and wearing the papal tiara...The attributes of Jehovah [were] His age, the globe, a book. (Ferguson 93).

Women were freely fetishized as they could not have been in the formal literature of the Church. Mary Magdalene was a popular subject, an icon of feminine servitude who was invariably pictured with long flowing hair, the alabaster box of ointment, and a humbled posture -- either kneeling or prostrate -- that indicated her liminal social status. Latinized sophistry crept into titles of paintings of women, surreptitiously splitting female subjects into good-evil halves according to their degree of nakedness. Truth as a virtue was usually represented by the figure of a naked woman -- *nuditas virtualis*. The dark side of woman -- *nuditas criminalis* -- was richly clothed and adorned with glittering jewels. These sexual images foreshadow literary characters waiting in the (eighteenth-century) wings; the



virtuous woman not only wore nothing but -- like Clarissa and Charlotte Temple and Walpole's princesses -- she had nothing. The dark woman subtly indicates (as a well-dressed male subject would not) Christ's audacious claim to sexual autonomy. Her nudity was not visible -- it had to be imagined. The viewer had to consciously participate in stripping her of her dignity, and in that creation of consciousness lay the grave threat she presented to Hebrew/Catholic patriarchal interests; the source of her "evil" nature was her status as equal to man. The message is almost too simple to comprehend; when a woman has the personal independence and self-knowledge to create sexual safety for herself, to veil her nakedness from the buyer's gaze, she comes to represent untruth, criminality, evil.

When the overlapping holocausts of the Catholic Inquisition and the Protestant Reformation redefined the economic and religious destiny of Europe, literacy worked to liberate the individual man from centuries of patriarchal servitude, as it had in the first decades after the death of Christ. Now that the common man could read his Bible, his rebellion against his ecclesiastical masters was inevitable. At stake was control of the Biblical Logos in its two-Testament forms: the embodied Word which was the Catholicized, infantilized Christ, and the Old Testament logos of the Hebrew warrior which was Christ's cultural heritage. Newly imbued with the economic possibilities within both points of view, and

beginning to comprehend the force of political dissent, the common man called himself (at the Diet of Speyer in 1529) a Protestant, and for the rest of the century he suffered and died for the right to interpret Biblical meanings for himself. When the blood-bath was over, the question that was settled (as with Christ) was the inalienable right of the "Christianized" male to disobey his pope, his feudal lord, his father, his confessor, even the Biblical writers.

The first official act of sixteenth-century Protestant theologians was to exclude eight books from the sacralized Biblical canon, an act of literary exorcism that injected "Catholic" material into "low" literature at the same time it imposed (in the name of the Catholic Christ) bourgeois Protestant values on the ancient Hebrew texts. A new Christianity exploded from the rebellious roots of the old, forming a religious variation which incorporated within itself the rejected father-principle in the form of capitalism, the economic systemic balance which created and which sustains the Gothic novel. The theme of legitimate prophecies held a central place; in the Protestantized Bible which appeared in 1611, the Apocalypse of John was renamed, by Martin Luther, the Book of Revelation. (Luther at first damned the book altogether as being "neither apostolic nor prophetic... because Christ is not taught or known in it" (Alter and Kermode 76). At that point, the word "apocalypse" joined "apocryphal" (which Webster, in 1828, defined as "spurious") beyond the

possibility of allowable integration; thus, the quality that marks the Gothic experience was definitively lodged in the place of ambiguity, the Threshold.

Inherently schizophrenic, the Apocalyptic Vision is a fixed threshold between opposed ideas, a polarized vision at once hidden and revealed, Biblical and non-Biblical, legitimate and illegitimate, miraculous and fabricated, pure and impure, loyal and traitorous, good and evil, and (by a logical extension of Biblical philosophy) male and female. As Man/Logos/Reason/Good became inextricably linked in the ecclesiastical documents which underlie Western culture, so Woman/Silence/Madness/Evil came to signify -- in modern literature -- whatever was unecclesiastical, sub-cultural, non-masculine.

These polarized positions of "Christianized" sexuality are characterized by the male/female gender assumptions in both The Castle of Otranto and Wise Blood. In Otranto, the "threshold" is the site of woundedness for both Manfred and his daughter Matilda; both suffer from their ambiguous placement, but character gender defines absolutely the placement of the threshold, the nature of the other/beloved, and the final outcome. The Threshold factor works differently in Wise Blood, partially because O'Connor's female characters (Sabbath Lily and Mrs. Watts) are caricatures. O'Connor's women are, perhaps, negative psychological projections of her own (unavoidable) sexual purity; they are unchanging,

one-dimensional, sub-human stick figures who are fixed in "illegitimate" sexuality and therefore in a closed realm of sinfulness, beyond the moral suffering of choice which is the torment of the Gothic threshold. Echoing the third-century voice of the misogynist Clement and his view of women as creatures who are naturally shameful, O'Connor "...based [Hazel] firmly on someone she did know and understand and believe in...the biblical, historical figure of St. Paul [Clement's source of Christian sexual meaning]"(Fitzgerald, xii). Mocking, mean-spirited, self-concerned, hateful and hated, Mrs. Watts and Sabbath Lily are drawn in malice and actuated to serve as contrasting foils for Hazel's character image and moral evolution, a salvation which -- to the virginal O'Connor -- meant an ascent toward sexual neutrality. Both sexualized women are deprived even of the status of sinners, since sin to a Catholic ("original sin" is erased by Baptism) is a product of choice. They are sensualists and therefore soul-dead, beyond caring, beyond thought; they are not people but things that her hero, her Christ-in-reverse, must reject in order to arrive at a state of truth, grace, virtue, sanctity.

The sexual lines which split the Gothicized moralities are cut in stones of varying densities. In Otranto, masculine morality is relative to his changing interests, or Protestant, as reflected in Walpole's heroes who neither die nor suffer tyranny, though his females do both. The

feminine moral position, automatically opposed, was based on the Paulist idea of female subjection to male rule, rule which is, even in Protestant form, ancient, Catholic, and absolute. The moral structure of Wise Blood maintains that difference in reverse; Hazel obeys absolutely the call to serve a fierce, tyrannical God (therein lies his goodness), while her female characters are free agents of their own interests, especially their sexuality (therein lies their evil). Both books restate the Hebrew supposition that God created the universe as an arena for the sanctification and general welfare of the patriarchal will through history.

The difference in their authorial assumptions has less to do with the definition of sin (the authors agree that Sin in its pure state may be found in feminine sexual autonomy) than with the source of Christian authority. Walpole's democratized Protestantism, personified in the "true" prince Theodore, defines Christian sanctity according to a principle of individual freedom -- the divine right of the common man to rebel; while in O'Connor's traditional Catholicism, human sanctity, personified in Hazel Motes, rises from the duty of the individual to reject the impulse to rebel, to willingly submit to the yoke of physical and spiritual penance, with the end purpose being the imitation of the crucified Christ. Where Otranto celebrates the actualization of the masculine ego, Wise Blood celebrates the sanctification of the masculine soul. Both books use women as ground for the hero to walk

upon, as stepping stones to a final good end.

The true prince, the tyrant, and the penitent all serve as bearers of the Jehovah Imperative, reflections of the Father-Son domination of all else. Though the Christ/Jehovah personalities are reversed in Wise Blood, the moral struggle for both Hazel and Manfred centers on the confrontation between Meaning (Self) and Chaos (Other). As the carriers of the Protestantized logos, both characters must protest the present order and embrace the chaos of the unknown; both must create a condition of philosophical and psychological tension with the Other. They share the characteristic loneliness of the Gothic male, the solitude born of self-elevation from the state of Man to the status of the definer of man, the God of the Word. From that loneliness -- sexual and spiritual -- comes the Apocalyptic Vision.

The Manfred-Theodore combination represents Jehovah's power to define, conquer, and rule, potencies which are contingent upon the proximity of whatever is incomprehensible, unconquerable, unruly -- that is, the female. Hazel Motes' quest for Christian "truth" likewise depends upon the presence of female scapegoats; his final submission to Love, to the need for penance and grace, results from his blanket rejection of the corrupting taint of women, indeed -- of all the human community of Taulkinham -- a dark world of sin and sinners to which he, through O'Connor's privileging of his "Christian" mysogyny, has proved himself superior.



Woman, in Romance, is essentially a generic collection of those traits which shape the romantic male. In the basic Gothic design, woman shares with the "unconquered wilderness" the nature of "not-man," of negative ego space, of chaos; thus, she is made to serve as a frame for the portrait of the reasoning, defining, conquering male. In both novels, a male God blesses the male with the inescapable condition of being in love with himself through the power -- the "grace" -- of the eternal, immutable Word of God. In both novels, all female characters find their identities not in love, which is always freely given -- not in grace, which is the signifier of moral change -- not in comprehension, which occurs on the drawn line between Meaning and Chaos -- but (as imaged in the Book of Judges) on the deadly threshold between one absolute male ruler and another, both of whom she must obey as she would obey Jehovah. There is no other place for Woman within the Apocalyptic Vision.

## CHAPTER TWO

### HENRY'S APOCALYPTIC VISION

The ancient conflict between official and unofficial theological values was formalized in England in 1533, when Henry VIII outlawed the Catholic Church which had outlawed him. His claim on the Logos, however, demanded as a first condition the removal of the Logos, the Christos, from the official Christian altar, for the sake (ostensibly) of the right to participate lawfully in the interpretation of the Biblical meaning of marriage. The Bible-reading Henry was well within his traditional rights to expect and then demand from his faith, his kingdom and his marriage the sine qua non of an Old Testament patriarchal household -- loyal sons. Henry was also debt-ridden, and no doubt saw in an Old Testament marriage policy the clearest way toward mustering an unpaid army, soldier-sons whose blood could (with long-established Biblical sanction) be sacrificed to fulfill his imperial ambitions. In a way, Henry VIII -- as man and as master -- was the first Gothic hero.

Henry's short-range paternal ambitions went unrealized, but when he protested the presence of the Mass in England,



banning the communal blood sacrifice (and its psychological release), he institutionalized Protestant Rhetoric as the new site of the Biblical Logos. Christian Democracy was born when Henry transferred the Logos from the Catholic altar to the political realm of the English throne. By that same act, Jehovah's powers were passed from the Vatican to the new English Parliament. From 1611 on, the state (through Henry) wielded "divine" dominion over the enclosure of blood inheritance; not only was the Parliament authorized to call the soldier-son onto imperial battlegrounds (under the threat of execution) but it also had the power to sanctify (and profit from) the Protestant "marriage of jointure," the device by which the untitled bourgeoisie could combine land holdings and mercantile fortunes to increase inheritable wealth.

When Henry appropriated Jehovah's power in Christ's name, he cut the dying European God in half. His use of Protestant theology as an economic force defined Protestant values as something a Protestant has, a theological idea held by an individual or a sect. Since its essential methodology is "protest," the individual Protestant (and sect) holds, as a moral absolute, the right to relinquish that theological idea, to protest the existing doctrine and create another, opposed doctrine. Within Protestantism, theological oppositions not only may but must exist side by side; whatever doctrine the Protestant claims must co-exist with that which he denies, so that the Protestant morality, and its social

value-system, contains a war within itself, a conflict between the two parts of itself: that which is accepted and that which is denied. It is a religion which defines itself by defining (creating) an "Other," a rejected part which -- like the Apocrypha (perhaps because of the Apocrypha) -- must claim an existence and yet be officially silenced.

The process is a painful one for the definer. In his grand theft of the Logos, Henry became both the patriarch and the protester against patriarchy, establishing and institutionalizing the double-intent which is the natural mind-set of the Protestant male. Henry's multiple powers, applied to an oppositional set of Scriptures, produced a religious paradox made up of Jehovah, the Father-Definer, and Christ, the Son-Defined. The faith of the Protestant male burdened him with a moral paradox, a double bind which asked him to serve two masters. But the process was profitable; although the operations of the double divinity were nominally opposed, their shared scriptural roots made those differences useful within the emerging social dynamic.

The two halves of the split God were reconnected within Protestant marriage. The male, equal to king, pope, and father, brought to the union the power of the Logos -- the Rebel-Christ's power to disregard an unjust patriarchal law. The husband was also the Old Testament patriarch who ruled his home, wife, and children as completely as God ruled him. In the female was invested the sacrificial Victim Christ,

bound by love (and law) to obey the commands of a God that was constructed from the combined authorities of husband, father, church, state, and Paul the Apostle. Not that she did not wield power; if the eighteenth-century Protestant wife was forced to unite within herself Old Testament tribal loyalty and the "piety" defined by Paul, she was at least permitted to enter the negotiations. Like the victimized Christ, she did (parental pressures notwithstanding) choose the site for the sacrifice of her sexual identity. Naturally, husband and wife could not share a personal theology, since each had to embrace what was anathema to the other, but they could share an economic philosophy which would (nominally) work to the equal benefit of both. But law and tradition were on his side; while the Jehovah male was conquering the world "for Christ," his institutions would be imposing absolute moral rule over women, children, and the peoples of color who would live under the English flag, whose destiny was to labor (as had the pre-Christian Hebrew male) in service of the patriarchal hegemony. The institutional state would claim God's final authority over husband, wife, and property, while the Church of England sanctified all, and provided life-preferments for those souls (most often literary men) who labored in the rich, ecclesiastical vineyards, guarding and enforcing the Protestantized Logos.

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Critic Mieke Bal, defining patriarchy as the old man's domination not only of women but of younger men, coined the terms "patrilocal" and "virilocal" marriage to illustrate the evolving social dynamics of the ancient Hebrew westward expansion. The Hebrews, transferring Jehovah's authority from the nomadic mode of desert life to the agricultural mode of life in Canaan, were faced with the problem of who would house and rule the married female (and the work-force of her offspring) -- a problem very much like that faced by pre-revolutionary Englishmen. The patrilocal/virilocal struggle in both cases pitted the sexual/economic rights of the aging, dynastic male against the semi-lawful demands of the rebellious warrior-son. This struggle is imaged in the Book of Judges, Chapter 19, in the story of the Levite and his wife, wherein a young woman who stayed with her father after her marriage -- as was the custom -- is carried off by the husband and consequently dies of gang-rape in the streets of a strange town, after her husband throws her out of the house in which they had both been given shelter by an old (patrilocal) man. Although the mob (of Benjamites -- the youngest tribesmen in Israel) had first insisted on raping the husband, the issue at stake was not homosexual aggression, but heterosexual lust; Benjamites had not yet earned the patriarchal privilege of claiming a wife. The husband, in response to the offense against his wife (who died literally sprawled across a patrilocal threshold) cut

the girl's body "along with the bones" into twelve pieces and sent one piece to each Hebrew tribe. Denying his own participation in the incident, the Levite gathered an army from the twelve tribes and initiated a revolutionary war that ended with the acceptance of a new marital custom; from then on, a married Hebrew woman left her father's household and followed her husband to his, a social advancement that took unmarried rapists off the streets throughout Israel.

The liminal threshold space between the father's "safe" house and the husband's virilocal adventure was recreated during England's religious-imperial revolution. As in the time of the Levite, and -- later -- the time of Christ, the issue was ownership of sexuality, and the site of rule was the house, both as location and blood line: "The idea of the house...relates the spatial domain to the historical. The same word -- house -- denotes both a place and lineage ...lineage is the founding problem in the book [of Judges] ...the place of the father-son war is at the crossroad between chronology and space"(Bal 20).

The crossroad, the line between the old man's rights and the young man's dream, is the central theme in The Castle of Otranto, mirroring the social and economic issues that were engendered in England by the Reformation. As the signifier for the economic link that was then forged between patrilocal and virilocal interests, the threshold in Otranto -- at once the war zone between castle and church, father

and son, England and her colonies, the past and the future -- defined a major formulaic site of danger for the female character in the Gothic novel; she is the lamb offered up to expiate divine wrath, she is the guarantor of ongoing communication and cooperation between father and lover.

In Otranto, written at a time when the evils connected with the religious past were fueling eighteenth-century emigration to the colonies, the site of the young girl's martyrdom is the altar of a Catholic Church -- a house in which England had lived for fifteen hundred years before Henry's royal claim on the Biblical Logos led the Englishman over the threshold to the unknown Protestant adventure.

It was Henry VIII who first formally embodied the modern "Apocalyptic Vision;" it was he who, as the ruling patriarch, represented the old regime and he who, as the son, rebelled against it. His self-interest is the locus of change, of conflicting meanings which constantly shift but which are always self-referent, focused on the fulfillment of his own will. By his edict, his supremely potent word, the old ritual of moral redemption through the blood sacrifice of the ritualized Christ was criminalized and banned, and in its place was born a new ritual of self-destruction, an Apocalyptic Vision which revealed a new Prophetic revelation: from now on the Biblical God Jehovah would serve Henry's sovereign will and -- by extension -- England's. He envisioned a racial and economic ascendancy



based on the same principles which established the dynasty of the Hebrew patriarchs, and by appropriating the Biblical Logos he established his dynastic pinnacle -- as immutably "lawful" as Jehovah's.

The Biblical Logos took many literary forms en route from Abraham, Moses, and Christ, to Paul and other early Christian documentarists -- legitimate and illegitimate, to Catholic Canon Law mixed with popular disclaimers, and finally to the firefight over control of the Word which was formally begun at the Diet of Speyer. That none of the original force of the Logos was lost on the journey is due to the very nature of God-as-language; the Judeo-Christian economic paradigm, still held together by ancient marriage contracts and liturgical rituals of blood sacrifice, is absolutely based on the worship of its own historical logos.

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The history of sacred Scripture is basically a history of its priesthood, its scribes. Literacy, the power of the commonalized Word, made possible the American dream, beginning with the exodus of the hard-working, mercantile, bourgeois English Protestant and his family to America, the New Canaan. His need for the social status that would guarantee the accrual of inheritable property drove the Protestant pilgrim to search through the newly accessible cultural

lexicon of the Bible for ways and means to fill his need. He found two applicable formulas among the Biblical myths: One was the story of Abraham and Isaac, in which Abraham proves his obedience to Jehovah by his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac at Jehovah's word. The other story, that of the Levite and his wife, established -- through the rape, murder, and final disposition of the girl -- the new custom of virilocal marriage over patrilocal marriage.

Both myths were firmly re-established in the first Gothic novel, but while the sacrificial myth of Abraham and Isaac was overturned (as it was in the pre-Revolutionary England which produced the Gothic), the myth of the Levite and his wife -- the incest myth -- was left intact and even reinforced. This is true even in O'Connor's parodic treatment of Protestantism. Because she applies a principle of reversal equally to both myths, Wise Blood leaves the Gothic formula in place -- although in negative "carnivalized" imagistic space; O'Connor's book, like Walpole's, manages to isolate the source of social evil in the female. Under literary analysis, that ethnocentric, gender-based moral philosophy is the Judeo-Christian legacy to the modern world, as effective (and inescapable) a resolution to the problem of evil as it was in the days of ancient Israel.

Since it was invented, the elastic (and salable) Gothic construct has been a popular arena in which to balance the overt/covert hegemonic intentions of western literature.

Walpole's book swept England and America in non-stop editions when it was first written, and the formula has since provided hundreds of imitators with a rich, unending source of literary tensions. It has attracted widely different authors; Fiedler's long list has assembled Mrs. Radcliffe, Walter Scott, Jane Austen, Monk Lewis, the Bronte sisters, Mary Shelley, D.H. Lawrence, Dickens, Hardy, Trollope, R.L. Stevenson and the Marquis de Sade; and in America Charles Brockden Brown, Hawthorne, Poe, Melville, Twain, Zane Grey and Frank Yerby. William Faulkner and many other post-modern Southern writers (including Flannery O'Connor) have pushed the Gothic form to new psychological depths, but the old mythical principles hold solidly across the genre.

Through these authors and the tremendous collective impact of their works on the evolution of modern consciousness -- an evolution clearly tracible to the Judeo-Christian Bible -- the moral inconsistencies within the Gothic vision have been inextricably lodged within the evolving Western literary canon. The Apocryphal/Apocalyptic relationship, politicized since the words were coined, contains an apparent contradiction which was based on a series of historical necessities. But beneath the apparent digression in their evolutionary tracks, the words are meta-textually connected in their service of their patriarchal inventors.

Ultimately (and equally, in tandem) both words operated as literary tools that carved out a continuous two-way path

of economic cooperation between the young men and the old, a coalition which -- since it could not be admitted -- was encoded within a complex network of etymological twists that hid its essential "eternal" purpose. These twists, canonized in dictionaries used by a mainstream of readers and writers, point to a hidden creator of the Gothic manipulation; the Apocalyptic Vision -- ancient and modern -- was created and is held in place by the lexicologist, the final arbiter of what words mean.

That the Apocalyptic Vision is based upon a principle of ambiguity (as is the Protestant religion) is made clear by Webster's machinations of what constitutes a prophetic Biblical revelation. Seemingly illogical on the surface, Webster's entries maintain an undercover loyalty to the decidedly un-ambiguous ambitions of the eighteenth-century revolutionary, for whom Biblical ambiguities provided a blueprint for social and economic success.

The Gothic novel is Protestant in its ethos...blatantly anti-Catholic"(Fielder, 108.) The same might be said of Noah Webster's American dictionary. Like Horace Walpole, Webster served Protestantism. He was six years old when Otranto's formula reached the American shores and became part of his culture; naturally, he adapted -- as an extension of the freedom of religious speech which Luther took from the Pope -- the philosophical elements of his world-view to the authorial power of the dictionary writer.



In his own words, Webster describes his work as revolutionary; he wanted to produce for Americans "a dictionary which shall ...dissolve the charm of veneration for foreign authorities which facinates [sic] the mind of men in this country, and holds them in the chains of illusion"(Webster, 9). An analysis of his assumptions suggests that he broke the foreign chains of illusion with more of the same, with a linguistic shell game which depends for its existence on the illusion that Biblical meanings are -- despite their internal discrepancies -- instituted by the Creator of the universe.

Beyond the ambiguities shared by "apocryphal" and "apocalyptic," Webster's 1828 entries for "logo," "Logos," and "word" participate in the double-Testamentary sexual politics that activate the meaning of the Gothic paradigm and its signifiers. An exploration of their implications shows how they were often forced out of their original meanings into a position of religious and philosophical bias. For instance, one definition for "word" (common noun) says this: "The Logos. The Scriptures or Gospel"(all proper nouns). Mieke Bal has warned us to suspect all Biblical naming: "The Proper Name [like] the modifier 'sacred' determines the stability of its subject, stimulat(ing) an ideological circularity that enhances an illusion to which wholeness of character can attach itself...in the interest of the dominating group"(Bal Lethal 114).

Webster's application of one unit of meaning -- the common noun "word" -- to three separate "character" texts (one character is one book, one character is eighty-eight books, and one character is not a book at all but a man) enhances the illusion that all three Biblical signifiers agree in some real sense, some "eternal" sense. But they do not share a "wholeness"; the historical Scriptures (both Testaments in one Bible) are different from "the Gospel" (presumably one of the four), and the Logos is different from both. When Webster created the illusion that they are not different, he obscured the history that divided them.

In Webster's "enhancement" of those three proper nouns under the single word "word" (unit of meaning) is buried not just a philosophical but a cultural contradiction: the Testaments did not share a racial or an economic philosophy, nor did they share a religious vision. Although they testified to the existence of the same God, the Old and New Testament covenants (signs of sanctification) are as different as blood and water. That Webster links their meanings rather than their etymologies is a subtle example of how Biblical significance has been lexicographically slanted in favor of the Old Testament patriarchy. The word "testament" is likewise slanted: "testament," meaning "promise," shares a Latin root with "make," "will" (as volition or document), and "testicle." (This semiotic link was appropriated from common usage; in ancient Rome, a man made an



oath with one hand on his testicles.)

Demonstrably, the search for the Gothic essence begins in the Bible, but because the Bible is morally oppositional at its intertestamental core, the search for what continues to drive the Gothic hero might begin with the question: which Testament -- which Logos -- does the hero serve? Of the two Testaments, the Manfred/Theodore heroes of Otranto are Old Testament types, representations of the Jehovah warrior for whom the ownership of the house and its inhabitants is the central issue, while Hazel Motes is -- like O'Connor's deep-south homeland -- Christ-haunted; even in his schizophrenic self-destruction, Hazel is of Jehovah only in his violent delusions. In his person, he represents the poverty and homelessness of the Christian pilgrim, the sacrificial Logos of the Catholic altar. When O'Connor has her hero announce that it costs nothing to join his church, when she has him throw his "extra" money in the wastebasket, she is mocking the Old Testament economic value-system. That value-system, which defines the "Christian" Gothic hero in Otranto, is fundamental to Webster's post-Revolutionary Protestant American culture, and is also fundamental to his definitions for the word "Logos."

Like Webster's entry for "Apocalypse" (the Catholicized word that was replaced in 1611 with "Revelation"), "Logos" is a proper noun, but a proper noun is inappropriately applied to its first definition, which is: "Cosmic reason, affirmed

of spoken and written English, thereby maintaining (invisibly, as does the Gothic novel) the social, sexual, economic, and political sovereignty of the Protestant male in the Western world.

## CHAPTER THREE - OTRANTO

### LOGOS AS SERPENT

The Ourobouros, the Greek snake that consumes itself eternally, is as good an image as any to define the moral twists in The Castle of Otranto. The character-signs are implicitly ambiguous: the true prince is stupid but honest; the false prince is also honest and sexually appealing besides; his Christianized wife is a heavy-footed, mournful, stupefying bore whose scoldings are invariably accompanied by the prayers and threats of a Catholic priest of the same moral stamp; the princesses are more lovers than rivals when they discuss their shared love of the young hero; the plot coalesces when two aging fathers (one is a warrior home from the Crusades) negotiate a land trade in exchange for the sexual favors of each other's daughter. The story's action rises from a wedding gone awry, and the end comes after Heaven punishes the sin of one of the fathers; but it is never clear whether Manfred's sin was his attempted rape of his son's bride, his wrongful occupation of the Castle of Otranto, or the murder of his daughter Matilda in a jealous rage.

One has the idea that since the young women are property to be openly bought and sold, then Heaven will judge all three crimes as thefts. There certainly are mitigating circumstances surrounding his claim of the bride; Isabella is lovely, his son Conrad is freshly dead, the prince had the traditional "droit de seigneur" which European feudal mores offered the aging male aristocrat. Even his theft of Otranto is not totally culpable; he took it from someone who had apparently stolen it first, and the stabbing of his daughter might be excused by his state of mind at the time. And Heaven does not judge him harshly; the adjudicating Voice (disembodied) merely gives the castle to Theodore, the true owner, and sends Manfred to a nearby monastery for the rest of his life.

The Castle of Otranto is entertaining, but so morally indulgent and self-contradictory that one wonders what appeal it could have had for a hardheaded, eighteenth-century Protestant readership. Walpole himself thought it silly. Though he had little hope for its acceptance, he had it printed, and on Christmas Eve, 1764, The Castle of Otranto was presented to London readers as having been written by "Onuphrio Muralto" and translated from the Italian by "William Marshal, Gent." In a preface written from within the blind of double anonymity, Walpole-as-Marshall announced Otranto's suitability for a bourgeois, Protestant readership: "No doubt...the English reader will be pleased with this performance [despite its]

miracles, visions, necromancy, dreams. The piety that reigns throughout, the lessons of virtue...the rigid purity of the sentiments, exempt this work from the censure to which romances are...liable"(Walpole 4).

Whether or not Walpole's virtuous disclaimer enhanced the propriety of his "little trifle", the book was immediately, wildly popular on both sides of the Atlantic; in 1765, The Castle of Otranto "supplanted Rousseau's New Eloisa as the most widely read novel in the colonies" (Fiedler 82). Otranto went through twenty-one editions before 1800 and over a hundred since in a dozen languages. From the start, however, critical exegesis covered its confusion over the human elements in the work by focusing on what was patently unreal. Thomas Grey, writing from Cambridge in 1765, praised Otranto's purely "apocalyptic" elements: "It made some of us cry a little, and all in general afraid to go to bed at night"(qtd. by Mudrick, 1963). Sir Walter Scott approved of Otranto's "masterful blend of spectral and architectural detail," conceding to Walpole "the applause which cannot be denied to him who can excite the passions of fear and pity"(qtd. W.S. Lewis viii). Even Lord Byron referred to Otranto's specificities in a vague, general way, as if its category defined the work rather than the other way around: "Walpole is the author of the first romance ...of our language"(qtd. Lewis 163).

The critically-approved "portents of horror," set loose

within a twelfth-century castle in southern Italy, included the appearance of huge knightly appurtenances, a hooded skeleton hovering over a tomb, an ancestor who steps out of his portrait, a statue that bleeds from the nose, a sword that is carried by an army of fifty mute knights, a voice from the sky whose irrefutable authority finally crowns the true prince of Otranto, fulfilling the ancient curse that deposes the evil prince Manfred: "The castle and lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it."

The castle's Deus-ex-machina special effects are not real nor does it seem as if Walpole went out of his way to make them seem so. Their purpose is to deflect attention from the human content at the same time they invoke Heaven's authority over it. "The piety that reigns throughout, the lessons of virtue...the rigid purity of the sentiments" in Otranto constitute the book's real import; Walpole's fantasy is no fantasy.

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A basic tenet of the Aristotelian theory of reality holds that "form follows function." Whatever might be his differences with Aristotle, Karl Marx echoed this principle when he wrote: "Production not only supplies a material for a need, but also supplies a need for the material. Production



produces the object, manner, motive of consumption...and likewise produces the producer"(qtd. Pollock 3). Marx was speaking of graphic art, but any literary criticism which questions publishing principles is a closely related activity; "Most contemporary critical theories are theories of consumption, concerned with understanding [how] a literary object can be profitably and correctly consumed"(Williams, qtd. Pollock 3).

The consumable element in the literary object called the novel is social meaning. There are no novels without people in them. Novels offer the material for profitably and correctly interpreting our relationships with others and the world, and if a novel functions well, if the book's world conforms in a recognizable way to the world within our minds, we are satisfied with it; we crave more novels like it which will anchor and reify our security in knowing who we are or -- more precisely -- in the belief that the novelist knows who we are. The cause-effect momentum of reading, believing, buying, and re-reading thus reconciles again and again the author's vision of reality with the reader's belief in the author. The reader's trust of the writer activates a social-economic covenant of literary truth-in-lending, based on the reader's assumption that such dialogue will be carried on honestly. Thus, the consumer of novels is led to believe that human reality and literary renderings of human reality inform each other by nature.

The "natural" reader, critically uninitiated, finds under Otranto's special effects a swift and bloody struggle between an aging warrior and the gathering elements that will demonstrate his final and inevitable impotency. The tyrannical Prince Manfred, accustomed to absolute rule over the castle and its inhabitants, tries to delay the workings of the family curse by arranging a marriage between his son Conrad and the princess Isabella, the young daughter of the Marquis Frederic of Vincenza who is off fighting the Crusades. When, on his wedding day, the weak, sickly princeling is crushed by a giant warrior-helmet that falls from the sky, his father (Manfred) demands the bride's presence in his bedroom, from which he expels his aging wife, the grief-stricken Hippolita.

Isabella dutifully appears and is faced with the Prince's lust: "I have lost the hopes of my race. But Conrad was not worthy of your beauty...heaven has perhaps taken him away that I might not trust the honours of my house on so frail a foundation...I hope...to have reason to rejoice at the death of Conrad"(22). Isabella recoils for Hippolita's sake, enraging Prince Manfred: "Curse Hippolita! Forget her from this moment, as I do! Too long has [Hippolita] cursed me by her unfruitfulness"(Walpole 23). Manfred seizes Isabella who pulls away and runs. Manfred chases her. The progress of that chase is the storyline; although he is momentarily distracted from the rape by an ancestor descending

from a portrait, he never abandons his sexual claim. The plot of the story hangs on his tenacity.

Manfred's sexual aggression engages the enmity of a peasant lad (Theodore) who aids Isabella's escape through the castle dungeon to the church of St. Nicholas and the forest beyond. Theodore is imprisoned for his insurrection but Manfred's own daughter, Matilda, frees him, praying he will find Isabella before her father does. Theodore finds her in a cave in the forest, where he is challenged by an old, war-weary knight, a stranger. Theodore draws his sword and badly wounds the "foe" before he discovers that the strange knight is Frederic, Isabella's father, just back from the Crusades. Theodore apologizes and escorts the Marquis and Isabella back to the castle.

Fifty mute knights who have accompanied Frederic are waiting in the castle courtyard, holding among them a giant sword on which is inscribed a repetition of the curse. While this mystery is explored there is a frank, brief discussion between the older men wherein an exchange is arranged; each will take the other's daughter. When the girls protest, Hippolita (Matilda's mother, Manfred's wife) reminds them of their duty to their fathers. To Matilda she says: "You must not mention Manfred with disrespect... he is thy father still...thy fate depends on thy father...let us submit ourselves to heaven." Matilda falls at her mother's feet. Hippolita upbraids her: "Answer me not...I must not hear

a word against the pleasure of thy father"(Walpole 88). To Manfred, Hippolita says: "Think not thy...wife rebels against thy authority. It boots not what becomes of me. I will withdraw into the monastery and waste the remainder of life in prayers for my child and the prince"(Walpole 87-89). Here Hippolita chooses the Christian humility of "taking the lowest place," the fate which will later be imposed upon her Old Testament husband.

While Father Jerome (Hippolita's friend, the pastor of St. Nicholas' who is -- secretly -- Theodore's father) delays the paperwork of the divorce, the royal fathers press the issue with both girls. Isabella rebuffs Manfred's second rape attempt, setting in motion the final disaster. When she flees him, Manfred tracks her (he thinks) to the Church, sees a girl at the altar talking to Theodore, and -- thinking she is Isabella -- stabs his daughter Matilda through the heart. As she dies, begging her father's forgiveness for the sin of her "disobedience," a disembodied voice (male) deposes Manfred and crowns Theodore. Manfred is humbled, attests to Theodore's legitimacy, and capitulates; Theodore and Isabella marry despite his love for the dead Matilda; Manfred and Hippolita retire to separate Catholic convents where they will spend the rest of their lives in prayer and penance.

Clearly, the story is about a family in distress. Critics, however, aside from labeling the book "romantic"



according to its form, have said virtually nothing about the content, despite its hundreds of imitators. Since it is perhaps self-evident that a literary idea informs the realities that re-create that idea, the question arises: according to what formula of authorial appropriation of meaning has the book's quirky "form" been widely noted and imitated, while its function -- its human content -- has been unanimously deprecated as being insignificant? One might answer that because the sexual content is in many ways familiar, eternalized by thousands of years of self-defining Biblical authority, the content is not so much insignificant as invisible.

Manfred, the prototypical dark Gothic hero, is caught -- like Henry of England -- in the two-Testament double bind. Created by an English parliamentarian in the long shadow of the first Protestant king, Manfred is trapped by the Logos that enthrones him. He is the reigning patriarch with the power of life or death over the other characters in the book, yet he is forced by Biblical law to remain married to a fruitless wife, forced to search the records, as Henry did, for evidence of incestuous ties between him and his wife which would nullify the marriage. He bears Jehovah's values yet he suffers at the end a Christian vision; he is doomed to know himself by facing his mistakes. Unlike the single-dimensional Theodore who is pure, untried, and who therefore knows nothing, much less himself, Manfred is a rival God,

a soul so obsessively self-possessed that he draws upon himself Heaven's thunder. It is Manfred's sin rather than Theodore's virtue that gives the story its strange depth and darkness.

Critic Caroline Spurgeon first (in 1907) dissected the self-consuming Gothic formula into three parts: the rising castle or conqueror's house (both spatial edifice and historical lineage), the chaos outside the castle (often random or "grotesque" events made of purely physical elements -- light, darkness, gravity, wind and weather, geographical location), and the "brooding Byronic hero" whose presence at the threshold between them puts him at enmity with both. This unresolvable discord -- based on Biblical imperatives hidden within the first Gothic novel -- serves the "modern man" but at the same moment it indicts him. His historical legitimacy does little to heal his indeterminate but unquenchable guilt over his unlimited "Godlike" powers; the sexual mirror that is Woman has been "demonized" and so deceives and "unmans" him; his moral guide -- the Bible -- is inherently ambiguous and infects him with doubt; his Biblical legitimacy is based on the fragile foundation of his own personal Protestant interpretation of scriptural significance.

The Gothic hero lives on a threshold between the self-consuming Godhead whose Act is the creation of the Logos that must -- if it is true to Old Testament values -- damn the Christian hero for the crime of patricide, and the Logos



itself. This line drawn between autocracy and autonomy is both a major cause and an inevitable effect of the tormented psychological "realities" on which the Gothic novel feeds.

The Gothic heroine has a drawn line, too; the fertile young female is warned -- then and later --to shun the company of strangers, alien men whose sexual aggression and foreign seed endangers the existence of any closed tribe. Based on the tragic character Matilda, the princess who fled the flesh-trade made by her father and who was murdered by him, the young female reader is informed that her social deportment is crucial to her well-being. The price of disobedience (then and later), or even (as in Matilda's case) the appearance of it, would be martyrdom. The message, brought up through Judeo-Christian history in the Book of Judges, is a familiar one to middle-class female readers of romances. If she would leave home safely, she must first center herself between the patrilocal male and the virilocal male, and -- using as a lever her sexual desirability and vulnerability -- engineer an economic deal between them.

That positioning is the site of meaning in the Protestant "marriage of jointure," and its enforcer is her father. His instructions come to her from the ultimate father, Jehovah, through the Book of Judges. If she would leave her ancestral childhood home, she had better find a husband who can fight her battles for her, or sufficiently recompense her father's loss. Christian virtue, lodged in the female

by the God-splitting Reformation, lies not in honor but in prudence. The lessons of piety and purity which Otranto's first preface promised his English readership were certainly not addressed to the young Protestant male; his salvation lay in warfare; Walpole was announcing to young women that their participation in holiness would consist of the Paulist traits of meekness and silence, obedience and sexual chastity, social engineering, and the sustaining of the love-marriage economic rituals. This difference, this hierarchy of significance between male and female Gothic loves and loyalties, is reflected in book four, line 297 of John Milton's Paradise Lost: "For contemplation he and valour form'd/For softness she and sweet, attractive grace;/he for God only, she for God in him."

Considering the broad significance of the inter-familial tensions in Otranto, including the social, psychological and political impact of all its imitators, it seems odd that critical exegesis has failed to note any particular social meaning in the book, especially since it sold well to a bourgeois Protestant readership whose daily lives included little that was not socially useful. Even given the insidious nature of its Biblical under-structure, it would seem as if the specifics within the Apocalyptic Gothic vision have nothing to do with the book's "profitable and correct consumption" or even with its structural elements: plot, setting, character interaction.

"Otranto's plot [Marvin Mudrick wrote in 1963] is mere carpentry, erected by an aristocrat who yearned for the past, [for] that dark time before the Protestant disinfection, when powers and passions forbidden to civilization burst forth...."(Mudrick 11). Prothero Lord Ernle, in a 1916 anthology, admitted that Otranto was epoch-making, the linear ancestor of Ivanhoe...the most suggestive book in modern literary history," but then he tells us that we are to regard seriously neither the characters, which are "unlikely", nor the grotesqueries, which, "....if they were not invented in jest," were an editorial oversight "included, no doubt, when the judgment of an author's fribble was allowed to triumph over the judgment of the literary critics"(Ernle 243). He further dismisses all questions of contextual undertones with this conclusion: "The eighteenth-century middle-class movement, despising ideas, absorbed in realities, strongly leavened with Puritanism, concerned in practical morality, influenced [Walpole] not at all"(Ernle 244).

Ernle, like Mudrick, seems unaware of any connection between the social and religious realities within the book and the social and religious upheavals that shared the moment of its birth. Even Leslie Fiedler, who is usually sensitive to contextual subtleties, posited a total break in logic between the book's artistic form and its immediate function. "The Castle of Otranto," he wrote, is "fundamentally anti-bourgeois"(Fiedler 107). And yet it sold to a bourgeois

readership, as if it bore some relevance to their present-day existences.

The difference between the novel's message and what the critics say the message is, leads the thoughtful reader to conclude that the Gothic novel is serving some strategic political function that must be hidden in order to remain profitable, and further, that critics have increased the formula's effectiveness by directing the consumer's gaze away from it. If "discursive space is never completely independent of social place....[if] cultural conditions regulate what may and may not be said, and who may speak...." (Stalleybrass & White 102), then it is reasonable for the careful reader to search through the quaint, irrelevant pages of Otranto for traces of a bourgeois economic conspiracy.

Critical assurances aside, a close reading of the book reveals that its elements enclose the explosive family dynamic then being enacted on a vast historical and geographic scale. The castle and its inhabitants gave the New Protestant Man a comprehensive formula he could apply to himself and his journey to the New Canaan, a new imagistic vocabulary which would help him transplant moral authority from his ancient European home to the noisy American marketplace.

The progenitor of the Gothic novel form was specifically, if unconsciously, developed for the "children of an age which had killed kings and bishops, who had cast down the holy places of their fathers"(Fiedler 112). Walpole (who was,

throughout 1764, embroiled in an argument with King George II over the issue of illegitimate royal privileges (an argument that cost Walpole several paychecks) spoke to these "children" when he located his book somewhere between the first Crusade and the last; he offered a subliminal greeting to a readership that was at war with an old regime, that was about to embark on a new crusade. Otranto's true prince was the colonist, an extension of the religious warrior. The false prince was false because of his identity as the guardian of the status quo. Far from being irrelevant to its time and place, The Castle of Otranto grew out of a functioning history; a Protestant future was really being set against a Catholic past. By elevating Theodore, the agent of a revolution, to royal status, Walpole soothed the revolutionary's conscience, quelled his terrors, legitimized his abandonment of the homeland. No doubt, Walpole himself experienced a deep satisfaction in his literary sabotage of royal interests.

Walpole, who despised Catholicism, accomplished a major coup by bringing the bad news of God's murder and the death of the aristocracy out of the south, from Italy's languor and lust, from the unholy source of the Inquisition. By embodying earthly evil in the papacy, and by placing Matilda's murder at the site of the Catholic altar, he presented the issue of obedience to the criminal past -- not by echoing the relative innocence of Abraham, but by recreating

the jealous rage of the Levite husband who cut his wife into pieces. Sex, love, and marriage formed Walpole's range of focus, as they form a major focus of Hebrew law.

In the center of the book, Walpole placed the majestic, punitive Jehovah, portraying Him in Mosaic terms, as a dark, almost malicious Intelligence manipulating wind and weather, light, gravity, blood, the accidents. According to Mudrick, the supernatural effects in Otranto serve as manifestations of "the incubi and nightmares which the age has rejected" (Mudrick 10). Another interpretation suggests that the age did not reject miracles at all, but was rejecting the ancient supposition that they must operate in favor of the patriarch. In Otranto, all heavenly aids serve not Father Abraham but Son Isaac, a reversal which is perhaps unprecedented in Western thought.

It was the evolution of business interests that forced Jehovah to change sides in the eighteenth-century. The Chosen People were again the ones moving out, the colonizers, but ambitious as they were they were not yet patriarchs. Filial disobedience was the trait that marked the faithful worshipper in the England of that time, as is shown by the supernatural elements in Otranto. The huge, miraculous sword, brought from the Crusades, represents the the weapon of collaboration, the union of peasants, Its delivery demands the cooperative efforts of an army -- all mute -- no explanation is necessary or, considering Walpole's situation in the



parliament, desirable; the fifty silent knights represent the spectre of an American army. The deadly helmet, Conrad's killer and Theodore's former prison, will crown the giant knight, the expanding democrat who is being called by economic necessity (disguised as religious fervor) to the other side of the Atlantic. The thunderous voice that deposes Manfred is the disembodied word of the Biblical God who speaks from within clouds or flame; when it says: "Behold in Theodore, the true heir of Alfonso!" it might as well be saying "Behold my son, (the revolutionary man) in whom I am well pleased."

When Theodore is crowned, he and Manfred become economic equals. The European father can no longer demand loyalty from the revolutionary son without pay. The new democratic covenant will nullify the old agreement forged between Abraham and Jehovah at the site of the Hebrew altar. When Manfred becomes enraged at Theodore's insubordination: "Art thou so hardy as to dare my vengeance? Tortures shall force the truth from thee," Theodore claims (as did the Rebel Christ) the divine right to individuation, separateness, autonomy: "'I am no traitor, nor am I answerable for your thoughts'" (Walpole 23).

Walpole raises Theodore's overseas mission above the vengeance of earthly powers by having the molecular forces of the universe cooperate in the disempowering of the father. "Tell me!" Manfred demands. "I will know thy accomplices

[in escaping the prison]." "'There was my accomplice,' said the youth, smiling, and pointing to the roof." Light, gravity, the accident of a falling stone -- these signs of the divine presence are made to favor the spiritual innocence of the son, the peasant, the pilgrim. "I fear no bad angel," Theodore announces, "and have offended no good one"(Walpole 53-54).

In the hierarchy of Manfred's crimes, we know which is worst by the range of Theodore's reactions. As long as the conflict between the "father" and the "son" is limited to protocol, Theodore absorbs the old man's threats cheerfully, like a well-mannered bourgeois apprentice. But when it comes to Manfred's sexual domination of Matilda and Isabella, Theodore acts out of rage which is immediate and thorough. When he tells Isabella, "I value not my life, and it will be some comfort to lose it trying to deliver you from his tyranny"(Walpole 22), he sounds like the devout Catholic crusader who internalized Christ's gallantry as history and his father bade him. But in effect he is taking on the historical burden of Martin Luther by placing himself -- on his own authority -- beyond the ancient Hebrew customs of patrilocal marriage. Theodore's marriage will be virilocal; that is, Isabella will leave her father's house and go wherever her husband takes her.

Although critics have not noted it, Isabella's evasion of her aging rapist is the essential social problem in The

Castle of Otranto, just as the presence of the marriageable female will be essential to the success of the far-off American experiment. The blackest crime of the patriarchal past, personified in Manfred, was his claiming of the old man's traditional sexual privilege. This claim constituted the final Catholic trespass on the Protestant future; patriarchal incest was the criminal act that hardened the resolve of the otherwise tractable Theodore, and completed Walpole's portrait of the revolutionary knight.

Far from being an "unnatural passion," as Mudrick refers to it, Manfred's lust for the girl is made up of very natural masculine ambitions, according to the sexual-sociological economic promulgated in the Pentateuch. Mosaic law required men to fill any place left empty by the death of a male relative, often a warrior; when Manfred, the patriarch, orders Isabella to come to his bed, she is bound by tradition and by law to obey her host, both as his guest and as his daughter-in-law. Thus, Isabella anchors in its "natural" place the Hebrew definition of Biological Fatherhood as Jehovah's political policy. She defines "the mark of the conqueror... the house and its structure of descent...the live-in daughters"(Bal 173). But in this first Gothic novel, the Hebrew/Catholic tradition bears a Protestant twist; the house of Otranto was an entity, an intact reality, only as long as it was false. The house in the prophecy had to be broken open for the prophecy to come true. This triumph-through-

breakage symbolizes the new direction being taken toward the unknown: the new, mercantile, Protestant endeavor.

The rape of the young girl is an expanding metaphor that bridges the gap between the Old and New Testaments. By serving as an object of sexual exchange between Manfred (the possessor of the castle-house in the past) and Theodore (the future owner) Isabella reinforces the hidden contract between the aging Hebrew potentate and the young Christianized prince; each will own her in turn. By her capture, the Biblical myth of the girl who dies on the patrilocal threshold is made new, modernized by historical necessity.

By the passing of time, Theodore will himself earn the status of the patriarch one day, a fact guaranteed by his possession of a fruitful wife and an unassailable castle. The heir of Otranto will not only conquer the young female, he will contain her forever in lawful entrapment. Within Otranto's moral system, Manfred's attempt to imprison Isabella in his bedroom is not a sexual crime; theft is the crime that must be avenged by Heaven and the forces of Good. When Manfred accosts Isabella, claiming access to the familial-sexual bonding which will ensure the "profitable and correct" consumption of family property, he impinges not on Isabella's rights (she is an object, not a subject) but on Theodore's.

The rapist, as in olden times, has his reasons. Like the ancient Hebrew patriarchs at war with all their neighbors,

like Henry VIII caught between French and Spanish armies, Manfred's primary task is to engender loyal soldiers. Son Conrad is dead, incapable of fulfilling his sexual duty to his lineage and the past; in any case the boy was sexually immature. "My fate," Manfred tells the captive Isabella, "depends on having sons; and this night, I trust, will give a new date to my hopes." According to Old Testament precedent, Manfred is taking the open way toward a reasonable goal.

Isabella restates Old Testament marriage policy when she invokes the sanctified judgment of the law: "If ever my father returns, and it shall be his pleasure, I shall obey"(15). But Manfred, by his lights, is well within the law: "'Instead of a sickly boy you shall have a husband in the prime of his age who will know how to value your beauties....' At these words he seized the cold hand of Isabella" (Walpole 15) who is plunged into the classic sexual paranoia of the young, fetishized female. "She shrieked and started from him...". Manfred chases her: "Neither heaven nor hell shall prevent me! I will use my human power for preserving my race"(Walpole 16). The race Manfred seeks to preserve, whether or not he sins by his action, is not the race of Alphonse of Otranto; Manfred knows well that his claim to the castle is false. The race he refers to is the "race" of men, and the act that signifies the supremacy of that race is sexual domination of the Other.

Just then, the moon (Isabella's divinity) "presented to his sight the plumes of the fatal helmet..." but Manfred cannot surrender to this warrior-apparition and still represent the patriarchal male. He is not distracted from his sexual obligation until the great Alphonse steps down from the portrait and comes between them. The miracle stops the rapist; the girl will escape Manfred not because the great ancestor is her rescuer, but because God and Heaven favor the eighteenth-century revolutionary, Theodore.

Manfred follows the spectre to a room at the end of the gallery, where another miracle occurs that forces the false prince out of the anonymous past and into the culpable present; after the ghost passes over the threshold, an invisible hand shuts the door in Manfred's face. The ghost's destination is not Manfred's; the Past-as-God now betrays the historical past by blessing the son's rebellion, by depriving the father of the girl's fruitful womb and the sons she would have borne him. Manfred's doom is to share with his dead son Conrad the shame of sexual insufficiency.

Critic Leslie Fiedler, though, would have it otherwise. In a prose passage as effusive as image worship, Fiedler substantiates the invisible patriarchal theme in critical exegesis by interpreting Manfred's defeat as a higher kind of potency -- the potency of the Definer. "Manfred is one of the former villains of the orthodox mind who will come



to stand for the lonely individual (the writer himself) challenging the mores of bourgeois society"(Fiedler 114). As we have seen, Manfred's crimes against Isabella, Hippolyta, Theodore, and especially Matilda are anti-bourgeois only insofar as they are pro-fascist. Manfred is absolutely orthodox, utterly faithful to thirty-five hundred years of patriarchal privilege. His loneliness is the loneliness of a man who would be God; indeed, his roars of protest against the encroaching movement of democratic thought are those of a jealous, monomaniacal God, a man to whom Jehovah's privileges have been promised by the self-worshipping Judeo-Christian Logos. Manfred's villainy is not a former condition but a real and present danger -- now as in the eighteenth-century. His "torment" defines a psychic tyranny that has reigned unchecked wherever the Gothic paradigm has gone unexamined, wherever literary critics such as Fiedler have failed to properly identify and illuminate the subliminal realities within their own subjects, which amounts to a failure to read the actual words on the actual page.

The feminine principle in Otranto is tied up in the old familiar imagery of The Original Fall. When Isabella flees Manfred she runs to the trap door, the opening to the dungeon, where she meets Theodore who has fallen through a hole in the roof to the mouth of the tunnel. To effect the girl's rescue, Walpole has his hero descend from heaven to hell, from the apex of classicism and the patriarchal

hierarchy -- the castle roof -- to the darkness (the chaos) of the womb. Realizing the sexual nature of her danger, Theodore pledges his life to her safety, but he cannot complete his vow; the dungeon door will only open with the aid of "feminine magic"; Walpole's princess has to save herself with a key she has stolen from Manfred.

It is Isabella, like Eve, who challenges Jehovah, as it will be the wily female who will engineer the Gothicized social architecture and see to the escape of the fruitful young from the European house of God the Father. The moon lights the place of the lock; she inserts the key, unlocking the trap door and the iron ring -- the symbolic shape of marriage. "Lift up the door," she instructs Theodore. "We must go this way to the church of Saint Nicholas" -- that is, to the profitable and correct consumption of sex which has been sanctified (legalized) by marriage. Theodore lifts the door and Isabella slips down into the underground tunnel which will end beneath the altar of the church.

The prophecy so fulfilled, that the blood of the true ancestor will never mix with that of Manfred, places Theodore's overseas mission between Isabella and her royal pursuer. Although she will face a rival for Theodore's love in Matilda, the prophecy has disqualified the other girl. Since the church/state coalition has been invoked in favor of Isabella, the prayerful Matilda is as good as dead; Heaven and earth have so ordained. Indeed, she dies while kneeling

at St. Nicholas' altar. While she lives, however, she and Isabella share a fantasy -- that of having their sexual identities absorbed by the young conqueror.

With the sexual triangulation of two girls and the boy, Otranto lodged in modern literature the seed of a favorite masculine sexual fantasy, a man loving two women who typically -- like Isabella and Matilda -- love each other besides loving him. Theodore's harem conjures up for the colonial reader a readily-consumable image of the spoils of war; the princesses represent the double-woman -- virgin and whore, mother and slut -- who will be the young man's just reward for expanding the imperialistic interests of his patriarchal line. Of such is the thrust of the Mosaic male privilege and the language that describes it.

Happiness will not be among the blessings of Theodore's marriage to the princess whom he "saved." After Manfred murders Matilda in Theodore's presence, Theodore will go on to marry Isabella, and then punish her with a lifetime of unresolvable jealousy: "Theodore's grief was too fresh to admit...another love." It is only because the ever-sensible Isabella shares with her husband "frequent discourses of Matilda" that he obtains any relief from "the melancholy that had taken possession of his soul"(Walpole 117).

Theodore's position is that of the Biblical Levite. His presence on the threshold of a house that is not (yet) his provokes the frustrated rapist -- the owner of the

castle -- to commit murder. That this rapist/murderer is also the victim's father is a fortune of the long-range Judeo-Christian war against Other; they are all -- father, daughter, and lover -- creatures of history. Theodore's soul, like the Levite's, holds an indelible trace of human sacrifice which is all wrong because it is the sacrifice of a female. Matilda's death, the Catholic altar on which Walpole positioned it, and the hero's unconscious approbation of the murder forms the site of the Gothic hero's eternal sexual guilt and moral insufficiency, an open wound which cannot be healed according to the vows of knighthood and his Protestant doubleness of mind; this is the stuff of the Apocalyptic Vision.

Theodore will crave union with the dead Matilda who beckons him to the grave as punishment and as final absolution, while Isabella, the wife who serves her husband's needs through time and his advancing age, comes to represent the stale taste of a past success, a victory long won. With flawless social logic, Walpole rendered irreducible Theodore's mind-body sexual split, and legitimized the double sexual standard that lies hidden in the cultural paradigm of the bourgeois marriage.

In the young prince, Walpole produced another familiar Gothic prototype besides the Possessive Father and the Maiden in Distress. Theodore, the necessary product of broken loyalties, bears the seed of the brooding bully, the American

Desperado. As the lawful knight who was made an outlaw by the law's corruption, Theodore must remain alienated from civilization; his sanctity lies in parricide; he must continually kill off the father-principle in order to endure in lawfulness. His alienation will serve him, however; the bourgeois hero is not just the peasant bringing down the false god Royalty, or the guilty, restless husband who perpetually longs for the woman who is beyond him. He is also the clever conqueror of the marketplace whose religion serves the profit motive of Self-versus-Other; he can never stop measuring the world and his life within it with the careful eye of the consumer.

The Protestant Gothic hero must -- by virtue of his faith -- always serve two masters: at the same time he must keep to the law and break it, marry and yet be sexually free, embrace democracy at the same time he engages in economic warfare with the Other. Loneliness is the crux of his identity. To avoid confronting the significance of his internal contradictions, to avoid surrendering his self-control -- a prerequisite of authentic human intimacy, the Gothic male must continually seek his own dissatisfaction. He cannot trust himself to function rationally within everyday society, but he also knows he cannot live without it. The answer, in his life and in the stories he tells about his life, is in strict categorization; he must sustain the illusion that his schizophrenic sufferings define his masculinity.

At the book's climax, both Biblical myths are fulfilled as the result of one act -- Manfred's murder of his daughter. "Gliding softly between the aisles, [Manfred] stole towards the tomb....to which he was directed by whispers: 'Does it alas depend on me? [a girl says to a boy, obviously Theodore]. Manfred will never permit our union.'" The whisper ignites Manfred's jealousy and he responds as he must: "'No, this shall prevent it!' cried the tyrant, drawing his dagger... plunging it over her shoulder into the bosom of...Matilda" (Walpole 104). As the girl sinks onto the ground before the altar/tomb (the symbolic threshold between the Catholic past and the Protestant future), she becomes the Levite's wife lying across the patrilocal threshold, whose last act -- the joining of the severed halves of the Biblical economic rift -- is her life's purpose.

When Theodore rushes the old man, Matilda is both the peace-loving Victim Christ and the Old Testament voice of maternal chastisement; she cries: "Stop, stop thy impious hand! It is my father!" Here, Manfred manages to differentiate between the princesses in terms of his obligation to protect them; as if the other girl deserved to die at his hands he says: "I took thee for Isabella; but heaven directed my bloody hand to the heart of my child!" (Walpole 105). Matilda, guilty of nothing but physical resemblance to the other girl, pleads for her father's forgiveness, and begs him to keep her mother as his wife. She is carried



back over the castle threshold where she dies, grasping both parents' hands.

In this scene the essence of the Gothic threshold is delineated. The reader, having come to this culmination of the female journey through the cave, the dungeon, and the tunnel, is prepared (subliminally) to accept that the girl's death wound is a form of homecoming. It was placed by her father at the heart, the site of blood and longing, the core of life; he is Jehovah's representative and so her death is somehow fitting, a sign of their final union. Manfred spends his final potency; no angel stops his hand.

At this moment Matilda takes the place of the Agnus Dei, the blood sacrifice of the Catholic Mass which was -- to Horace Walpole -- the central abomination of Catholicism. Matilda dies on the threshold between Catholic decadence and Protestant innocence -- in the presence of Theodore's father, the concupiscent married priest (the moral and philosophical opposite of the Protestant minister who is also a family man). Her sacrifice works in counterpoint to the Abraham/Isaac myth; the boy-child in the book of Genesis was saved by the will of Jehovah from the death Matilda must suffer; she is expendable, he is not.

"'What! is she dead?' cried [Manfred] in wild confusion. A clap of thunder at that instant shook the castle ...The moment Theodore appeared, the walls of the castle were thrown down...the beholders fell prostrate, acknow-

ledging the divine will"(Walpole 108). Matilda's death was the signal for the final justice to be made manifest; the girl breathes her last, God speaks, young Theodore is crowned. As with the Levite's wife, the evolution of masculine history is contingent upon the blood sacrifice of the female. From now on the patriarch and the old ways are doomed; the young man -- Isaac -- rules.

Of all of Otranto's major critics, Leslie Fiedler is unique in mentioning this moment in The Castle of Otranto (though he neglects to make the Biblical connection), and he and Marvin Mudrick are virtually isolated in addressing the subject of incest as the book's central theme. Their interpretations, however, are typically dissimulative; for Fiedler, the imposition of the father's sexual will on the daughter has become so naturalized by history that history depends on it for its existence; and for Mudrick, incest is irrelevant: "Otranto is not so much a novel as a state of mind...with a specific guilty content... Walpole turned the key that opened the door to the secret chamber of incest...." In his treatment of this insight is the sign of Mudrick's participation -- conscious or unconscious -- in the hidden critical conspiracy that serves the Jehovah Imperative: why would Mudrick point out the incest theme in Otranto and then instruct the reader to disregard the crime and its significance? He finishes his essay on The Castle of Otranto with this dismissal: "As for the charac-

ters [in Otranto, including the father and the daughter he murders], the less said the better"(Mudrick 4).

Reader-response to The Castle of Otranto is complicated by the problem of having to identify the novel's true source of "evil," a problem rendered unresolvable not only by the gaps in the canonized lexicographical discourse, but by the appeal of the black sheep, the intractible, irascible old man, Manfred. Since Otranto's plot is built around the family curse of deposition -- as yet unfulfilled -- the reader understands that time, advancing history, will eventually vanquish Manfred; and so we are at liberty to suspend moral judgment on his royal monomania. We are (as the critics seem to be) morally blind in Manfred's presence; we actually enjoy the visions of rape, murder, innumerable psychological cruelties given and received in the name of Christianity. These mythical elements are present, if watered-down, in many childhood fairy tales; we do not need to "believe" in them to accept the reality of their messages.

Manfred's need to rule the world reminds us of our own. We feel his lust for the young women as well as their terror of his deadly sexual domination. We share his pride; we are insulted by Father Jerome's priggish scoldings, and we are not even fully gratified when Heaven deposes him in favor of Theodore, the bumbling usurper who -- we feel -- will never be the man that Manfred is. Although we sympathize deeply with the sufferings of the cast-off wife, Hippolita,

the book's moral structure leaves us free to dislike her; her plodding Christian dignity is joyless, judgmental, and ever awake. In a real sense she embodies the central evil of the book -- the erosion of Manfred's sexual potency.

Critics -- unable to label or even see the implications of these family sexual dynamics -- concealed their confusion under layers of literary jargon that was increasingly self-reifying as it evolved into deeper and deeper ambiguity. As Walpole's imitators spun the thread of his dream (Otranto was based on a dream) further and further into the Western imagination, critical reportage came to reflect the effects of the criticism itself on the modern literary consciousness. The descriptors of the Gothic realities became the realities themselves.

After Mrs. Radcliffe laid the Gothic special effects to the charge of human intervention, after Brown, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville pointed out the simple evils consequent to law-bound morality, Caroline Spurgeon -- in a critique of The Castle of Otranto -- was forced to depend on that layered jargon to interpret the social dynamics which underlay the bloody story of Manfred's overthrow. To cover all the psychological extensions -- the multi-millennial moral appropriations -- of the Jehovah Imperative in the Gothic novel, Ms. Spurgeon invented a simplistic critical overview which linked the ambiguous past with the (hardly more) ambiguous future. She extended the meaning of "apo-

calyptic vision" to include not only God and man but nature: all the causes and effects of any moral struggle set in an atmosphere "characterized by wild, irregular, or grotesque elements"(Spurgeon, Walpole xii), or (stated more simply) those elements of inner and outer Reality which produce or reflect mortal terror in the protagonist.

Thus, not only does Spurgeon's literary critique -- like Henry's royal edict banning the Mass -- transform Walpole's Gothicized God into Man, but into a specific man; the Logos, en route from its place in the blood sacrifice of the Mass to its place in Protestant Rhetoric, became (in the Gothic formula) the "brooding Byronic hero." Interestingly, Byron, the nineteenth-century poet (and author of a tragedy named Manfred) was a clear reflection of the eighteenth-century character, Walpole's Manfred, and a motif of Byron's writings: "The 'Byronic hero in Byron's [work] is a ruling personage....his central and recurrent attribute is that of a saturnine, passionate...and remorse-torn but unrepentant sinner, who, in proud moral isolation, infuses the arch-rebel with a strong erotic interest, a compulsion to try forbidden experience (including incest)...a tendency to court his own destruction"(Norton 257).

As archrebel (the Son who both questions and claims the authority of the past) and as moral judge (the Father whose sexual privilege extends to family members) Lord Byron prefigures (as does Walpole's Manfred) the double doom of

the twentieth-century male. On one hand, he must carry alone (it is a masculine task) the God he has internalized; on the other, he must suffer the guilty conscience of the social being who -- though he kills on divine principle -- is guilty of the crime of the traitor. Both ends of his moral continuum -- classic and popular -- are producers of the schizophrenic literature by which his torment is sustained and reproduced.

By the start of the twentieth-century, then, the omnipotent nature of Walpole's frightful deity had been etymologically transported from a projection of eighteenth-century British sentiment, to the unchartered torments in the psyche of modern man. With other critics, Spurgeon was intimidated by the enormity of the Gothic idea, and -- no doubt -- the obvious implications of its fundamental corruption, and so she disregarded the specifics of content and context which gave shape to Otranto's form. Instead, she focused on "literary" elements, on Walpole's love of the "mystery, dissatisfaction, passion and confusion of romantic literature [as opposed to the] repose, simplicity, proportion, clarity, restraint of classicism." Spurgeon does not lodge those qualities in real things or people; she never discusses the book's human meaning at all, although she does foresee that the "division between the seen and the unseen [would be a] marked feature of the twentieth century novel," and she does note Walpole's influence on Coleridge, Wordsworth and the Romantic Revival. Spurgeon also derives from The Castle



of Otranto the seed of the eternally reproductive three-part Gothic formula: "...the Gothic castle with all its accessories, the accompanying strange climatic conditions, and the brooding Byronic hero." (Spurgeon, Walpole xlvii).

Ernle joins Spurgeon in announcing Otranto's profound literary significance, but at the same time he added the kind of spiritual disclaimer that might be expected of an English critic who was writing in 1916, during the shattering event of the Great War. Ernle is cynical in his treatment of Walpole's Jehovah-like divinity; for him, Otranto's odd spiritual trappings "suggest that [Otranto] was written partly in jest." When Ernle -- doubtful about the authority of Jehovah's stylized presence in Walpole's book -- admitted to Otranto's import while he simultaneously denied the foundation of that import, he was a modern man calling to modern writers for a subtler definition of the Gothic hero, a thicker mask to cover his vulnerability. Ernle insinuates his personal spiritual crisis into his critique of Otranto; not only does he announce his disbelief in the Biblical God, he implies that Walpole did not believe in Him either. Ernle himself enacts the standard Gothic moral ambiguity when he insists that The Castle of Otranto is "epoch-making", then tells us that its form is ludicrous and its content is entirely irrelevant to the time and place of its invention.

Insofar as the time and place of authorship reflects who may say what to whom, the temporal and spatial elements

surrounding a book's creation are at least as relevant as its history. The artistic friction between Walpole's near-royal background and his current surroundings directly informed his work, where it was translated into the necessary tension between the revolutionary male and his moral redemption. Born in the twin fires of the Inquisition and the Reformation, the modern male must either be in a state of protest or witness the erasure of his identity. This is the core of Gothicism; where would the Gothic novel find its material if it were not for the existence of intrinsic masculine schizophrenia?

Spurgeon's analysis wrapped the Gothic struggle in a prescription that extends backwards as well as forwards; whether as Mary Shelley's monster in *Frankenstein* -- sick with loneliness -- or as Rowson's evil Belcour, whose very name (Good Heart) announces the presence of schizophrenia -- or as Brown's Edgar Huntly, the American man of letters (literally) who lives out the dreadful moral ambiguities of the Logos which gave him his being -- Spurgeon's God-consuming modern man is also self-consuming. Like the Ouroboros, the Gothic hero is doomed to self-consciousness, he is divided into equal parts of Self-Worship and Self-Hate, a duality he will not be able to escape as long as the psychological castle walls which guard the conqueror's interests (and therefore the significance of his identity) are rendered unassailable by Biblical antecedents.

With his terrifying elevation framed and vindicated by wild weather, with his inescapable "sinfulness" continuously retold and refashioned by the same Gothic elements that announce his liberation, the Gothic male has evolved from Walpole's caricature into a full-blooded, twentieth-century Olympian Melancholic whose spiritual torments will be as eternal as his material triumphs. He is a great sinner, but because his moral impasse is situated on Mount Sinai as well as Mount Olympus, there is no one with the power to forgive his crimes.

When Critic Spurgeon dissected the formula that showed modern man to be his own Creator, she infused in the critical canon the idea that the Gothic hero is beyond human redemption. Beneath her literary jargon, Spurgeon is saying -- warning -- that the twentieth-century Gothic hero, who is both the Logos/Rebel/Christ and its creator, must absorb the "unseen" into himself and then bear its weight. This "unseen" is the growing understanding of what he has done; he is a son attempting to consume the "father-God" whom he has killed -- that is, the Law which is the Father-Destroyer in league with his earthly father, Abraham, the agent of castration. His absorption of the judging, castrating enemy into himself predicts that the Gothicized male (in and out of literature) is suffering not -- as she says -- from the "division between the seen and the unseen" but from their indivisibility. The modern man is becoming aware of his

Judeo-Christian moral schizophrenia, and that awareness is the site of his woundedness, as his literature confirms.

Spurgeon doesn't imply that his wound is self-inflicted, except insofar as he has blinded himself to it; it is not the fault of the Apocalyptic Visionary that there is no one to judge him but himself. His self-generated, gender-based privilege within the Jehovah Imperative -- the historical and political context in which he was obligated to speak of democracy with the voice of God -- places him beyond individual culpability; of such was made the miraculous American experiment. But as long as he -- even unknowingly -- writes and reads stories about himself that draw their imagery from the two-Testament Bible, he will suffer the moral fragmentation of opposed allegiances which is both a first condition and a final consequence of his Judeo-Christian masculine potency. The Gothic hero -- like Christ -- is a sexual hero. Unlike Christ, he writes books which will insure that the potency of his personhood is operating in the service of his own interests. On his own terms he has placed himself beyond salvation and -- like Manfred -- he is left at the end with the self-knowledge that constitutes his emotional restlessness and his moral doom.

## CHAPTER FOUR - WISE BLOOD

### LOGOS AS COMIC RELIEF

Flannery O'Connor once wrote to William Sessions: "When the Protestant hears what he supposes to be the voice of the Lord, he follows it regardless of whether it runs counter to his church's teaching. The Catholic believes any voice he may hear comes from the devil unless it is in accordance with the teachings of the Church"(qtd. Regina O'Connor 123). In this phrase lies the kind of (Jesuit) nicety that underlay O'Connor's life and underlies her work. The "Devil", or the principle of evil, is identified within scholastic Catholicism as 'that which is not present.' "Absolute evil is evil which implies absolute privation. Insofar as every being is, it is true; it is also one, good, beautiful, and intelligible. Hence what is unintelligible is unthinkable, or a total privation. Absolute evil is that which is not and cannot be"(Koren 68). O'Connor was a doctrinaire Catholic rather than a scholastic metaphysician; nonetheless, this principle, established by Aristotle and further elucidated by Thomas Aquinas, is unchanging, whereas Catholic doctrine is subject to change. Hence, within O'Connor's



Catholicism, either the Devil cannot exist, or the Devil is not totally evil. (It is doubtful that she did not know this, although in her descriptions of her work, she often linked the Devil with untruth, error, Protestantism.)

For all its seeming absurdities, Wise Blood, written by O'Connor when she was twenty-two (in partial fulfillment of the Master's degree requirements at Iowa State) is a treatise on Christianized 'evil' as much as it is a Gothic novel. But since the Gothic novel originally rose from the Protestant philosophy, Wise Blood is a logical continuation of a dialogue already long in progress. The book is a parody of the internal contradictions within the self-consuming Ourobouros morality, the network of theological deceptions which represented the Devil to O'Connor, if the Devil could be thought of as a Deceiver, a Liar.

Working with the psychological oppositions which are essential to the Protestant construct, O'Connor created her hero -- Hazel Motes -- from the elements of schizophrenia, and finally doomed him to the same self-concern that doomed Manfred. To make the point that Hazel's spiritual agonies rise from an illogical doctrine -- that of change for its own sake -- she exaggerates the Ourobouras circularity in his philosophy, treating it as a means to isolate him within himself in a closed system of nihilism from which there is no escape. Thus blocked off, Hazel's goodness -- the power to reject ambiguity which is his principle of moral



integrity -- must be expressed in his capacity to reject -- to hate -- the religious content of his own mind.

Hazel cannot love -- that is his sickness; though his faith in the possibility of love is absolute, it is a faith without a center, a faith that has self-will and a hatred of Other at the core. Hazel, however, does not know that; from the point of view of Catholic philosophy, Hazel's intent to locate "goodness" in himself and in society will redeem him. His self-sacrifice is a truly Christian act, both because it is (in reversed form) Other-directed, and also because (Christ-like) he chooses of his own free will the site of his sacrifice. This is the essence of the Christian position.

The essence of Catholicism, the sine qua non of O'Connor's Catholic faith, is found in the Other-directed sacrifice of the Mass. For the Catholic, there is no historical theft, no cruelty, hypocrisy, or Papal abomination that can mar its central perfection. Flannery O'Connor seldom discusses the Mass, either in her fiction or her letters, but as a doctrinaire Catholic she would not have denied that the redemptive act of Christ's human sacrifice in the Mass is the central force within Catholicism. Virtually every other doctrine is secondary to this "Prima Causa," and not just in significance but in the temporal order; the "last supper" occurred in history and Catholicism is based on its elements. In Thomistic terms, the Mass is "A principal cause

[which] acts in virtue of its own power, absolutely independent of everything else in the exercise of its causality" (Aquinas 235). The Mass is the sacrament that unifies the the Catholic Church on earth, the Church Militant; because of it, Catholicism cannot be -- like Protestantism -- at war within itself, but rather it challenges the validity of whatever is not itself, or whatever Christianity is not self-sacrificial. Hazel personifies both the Mass and the elements of enmity that necessitate that act.

O'Connor's hero-in-reverse embodies both the "living Christ" (the sacrificial Agnus Dei of the daily Mass) and -- through the nihilism of his Protestant rhetoric -- the definitive malignancy of the Devil. Hazel is a modern man who contains and consumes the evil Father-principle he protests, as Otranto's Theodore represents the outlawed knight who achieves virtue by protesting the law's ancient corruption. Both men are revolutionaries who must -- by reason of their truest identities -- continually commit parricide in order to endure in lawfulness. But while Walpole's Jehovah-hero is granted the spoils of that war -- Manfred's title, property and women -- O'Connor's Rebel-Christ refutes even his sanity on the moral battlefield of his "Church Without Christ." Theodore is a sanctified Crusader who worships the symbol-system that enthrones him; Hazel -- the creation of a female parodist -- is a simple soldier with an aching chest wound who just wants to go home.

The punitive, fundamental Christianity of Hazel's childhood has left him justly paranoid, as has the Father-principle which is the army. He carries both with him: "The army sent him halfway around the world and forgot him. He was wounded and they remembered him long enough to take the shrapnel out of his chest -- they said they took it out but they never showed it to him and he felt it still in there, rusted, and poisoning him"(O'Connor, 11).

When, after four years away, Hazel comes home to a house "dark as night....a skeleton of a house"(O'Connor 12), he is plunged into black depression. It is obvious that his basic problem is his internalization of his dead mother's hard-line, decidedly unloving version of Christian virtue which Hazel can neither absorb nor abandon. Gathering the fragments of his consciousness into one accusatory question: "You think you been redeemed?", he initiates a journey into Christian negativity which is brief and deadly. Living (as he feels he is) on borrowed time, consciously rejecting all symbolic worship in favor of non-symbolic religious anarchy, Hazel enacts (in burlesque form) the blood-sacrifice of the Catholic Mass, a rebellion made redemptive by the innocence of his intention, which is to rectify the deceptions surrounding the figure of Christ.

Hazel's sufferings -- comprehensive and endless -- are all connected to his obsession with the true meaning of the Christian experience. He seeks the integration of opposed

premises; he cannot live with the spiritual dichotomy which characterizes the "brooding, Byronic hero." His obsession will lead him to commit murder, to sexually molest a girl-child, to drive himself through increasingly painful acts of penance; he will blind himself with lye to achieve a "truthful" inner vision, and he will finally die "purified" at the hands of a young, well-fed policeman, a product of Protestant legalism whose crime will be easily absorbed within his personalized Protestant Christian sentiment. Hazel never comes to understand his philosophical inconsistency; when his landlady, Mrs. Flood, asks if the Church Without Christ was "Protestant...or something foreign," Hazel "said no mam, it was Protestant" (O'Connor, 1949 9), suggesting -- by his past-tense usage -- that in the course of his journey he has left his Protestantism behind for the sake of moral absolutism. Hazel himself is a Christ whom Christianity fails, not because he lacks faith (indeed, his faith is what kills him) but because the Protestant salvation he seeks is born of rhetoric rather than of blood. His physical and psychic longing for connectedness is at war with the first theological premise of the Protestant (and the essence of the Gothic hero's identity), which is to "protest" the existence of the Other, both inside and outside of himself. His torment results from the contradiction of self-love claiming to be love-of-other, which is the central conflict in the Gothic paradigm.

By investing Hazel Motes with a priesthood that serves a Church Without Christ, O'Connor burdened him with the Catholic Devil's condition of nothingness, wrapped in the Protestant condition of self-faith. Haze is not "evil," he does not even sin in that he is not satisfied with his condition. But from the first moment we see Hazel in his stiff blue suit with the price tag still on it, we know he is crazy; his sensibilities have been so caught up in his personal inner vision that he has no conception of how he is coming over to others. Despite (or because of) his isolation he is invariably confrontational with others, though they have no real existence for him; as if in his proving himself to be their moral superior he is achieving their erasure along with his own elevation, and at the same time making himself acceptable to the inescapable ghost of his mother. But because he seeks the truth, he finds it -- he creates (and sometimes embodies) the element of Christian grace -- the humility of understanding that he is somehow incomplete without love. But he cannot respond fully and still serve O'Connor's purpose, which was to reveal the Protestant error for what it is. Except that she has him serve as a human sacrifice to that error, he (like the Catholic devil, like Protestantism) is only 'real' as an intellectual construction, built by an Irish Catholic female author to represent a logical (and lawful) product of the English Protestant-Hebrew masculine coalition.



In her creation of Wise Blood, O'Connor inverted the Gothic design in such a way that traditional appropriations of literary meaning are highlighted and presented to the reader for what they are. O'Connor's transgressive treatment of the elements of Americanized Protestantism, particularly the street-preacher, is based on her view (in Wise Blood) of Protestant Rhetoric as a form of salesmanship. Marketable Christianity -- begun during England's eighteenth-century social and religious revolution -- resulted from Henry's first official personalization of the Logos. From then on, any man could do what the king did; the word of a Christian male was the word of God and the other way around.

Thus fractured and scattered, the Christian premise was sold among the open stalls of the English marketplace along with French lace, Spanish needles, Turkish soap, Italian looking-glasses. The displaced "Apocryphal" elements of the ancient writings which had accumulated in unorthodox, popular religious forms were transformed into salable goods: fortune tellers, quacks, alchemists, prophets of Christian doom and destruction, took their places at the intersection of the New Man's economic, cultural, and social thoroughfares.

Here, where new religious liberty and individualized Christian points of view became aligned with the fun and money of the fair, there occurred a logical evolution in



the religious personality of the penny-wise English Protestant, an evolution not unlike the Catholic selling of indulgences. Religious opinions began to take on real economic weight; when the post-Reformation social/economic advance cut the European God in half -- the half that was Jehovah was located in the various "masculine" metaphors of business and law, transportation, machines, industry, and the keen consumer's eye that began to focus at the market square crossroads. There, the Jehovah representative met up with his product -- the Other. Among the wonders of the fair were colonial exotica -- precious metals, wild animals, people who could be Christianized and -- like the marriageable Protestant female -- bought and sold as objects. The state took a profit and permitted the lucrative fair to continue where those which were held for pure fun were banned, outlawed. With the categorization of goods into those-bought and those-sold in the English marketplace, his religion too -- his civil right to worship as he pleased -- was expressed in cost-effective terms according to the flexible economic dicta -- diametrically opposed -- of the Old and New Testaments, with new theological combinations occurring as the economic need arose. As much as through the rise of science, the old patriarchal Biblical Logos was shattered at the English fairgrounds, where it found new life in the conventions of preaching -- an extension of politicking.

Under the single heading of the Holy Scriptures, the economic principle of sharing (New Testament) became rhetorically interchangeable with that of private enterprise (Old Testament), so that the love-of-other which marked the Christian became synonymous with the love-of-self which signified the salesman. This antagonism between what the New Man was and what he sold at the fair added a mercantile dimension to his religiously based, Self-Other dichotomy, and created the phenomenon of capitalism, the "logic which could interrogate the rules of inclusion, exclusion and domination which structured the social ensemble"(Stalleybrass & White 42), and whose legitimacy was established in the Bible, in the old Pentateuchal law. The sensible mores of the marketplace came to inform the moral triumverate by which we recognize the eighteenth-century bourgeois male and his capitalist descendents in America: political loyalty to the past, economic ambitions for the future, and the power to define, control, and profit from the Other -- the power of the salesman. Streetpreachers of the American south are of this breed: armed with solid knowledge of both Testaments, the Protestant preacher places himself at the inter-testamental threshold and draws his "Christian message" from both sources at once. The salable Christ -- made Other by the act of being sold -- thus becomes a rejected part against which the Jehovah-preacher can profitably shape himself, as he shapes himself against the Christianized female.

"'Listen here, I'm a preacher myself and I preach the truth. Don't I have eyes in my head? Am I a blind man? I'm going to preach a new church -- the church of truth without Jesus Christ Crucified. It won't cost you nothing to join"(O'Connor 1949 28, emphasis mine). In this promise of profitless preaching, regardless of his approach to the subject, Hazel differentiates himself from the other preachers in an essential way. Christ is not being sold by Hazel, even in negative form, and is therefore not Other but Self. Hazel himself is the Jesus Christ Crucified in his church of truth; in denying Christ he denies himself, and by refusing to sell the Christ (or the Self) he denies, he denies Protestantism as well, though it is the source of his illness.

Hazel Motes, by O'Connor's philosophy, has every right to his schizophrenia. Critics do not agree: "The very title of Wise Blood introduces us to a strange world in which blood and wisdom, instinct and reason, are dangerously married...not in their 'proper' places; they are unbalanced...even Hazel's name suggests dark uncertainty"(Added, Malin 119). On the contrary, the double noun of Hazel's name produces canonized echoes; 'motes' refers to Christ's chastisement of the hypocrite, the sinner who sees the mote in his brother's eye but misses the beam in his own; and there is also a hint of the moat which surrounds the Gothic castle and isolates the Gothic hero. "Hazel", currently feminine (no doubt the "dark uncertainty" that affected Mallin), was a man's name

among the ancient Celts; "The wisest philosopher was not as wise as the salmon who lies in the pool of Glyn Cagny into which the nuts of knowledge fall from the hazel bush on its bank"(Stephens 3). O'Connor chose his names as part of her system of reversals of gender expectations in the Biblical, Gothic construct.

"By forcing the boundaries of cultural identity and interrogating the liminal position, bourgeois romanticism ....reveal[s] the repressions and social rejections which formed it. Transgression becomes a kind of reverse of counter-sublimation, undoing the discursive hierarchies [by which] bourgeois society has maintained symbolic dominance" (Stalleybrass & White 201). If the bourgeois literary image of itself is dependent upon separating the "low populace from the privileged perspective of the public sphere" (Stalleybrass & White 199), a transgression against that image would entail a reversal of its parts; what is "low" must claim the public sphere. Herein lie the possibilities for the comic Logos: a "high" discourse, a "low" projector" of that discourse, and a public sphere.

At a lecture at Wesleyan College, Flannery O'Connor defined her participation in Gothicism with these words: "Many readers and critics associate the only legitimate material for fiction with the movement of social forces, with the typical....orthodox." She insisted that "...a literature which [could] mirror and guide society would have

to [use] more violent means than middle-brow subject matter ...a combin[ation] of the dark and divisive romance novel with the comic-grotesque tradition...the grotesque is truly anti-bourgeois"(Added O'Connor 276).

On a purely conceptual level, the story of Wise Blood is simple. When a wounded ex-soldier (in 1945) comes home to the South (Eastrod) and finds that his family and friends are gone, he succumbs to despair and journeys to Taulkinham, where he begins to preach (unsuccessfully) the Church Without Christ. Rejecting the love of a teenage boy, Hazel seeks psycho-sexual healing with three women whom O'Connor uses as his moral foils: a fat, motherly whore, a nymphomaniacal girl-child, and finally (after he murders another street preacher) an avaricious widow before whom he blinds himself in one of the penitential rituals that fill his days. In the end he is found unconscious in a ditch and is murdered by a policeman who "didn't want no trouble with him"(O'Connor, 1949 120). He dies in the police car on the way home.

The question that drives Hazel, and the novel, concerns the built-in contradiction between Christ's unconditional love of suffering humanity, particularly sinners, and the "Christian damnation" by which institutionalized Christianity has profited since the days of Paul of Tarsus. Haze involves his neighbors (on the train, in the street, in the bedroom) in the deadly performance wherein he acts out both parts of the contradiction -- the Old-New Testament Protestant

mixture of murderous ethnocentrism, sexual rebellion, the silencing of the female and the crucifixion of love -- in carnivalized form. "Carnival embraced parodies, farce, costumes, slang, 'low, dirty' folk humour...Carnival is a world of ceaseless excess where all is...ritually degraded and defiled" (Stalleybrass & White 63). In Wise Blood grotesqueries are tools which act in opposition to O'Connor's material -- Hazel's stubborn search -- as a plane or an adze acts in opposition to the wood it shapes. "The author function is linked to the juridical and institutional system that encompasses, determines, and articulates the universe of discourse"(Foucault, 1987 108). Insofar as writing is (as to the ancient Hebrews) a sacred act, O'Connor saw her authorial function as a deliberate desacralization of that unjust system, that universe of Self over Other.

To reveal the moral grotesqueries within the double-tongued Protestant allegiance, O'Connor isolated Hazel within a personal moral standard of absolutism. It was this Catholic absolutism that he acted out in the transgressive world of Taulkinham, the site of his personal holocaust. Through relentless carnivalization of the images and "realities" of the Biblical-bourgeois Gothic construct, the classically educated O'Connor battled the Devil (the Liar) by reversing the signifiers of the Protestant paradigm. Inverting Walpole's Gothic rule of male-Jehovah/female Christ, O'Connor masculinized Christ by having Hazel -- her Christ figure



-- commit crimes of Old Testament brutality and sexual monomania. She also placed Old Testament masculine traits -- underlain by either sexual willfulness or economic independence or both -- in her three female characters, and then positioned Enoch (the homosexual boy) in the role of an Old Testament prophet/priest. In Hazel's mother, the initial cause of his sexual schizophrenia, O'Connor created a nightmare of Biblical androgyny, a true Old Testament punisher in the ambiguous guise of Christian propriety.

Hazel's mother, never named, is a decent Christian woman as grimly chaste as her counterpart in Otranto, Hippolita. Hazel is obsessed with her vision of the-body-as-death, and when he comes home from the army to find her dead and gone, he begins the self-destructive journey that will take him to where she is. His journey begins ominously: "That night he slept on the floor in the kitchen, and a board fell on his head out of the roof and cut his face"(O'Connor, 1949 12). But suffering is what links him with his mother; before he leaves for Taulkinham Hazel writes a message on her empty chifforobe which alerts the reader to the depth and violence of his incestuous longing, and to his concomitant absorption of her identity: "THIS SHIFFER-ROBE BELONGS TO HAZEL MOTES. DO NOT STEAL IT OR YOU WILL BE HUNTED DOWN AND KILLED"(O'Connor, 1949 13).

That Hazel's mother was an Old Testament character is made clear by her legacy to her son. The Bible he carries

(the only book he ever read) was hers, as were the glasses he reads it with. She represents literature, law, history, all the Old Testament elements of familial and religious proprieties which were the stuff of Hebrew tradition. Thus, she is the masculine Jehovah, jealous, rigid, unforgiving, violent. Hazel is kept awake on the train to Taulkinham by memories of his mother's violence toward him, presented by images of death and female sexuality: "He had seen her face through the crack [of the coffin] when they were shutting the top on her...she might have been going to fly out of there ...to spring...but it was falling down on top of her...He saw it closing and he sprang up (in the berth) between the crack and wedged his head and shoulders through it and hung there, dizzy...Im sick!' he called. The porter (a smirking black man) didn't move. 'Jesus,' Haze said, 'Jesus.' 'Jesus been a long time gone,' [the porter] said in a sour triumphant voice"(O'Connor, 1949 13). His mother, both as the crucified Jesus and as the agent of Hazel's spiritual and sexual castration, will lead her son over the threshold between self-hatred and hatred of others.

Lodged deepest in his memory is the occasion on which, when he was ten, he followed his father to a carnival tent show, thinking "maybe it's some men in a privy...she wouldn't want me in there. Watching from behind his father, Hazel sees a naked woman in "...a lowered place...a box lined with black cloth...She was fat and squirming a little"(O'Connor,

1949 13). Hazel runs away, not from the woman but from his father's boisterous lust for her, which his mother imputes to Hazel when he gets home. She was "...standing by the washpot ...looking at him. She wore black all the time and her dresses were longer than other women's...[when] he moved behind a tree he could feel her watching him through [it]." He envisions his mother naked in the "lowered place and the casket...she was thin and too long for the box...she had a cross-shaped face....[his mother] left the washpot and came toward him with a stick. 'What you seen?' She hit him across the legs with the stick, but he was like part of the tree. 'Jesus died to redeem you,' she said. 'I never ast him,' he muttered"(O' Connor, 1949 33).

In reaction to the double identity of the Biblical God, Haze fills his 'revival' shoes with stones and walks two miles, thinking "that ought to satisfy Him"(O'Connor 1949 33). With this act Haze begins his lifelong penitential ritual, rooted in the combination of Christ as Victim and Mother as sexual punisher, the Abraham figure to his Isaac. Freely affirming (in reverse) the love of Christ while he executes the brutality of Jehovah, Hazel chooses to "indict himself, try himself, convict himself, sentence himself, and carry out the terrible sentence"(Fitzgerald xiv), thereby living out O'Connor's definition of Christianity as a product of personal liberty, implicit in which is a philosophical denial of the Protestant concept of predestination.

The psycho-sexual incident of the beating (for his trip to the carnival) fixes within Hazel the range of sexual/moral inconsistencies which will kill him. From his phallicized mother (long and thin) who sees Hazel through the tree, he receives Jehovah's wrath (the stick, the rod of Moses), not just for having "seen" (an act of empowerment) the humiliated woman who is both the stripper and his mother, but for having witnessed his father's lust, a strict Old Testament taboo: "Cursed be he that uncovereth his father's nakedness" (Bible, Deut. 27:20). At the same moment he took in his mother's justification for beating him when she invoked Jesus, the historically infantilized and feminized man who was -- like the woman-mother in the black box -- stripped and humiliated before a hostile crowd. Thus, for his sexual curiosity, Hazel is accused of stripping and humiliating the woman, his mother, his father, and Jesus, and for killing Jesus as well. His crime was "seeing"; his final punishment of himself will be to blind himself with lye.

Hazel's father, nominally the Jehovah principle within the family, did not "see" Hazel's crime as Jehovah would have, nor was he present as a fellow male to share the punishment which logically should have fallen on him, too. The resulting loneliness formed for Hazel-- in a more or less traditional way -- the site of his later sexual indifference to both men and women, as well as his pathological hatred of any man who claimed a resemblance to him.

"Within a patriarchal system difference is ordered in the name of the father. The attributes of the father function as props for the signifier of difference, the phallus which signifies both power/presence and loss/absence. It is also the signifier of desire, which is produced at the moment of loss of unity with the mother. Sex is acquired at the price of the repression of the mother and submission to the law of the father"(Pollock 144). But when the father is repressed (so desired), and the mother enforces submission to the masculine force of the law, the schizophrenic confusion which results -- far from being "grotesque" -- is utterly natural.

One other marked sexual reversal creates within Hazel's inner world a "natural" (based on patriarchal privilege) site for future disaster. Early in the story we learn that Hazel would shoot himself in the foot rather than lose his purity in the army. "He was going to be a preacher like his grandfather and a preacher can always do without a foot [a carnivalized body part]...a preacher's power is in his neck and tongue and arm"(O'Connor, 10). The preacher's power parts are all Biblically endowed with displaced Jehovah traits: the neck holds the voice, the tongue language, the arm the authority of the law and the strength to enforce it. "The whole enterprise of historiography [built on lawful linguistic authority] is undertaken in order to...fixate the history of the [Hebrew] people in its patriarchal be-

ginnings...Jehovah's voice is the reinforcement of culture" (Bal 67)". Since, contrarily, language, history, and lawful authority come to Hazel from his mother, Hazel's masculinity is mute, weak, passive, insubstantial.

The three women Hazel encounters reflect the sexual warfare begun with the carnival-incident. Mrs. Watts -- the whore whose name Hazel copies from a men's room door -- represents the carnival woman and the lust Hazel internalized from watching his father watching her squirm in the box. Mrs. Watts, with her glistening skin and indulgent ways, represents regression and forgetfulness for Hazel which might save him from himself. When he tells her, "'I'm no goddam preacher...I come for the usual business,'" she replies "...in a motherly way. 'That's okay, son....Momma don't mind if you ain't a preacher" (O'Connor, 1949 17).

After their first encounter Hazel is impotent with Mrs. Watts. He imagines the box-woman during sex, but his potency is based on watching his father watch the stripper, a sexual tangle that blunts Hazel's lust. Beyond that, he requires a woman who is aware that she is being objectified, humiliated and made passive by a jeering crowd, and Mrs. Watts is neither passive nor capable of humility. "She.... observed him standing behind the crack. She had a bold ....penetrating stare. After a minute, she....began cutting her toenails again"(O'Connor, 1949 16).

The carnivalized carnival-woman, pig-like and with



"small, pointed [teeth] speckled with green"(O'Connor, 1949 17) has served as an element of downward-displacement since the seventeenth century, when Ben Jonson's play "St. Bartholomew Fair" immortalized Ursula, the pig woman. But the ritualized sexual humiliation of woman began long before that: "From early Latin slang, when 'porcus' was used to describe the female genitalia...the use of the word 'porcus' was an aggressive form of degradation...and above all, 'porcus' was a nursery word used by women...[to define] the pudenda of little girls. The pig [like Mrs. Watts] resisted full domestication; it could create a wallow by unrelenting on a chosen spot in the pen; it indicated an ability to digest...faeces"(Stalleybrass & White, 45).

One morning when Hazel wakes, morning thoughts of his companion give way to thoughts of buying a car. This transference signals the well-established link between the male appropriation of public spaces, begun with the birth of nineteenth-century modernism, and the potential violence of the automobile. Clearly, the car was one false God that O'Connor wanted to pulverize through its relation to Hazel. She links the car with betrayal (the car is rat-colored), insufficiency (the back seat is missing), impotency (Hazel pounded his empty horn), mortality (one salesman coughs up phlegm, another sits on a gasoline can picking a scab), lechery ("The man said, 'would you like to get under and look up it?"), the rare sin of real blasphemy in Hazel

("Nobody with a good car needs to be justified") (O'Connor 1949 58). As Hazel drives away from Slade's car lot, the place of masculine initiation, the accumulation of sensations creates in him a "feeling that everything he saw was a broken-off piece of some giant blank thing that he had forgotten had happened to him"(O'Connor, 1949 38). The broken-off pieces reveal his shattered mind; the memory loss indicates that his condition is pathological, subject to rages which are later blocked out of awareness. The shift to his pathological masculine persona is carnivalized when he buys himself a white hat and drives to Lily's house.

The Biblical myth of the Levite and his wife -- an essential component in the Gothic construct -- is established on the threshold of the Hawk's house. It is there that Haze announces to Asa, Lily's father, that he has come in response to Lily's "fast eye." Lily, a fifteen-year old girl-child with glittering green eyes and a knowing sexuality, defends her visual aggression by saying she was watching him tear up her father's Bible tract. This scene repeats the ancient historical conflict between patrilocal and virilocal men over the ownership of women, and at the same time it places responsibility for both men's actions on Lily, who is a carnivalized counterpart of Matilda in Walpole's Otranto.

Lily's sexual relationship with Hazel begins in thoroughly spiritual terms. She tells him that she cannot be saved in her father's church: "I'm a real bastard...and do

you know what? A bastard shall not enter the kingdom of heaven...Do you think I should neck or not? I shall not enter the kingdom of heaven anyway so I don't see what difference it makes'"(O'Connor 1949 61). She then finds that Haze's church -- as much a product of virilocal revolution as Theodore's -- is a theological democracy, equally nihilistic for all.

The comfort that this information holds for Lily, a little country girl whose shabby life has been made one long misery by her father, is palpable to the reader (and is perhaps a likely subject for a critical study in itself); that comfort, and the fact that her father has just abandoned her, drives Lily to Hazel's bed. Hazel soon finds himself enthralled by the child's sexual sophistication, and he permits her to remove his good-guy persona. "Make haste" she says to him, echoing the bride's voice in the Song of Solomon (bride in Hebrew is **kallah**, and also a homonym of **kalah**, which means total destruction, consumption, or annihilation). Before she turns off the light, Lily confirms the myths that -- in reversal -- will insure Hazel's doom. "Take off your hat, king of the beasts,"(O'Connor, 1949 87) she tells him, removing it herself and throwing it across the room. O'Connor may or may not have encoded the animal reference, but it echoes Jacob's patriarchal blessing on his fourth son, Judah, and its words are telling: "Judah is a lion's whelp; from thy prey, my son, thou art risen.

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver [the patriarchal phallus] from between his feet"(Bible, Gen.49:1). Here, Hazel is the source of his own masculinity, Jehovah.

Within O'Connor's faith, Sabbath Lily Hawks fulfills the specifications for a Catholic catechumen from the Middle Ages, a student of Catholic liturgy. When she applies to Hazel's church, she is a pilgrim, a child of the wilderness who seeks shelter in the arms of the Church, and rightly so; she is a bastard but -- in her words -- "I can't help it. It was what he done to me and not what I done to myself"(O'Connor, 1949 60). Hazel accepts the girl into his church: "'There's no such thing as a bastard in the Church Without Christ....Everything is all one"(O'Connor, 1949 62), an act which places the catechumen in a provisional state of grace. This seems to have been O'Connor's intention; twenty-six times in the book she refers to Sabbath Lily as a child, four times as a girl, never as a woman.

Critics, however, view Lily as a full-blown arch-bitch, an agent of the Devil, the source of the twenty-two year old Hazel's corruption. For one critic, Sabbath Lily is "The serpentine daughter of a street-preacher"(Mallin, Added 122). For another: "The blind man's daughter is a hard-bitten slut"(Rubin, Added 55), and for a third, Lily -- like her father -- "kills Jesus for....profit"(Scott, Added 122). But clearly, Asa has sent Lily to seduce Hazel: "'Listen,' she said [to her father] 'nothing works. He would have hit

me with a chair.' 'I'm leaving out of here in a couple of days,' Hawks said, 'you better make it work if you want to eat after I'm gone.' He was drunk but he meant it"(O'Connor 1949, 74). In light of the literary facts, the negative criticism Lily engenders is at best inaccurate, and at least a vivid indication that critical exegesis -- hating and fearing the young, sexualized female -- is itself a stream of rhetoric with Biblical beginnings and allegiances.

O'Connor carnivalizes the antagonisms hidden within "lawful marriage" by presenting a brief, unforgettable image of animals caged together outside a country gas station, where Lily and Hazel have gone to find a repairman for Hazel's car. Lily points out the animals, and Hazel reads the sign above the cage; she is, for a moment, Eve, as Hazel, reading the sign above the cage, is Adam, naming the animals. But O'Connor's image, from which Hazel recoils, mocks his male privilege as definer of the "house" and its inhabitants; **house** (in Hebrew culture and thus throughout Christendom) signified both temple and charnal house, both raised place and lowered place, both sexual positions, both ends of mortality. Hazel's reading is itself contradictory; although linguistic meanings in Western culture have been appropriated by males (Bible writers), Hazel's knowledge of what the words say about the image before him -- their reality, the realities of their enclosure, their relationship within it -- signifies not his father's potency within him but his mother's.

Hazel reads the sign and metaphor becomes reality; it says: "TWO DEADLY ENEMIES. HAVE A LOOK FREE." "In a cage about six feet high there was a black bear about four feet long and very thin, resting on the floor of the cage; his back was spotted with bird lime that had been shot down on him by a small chicken hawk that was sitting on a perch on the upper part of the same apartment. Most of the hawk's tail was gone; the bear had only one eye"(O'Connor, 1949 64.) Hazel is facing his parents' marriage. That antagonism, which erupted on the long-ago night of the carnival, now extends to embrace all gender-based relationships which are or have been enclosed within the lawful terms of the Judeo-Christian marriage alliance. The cage is the marriage of Theodore and the Princess Isabella in "grotesque" mirror image; by reason of their eternalized separation (defined in Genesis) neither partner can know the hell of the other. For Hazel, as for all Gothic heroes, the patrilinear "house" which signifies his manhood is neither the temple which is his self-love nor the sepulchre to which his mission leads him, but the twisted (Gothic) staircase between them, the present moment.

At the moment that the Word becomes Flesh in Hazel, his multiple identities resolve into a single purpose; to unite the parts of himself through the propitiatory act of blood sacrifice, a masculine, priestly act which combines Old Testament punishment with a New Testament justification,



and which will raise him from the world of Woman once and for all. "Blood-sacrifice is suitable as a tribute to Jehovah because it is the counterpart of birthgiving. Life-taking relates the subject to the father-line while opposing the mother...a view of power that, in its opposition to life-giving, can only be negative. Its primary violence derives from a feeling of powerlessness inherent to patriliney, that its transference cannot avoid the detour through the mother" (Bal 103). Hazel's need to spill blood rises from his need to judge and punish, to prove that his participation in law and literacy exists in opposition to their female "source," his Christianized Protestant mother.

Enoch Emery provides Hazel with his first opportunity for bloodshed. Enoch, the teenage boy who guards the gate at the zoo, never saw his mother, and had been placed by his father in a problematic relationship kept in place by institutional literature: "He traded me to a Welfare woman who had brown glasses and hair so thin it looked like ham gravy trickling over her skull. I had run away oncet on her and she got me back and come to find out she had papers on me and could send me to the penitentiary if I didn't stay with her." His escape was effected through sexual aggression: "I got up one morning and I went in her room without my pants on and pulled the sheet off her and giver a heart attact. Then I went back to my daddy...My daddy looks like Jesus... [Finally he weeps.]...I ain't but eighteen an'...he done

gone off with a woman and made me come but she ain't going to stay for long, he'll beat hell out of her before she gets herself stuck to a chair"(O'Connor, 1949 24).

Enoch is Hazel's only friend, the first and only convert to his Church, yet Hazel's psycho-sexual trauma will only allow him to recall Enoch as a "sort of follower [who] had been a mistake...a boy about sixteen who had wanted someone to go to a whorehouse with him. [Haze] had asked him to be a disciple [but] the boy said he was sorry he couldn't be a member...he was a Lapsed Catholic and it would be a mortal sin"(O'Connor, 1949 75). With this phrase we learn that Enoch -- yellow-haired with the face of a fox -- has taken in a sense of ritual from his Catholic creator.

In the course of his infatuation for Hazel, several unparallel lines converge in Enoch: 'crime' and 'virtue,' 'God' and 'evil,' 'Philistine' and 'Jew' are de-categorized in the cauldron of Enoch's love of Hazel. Hazel's pointed rebuffs serve to awaken Enoch's need for sexual aggression ... "he would have to see him [Haze] soon or the nerve inside him would grow so big that he would be forced to steal a car or rob a bank or jump out of a dark alley onto a woman" (O'Connor, 1949 41).

His self-control breaks down at the zoo pool, when he spies -- from his customary hiding place in the bushes -- Hazel sitting on the grass on a hillside, watching a female swimmer in a stained white bathing suit (a version of Haze's

Carnival-Woman), who is squatting at the edge of the pool, accompanied by two small boys. As the vision's psycho-sexual elements gather within Enoch he takes a crucial direction; he crawls out of the bushes and across the grass to Hazel on all fours. But when the woman slips down the straps of her bathing suit, Hazel springs up from the grass and runs from both Enoch and the swimmer to his car, his safe (because historically unfixed) home.

At that moment "...the woman [sat] straight up with the suit half off her in front, and Enoch was looking both ways at once"(O'Connor, 1949 43). At this sexual convergence, O'Connor reveals Enoch's own schizophrenic vision: "Enoch's brain was divided into two parts. The part in communication with his blood did the figuring but it never said anything in words. The other part was stocked up with all kinds of words and phrases"(O'Connor, 1949 43).

Enoch hails Hazel, assuming that his own affections are being returned. His love is aggressive; even after he learns that Hazel wants Sabbath Lily's address, Enoch counters his question with: "'I got to show you something.' Hazel replies, speaking of Asa Hawks: '...I got to see that man.' 'Cert'nly,' [Enoch says], wetting his lips. 'Ain't she invited me to come to see her and bring my mouth organ? I got to show you this thing, then I'll tell you'"(O'Connor, 1949 45).

Enoch has made his commitment to his sexuality, but

Hazel must integrate a more dangerous set of psycho-sexual elements than parents who are -- as in Enoch's fortunate case -- merely missing. When he absorbs the image of the bare-breasted carnival woman (on a purely literal level, an anonymous swimmer at repose) and runs out of the park, Enoch follows, establishing the Christian "outside" as the site of violent or radical change in Wise Blood, as the Old Testament "inside" is the site of fixed habits or meanings. Blood Sacrifice in Wise Blood occurs not indoors but outdoors.

Hazel lays his hands on Enoch, shaking him roughly, demanding Lily's address. The boy swoons and falls to the ground "with an exalted look on his face," indicating that he has been lifted by a prophet's touch rather than ravished by the hands of a lover (in Hebrew, the word for "prophecy," *naba*, also means "spasmodic affections of the body"). But O'Connor works with reversals; just as Hazel becomes violent, she places his sexuality in symbolic opposition to the Biblical adulteress. In his need to judge and punish Woman, Hazel picks up a rock and throws it, striking Enoch in the forehead, spilling blood.

Hazel's violence is hopeful insofar as it forces him to acknowledge Enoch's existence; it works to unite the parts of his fractured religious identity. By grasping Enoch and causing him such joy that he swoons, Hazel becomes Christ, the prophet whose touch heals. By throwing a rock at him, he becomes Jehovah punishing a teenage boy who habit is to

hide in the bushes ogling sunbathers, while Enoch enacts the Mosaic law whereby sexual sinners were stoned by the lawful members of the community.

A third Biblical hero emerges when Hazel's thrown rock hits Enoch's forehead: that of David, the Old Testament shepherd, the boy who would later become the author of the Psalms. When David's stone struck the forehead of Goliath, the Philistine giant, it struck the site of knowledge, language, and memory, the source of history and law. When David's stone brought blood from the head of the giant, it secured the life and history of the Hebrew tribe. In Hazel, however, the David-principle will work in reverse; while David-in-Hazel will combine extraordinary courage with simplicity of action, the force of its expression will secure not Hazel's life or history but his annihilation.

Enoch puts Hazel's fears to rest and leads him through the museum, looking at him "to see if he was smelling the undersmell. He looked as if he were. Enoch's blood began to beat...urging him forward." Finally they approach Enoch's "thing." It is a mummified male, a shrunken corpse which has been preserved in a glass case. He is "about three feet long...naked...a dried yellow color...his eyes were drawn almost shut." The phenomenon unites them in a carnivalized attitude of prayer: "The two of them stood there, Enoch rigid and Hazel Motes bent slightly forward." (Then footsteps approach.) "Oh, Jesus, Jesus," Enoch prays, "let him hurry

up and do whatever he's going to do"(O'Connor, 1949 50-51).

The thrown rock effected a reversed conversion in Enoch; he seeks to worship something other than nihilism, but he fears "[taking] chances on the meanings of things. For the time, he knew that what he didn't know was what mattered" (O'Connor, 67). Faced with the Christian "unknown", Enoch -- the Old Testament ritualist -- doesn't know what to worship either; he waits for his 'wise blood' to tell him (Enoch's daddy had Wise Blood which Enoch inherited).

Enoch cleans his room, he prepares his temple. Among his devotional acts is the scrubbing of a piece of furniture that "had always been the center of the room and the one that most connected him with what he didn't know....it was a washstand with clawed feet....each one gripped a....cannon ball. The lowest part was a tabernacle-like cabinet meant to contain a slop jar....More than once after a big supper [Enoch] had dreamed of unlocking the cabinet and....proceeding to certain rites...he had a very vague idea about in the morning" (O'Connor, 1949 67). By expressing Enoch's liminal sexuality in bathroom images, then juxtaposing them with elements of Old Testament ritual, O'Connor creates a cartoon of a worshipper which degrades the patriarchy -- reversing its meanings and defying its prohibitions. The reader experiences the scene as a joke made at Enoch's expense, a "grotesquerie," but since the reader laughs at the "high" by personal knowledge of the "low" which has been



denied, the grotesquerie O'Connor is defining and mocking is not in Enoch but in the cleansed and falsely elevated self-image of the reader.

As O'Connor leads Enoch over the threshold from a false priesthood to real criminality, she surrounds him with chaotic images made meaningful through their internal relationships. When he leans against a drugstore window, the reader sees behind him alarm clocks (mortality, the Protestant work-ethic), toilet waters (baptism and sewage), sanitary pads (birth-blood, women's traditional "filth"), fountain pens (disembodied but "phallic" authorial power), candies (on the next page Enoch will remember a trick candy box given him by his father which sprang open and broke Enoch's two front teeth).

These images heighten the vision of Enoch as a reluctant prophet, an ambiguous disciple. Throughout the prophetic journey which will lead him (ultimately) backwards to a pre-civilized condition -- an animal state -- Enoch's inner monologue is overwhelmingly negative. He is creating a new self, not by resisting an identified 'old' self, but by resisting his own will arbitrarily, "grotesquely," as a child does. "I ain't going to do it," he thinks before he goes into the movie house. "I ain't going in no picture show....I ain't got the money....I ain't going to count thisyer change....I ain't going to sit in no balcony....I ain't going to look at it"(71). When he finally enters the

theatre Enoch is born again but in reverse; "Two doors flew open and he mov[ed] down a long red foyer...up a darker tunnel...up a higher, still darker tunnel. [Soon] he was up in a high part of the maw, feeling around, like Jonah, for a seat. ("Maw" is both mouth -- the whale's who swallowed Jonah -- and a homonym for mother.) It is here that Enoch recalls his father's trick candy box.

On his way home Enoch's transformation is made complete by the sight of Hazel preaching; Enoch, "his [wise] blood rushing around like a woman who cleans up the house after the company has come"(69), hears Haze preach of a "new jesus that's all man, without blood to waste, one that don't look like any other man so you'll look at him. Give me such a jesus, you people"(72). Suddenly Enoch realizes what he is supposed to put in the "ark of the covenant." The new jesus will be the mummy at the zoo, and when he steals it, O'Connor will dress Enoch in the traditional garb of a rabbi, in a long, black raincoat, and a hat to which is safety-pinned a long, black beard. He is the Old Testament in clown dress.

When Enoch delivers the new jesus (the mummy, now soaked with rain) to Hazel's house, he serves O'Connor's reversed metaphor by becoming the angel Gabriel at the site of the Incarnation. Hazel, already symbolically blind, is lying down with a cloth over his eyes, so Sabbath Lily, now a carnivalized Mary, takes the bundle into the bathroom, undress-

es the mummy, and identifies him as her own baby. The baby is suffering humanity, and this is Sabbath Lily's moment of grace: "One side of his face had been partly mashed in and on the other side, his eyelid had split and a pale dust was seeping out of it....She had never known anyone before who looked like him, but there was something in him of everyone she had ever known, as if they had all been rolled into one person and killed and shrunk and dried....She began to rock him a little in her arm...."(O'Connor 1949, 94).

In the other room Hazel, thinking obsessively about escaping Lily in his car, is packing his duffel bag when he finds and dons his mother's eyeglasses. He looks in the mirror and sees his mother's face. He turns and finds Lily watching him, telling the mummy -- who "squinted as if it were trying to identify an old friend who was going to kill it"(O'Connor 1949, 96) -- that his Daddy (Hazel) is going to leave them. The mummy is now Christ at Gethsemane, and Hazel is Judas: he "...lunged and snatched the shriveled body and threw it against the wall. The head popped and the trash inside sprayed out...Haze snatched the skin off the floor....opened the outside door and flung out what he had in his hand"(O'Connor 1949 96).

Lily's grace comes to her through an innocence that Hazel does not share, an innocence which is termed, within Catholic theology, "invincible ignorance," a state of mind which -- because it is not deliberate -- is not sinful. On

the other hand, Hazel's obsession with the truth of things is what has triggered his violence -- his vision had been clarified by the eyeglasses, and his reaction to the false baby was spontaneous -- lacking deliberation. For O'Connor, Jesus (as the Catholic comprehends Him) cannot be de-characterized -- He was a historical figure, occurring once in the history of the world. The Christ of the Mass is not -- though He was infantilized by the Catholic Church for fifteen hundred years -- the baby Jesus; He is a grown man who through the action of the Mass becomes, in a sense, the God of bread: "The only thing that makes the Church endurable [O'Connor wrote to "A", her unknown correspondent from Atlanta] is the body of Christ...on this we are fed"(Regina O'Connor, to "A", 90).

O'Connor, by having her hero "throw the baby out the window," mocked in Sabbath Lily the thing she most abhorred: Christian sentiment. O'Connor shared Hazel's hatred of illusion because she shared his real suffering: "During this time [the writing of Wise Blood] I was living my life and H. Mote's too and as my disease affected the joints, I conceived the notion that I would eventually become paralyzed [sic] and blind and that in the book I had spelled out my own course, or that in the illness I had spelled out the book"(Regina O'Connor "to A" 99). The terrors that drive Hazel were projected into his character by a mind which refused to surrender to the fear of what lay ahead; that

refusal was the beginning of her commitment to a certain kind of blindness by which she saw her life, her work, her (and Hazel's) sanctity, the Catholic Church with all its historical stupidities, the fact of her approaching death. In the Gospel of John (9:41) may be read: "Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth."

When Hazel murders his conscience in the form of Solace Layfield, the street-preacher who could have been his twin, he thinks of himself -- in his sexual delusion -- as a priest, an agent of the purifying, propitiating blood sacrifice. This is made clear by the ritual of Confession which occurs after Hazel strips and then runs the other man over with his car: "The man was trying to say something.... Hazel squatted down by his face to listen. "Give my mother a lot of trouble...Never giver no rest. Stole theter car. Never told the truth to my daddy....Told where his still was and got five dollars for it....Jesus hep me"(O'Connor, 1949 105). Layfield's last act, according to Catholic theology, assures him the bliss of Heaven, and as the agent of the sacrament, Hazel is also the agent of grace. The next day, Hazel himself receives grace which is a product of malice; after a policeman rolls Hazel's car off a precipice, Hazel walks back to the city, buys some lye, and blinds himself with it, the penitential act of truth (in opposition to Asa Hawk's false blindness) which begins his inner

journey. His other penances -- walking for miles with rocks and pieces of glass in his shoes, wrapping barbed wire around his chest -- reflect his knowledge that his sins are the sins of a warrior. As if his sins and their penances establish in Hazel a sense of his masculinity which is unassailable by Woman, he is calm and detached, even in Lily's presence, until the day his landlady, Mrs. Flood, sends Lily to a detention home and then tells Hazel she wants to marry him. He runs out into the winter weather and stays there until he himself is murdered by a policeman whom Mrs. Flood sent to find him.

That a representative of the Pentateuchal patriarchy should wield the club that brains her hero is perfectly consistent with O'Connor's religious philosophy: "I do not connect the Church with the Patriarchal Ideal. The death of such would not be the death of the Church"(Regina O'Connor, to "A" 99). Hazel does not place himself in his killer's hands. He does not choose to be killed; although he says to the policeman "I want to go on where I'm going," like Matilda in Otranto he is martyred by accident, he was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. He is sacrificed the way Enoch's new Jesus is sacrificed -- thoughtlessly -- by a blow on the head from a policeman's billy club (the club is -- in Renaissance art, a symbol of the betrayal of Christ). He dies in the squad car and is taken to the home and the bed of his landlady, Mrs. Flood.



The elements of the Mass must be consumed. In order for the ritual to be made complete, the bread must be eaten, the wine drunk; by this consumption the Logos is literally made flesh. In his death, Hazel represents the Logos, the revolutionary warrior brought down by the established law; and Mrs. Flood -- herself an Old Testament type for whom the government is God and for whom every penny counts -- undergoes a telling change of heart as she gazes at her dead tenant, receiving the sacramental nourishment of communion with him: "'You needn't pay any more rent but have it free here, and with me to wait on you, or if you want to go on somewhere we'll both go.' She looked...deep into the burned eye sockets [then] shut her eyes...she sat staring with her eyes shut into his eyes...and she saw him moving farther and farther away, farther and farther into the darkness until he was the pin point of light"(O'Connor, 1949 120).

As with The Castle of Otranto, the reader's unexpected responses to the way the story of Wise Blood is told is an issue in critical response. Where does the book leave us? Hazel, found freezing in a ditch by rescuers who murder him, dies of a crushed skull at the age (approximately) of twenty-two. He is unconfessed, unsanctified except by his absolute faithfulness to his need for self-completion, he lies unmourned in the bed of a stranger who (now that he is dead) is free to stare openly at the scars around his empty eye sockets, at his skeletal face and his blue hands and feet.

It is a dreadful, tragic vision, and yet we laugh. Why? What has O'Connor, the semiotic sabateur, taken away from us as sympathetic readers that we can laugh at Hazel's story after having seen it through to the end? Has she given us -- as Walpole gave his readers a literary social blueprint for a successful, eighteenth-century bourgeois marriage -- anything in return?

\*                    \*                    \*                    \*

To Flannery O'Connor, the dissection and re-construction of Christ's personhood in the Mass -- by whatever set of definitions are applied to it -- encloses the best part of the present reality, constituting an ongoing influence for Good that connects the most complex creation of the evolutionary process (human consciousness) from its far distant past -- officially historicized or not -- to its far distant future. The every-day-ness of this Sacrament is not available to Protestants within institutionalized Protestant theology, although salvation, of course, is: O'Connor referred to Haze's salvation as having come not from virtue (or, certainly, Catholicism) but from his knowledge that Christ exists in a real and present way: "Haze is saved by virtue of his wise blood being too wise for him to deny Christ [the principle of Love]. Wise blood has to be [his] means of grace, they have no sacraments"(Regina

O'Connor, to John Hawkes 350.)

O'Connor was in error about Protestants having no sacraments, as she is in error about the conditions -- within Catholic philosophy -- of damnation; if she had lived longer, she would have come into the time of Pope John XXIII, whose liberal interpretation of Catholic Christianity included the idea that mortal (damning) sin -- given the necessary elements of total knowledge, total desire, and total impenitence -- is virtually impossible to commit. John's comprehensive overhaul of Canon Law (Catholic Doctrine which -- contrary to popular understanding -- changes all the time) was largely based on the American idea of individual liberty defined by John Courtney Murray, a Catholic bishop from Chicago. Vatican documents published in 1964 (the year of O'Connor's death) included Murray's startling statement: "In religious matters, all men must be free," a democratic innovation that shattered many of the petty, legalist, patriarchal myths (Murray's use of "men" notwithstanding) that have tainted the teachings of Christ since the Church began.

But to define a thing is not to create it. Murray's statement on freedom reveals a thing which has always been true; within Catholicism, grace is not contingent upon the acknowledgement that one's humanness is a sinful state, in need of the grace of God -- that is the Protestant position of antinomianism, which refers to an apparent contradiction

between equally valid principles (faith and work), and which evolved, within the self-opposing Protestant ethic, to mean that faith alone is the pre-condition of salvation. To a Catholic, this doctrine is unreasonable, except as a tool of mystification employed in the service of social/religious control; faith without works is not faith at all, since it eliminates the arena of behavior by which the grace of God may be known, by which -- indeed -- Christ himself was known to those among whom He lived; it is a doctrine which nullifies the condition of liberty without which love is impossible; it is, in fact, the pre-condition of the state of despair which itself is sinful within Catholic theology. Works without faith, on the other hand, presupposes -- at least -- faith in the goodness of love, the efficacy of "filling from one's own another's cup," which is the definitive Christian principle.

Grace, rather, is contingent upon the acknowledgement of the possibility that one might be wrong, not in one's beliefs but in one's behavior toward others. "If you love me," Christ repeated three times to Peter, in the simplest possible language, "feed my lambs." If one's Christian life were based on no other activity, this one would be sufficient to identify one's state of "Christian grace." Hazel never fed anyone, but it is (perhaps) to be assumed that he would have, had he understood the basic Christian issue, which he assuredly -- in his Protestant schizophrenia -- did not.

O'Connor's subliminal gender assumptions reflect her personal bias against her own sex which was encoded in all of Western literature, and against which neither men nor women had any intellectual defense until the sexual revolution -- based initially on dress-decoding and the advent of birth control which followed World War II -- made defense possible. She did, however, attack the basic premise of the Gothic paradigm, which may be stated in opposition to John Murray's Apocalyptic Vision regarding religious liberty: within Gothicism, it is only the **irreligious** male, the unparodied Gothic hero, who is privileged to exist in a state of self-control, self-knowledge, self-determination. Because Gothicism is based on the very antinomianism which underlies -- to varying degrees -- Protestant (Paulist) theology, to claim a life of action, to claim sexual autonomy, is tantamount to claiming the power of God, which is the center of masculine Gothic woundedness -- his separation from the active, sexually autonomous Christ of history. In Wise Blood, this patriarchal myth, this self-deceived, self-divided Gothic presumption, is overturned to reveal its true cause -- which lies in the unconditional worship of Old Testament masculine privilege. Philosophically, Wise Blood echoes the Apocalypse of John wherein the Logos "spoke, discarding manhood" for the sake of a more balanced view of the Truth.

## CONCLUSION

### LOGOS AS EVOLUTION

To consume the two-Testament Gothic construct in any form is to experience, profitably and correctly, the schizophrenic philosophical position of the Apocalyptic Vision, which is the worship of the masculine Self as the center of the universe. It creates itself eternally; those who perpetuate the Gothic paradigm in popular culture or in "classicized" form (a contradiction in terms) warn the novelist (and scriptwriter) that public accessibility to their works depends upon the works' acceptability to the modern "Gothicized" patriarchy; the publishable logos must invest in "the military, industrial, technological [realities of patriarchal rule]...woman must be represented as the negative of man, the non-male, the mutilated, castrated Other"(Pollock 32).

The Gothic threshold, the "Apocalyptic Vision," does not refer to a specific literary quality, but rather to a category of literature whose hidden purpose is to identify, objectify, and eternalize those Biblical texts which would ensure the ongoing unassailability of an "elite" or "elect"



literary populace. The subtextual underpinnings of the masculine coalition are kept in place by all the major streams of Western literature, particularly the Gothic construct which is built across the sexual threshold between law and romance, between the father's house and the son's journey from it, between legitimate and illegitimate sex, between Self and Other, good and evil, male and female.

In the Protestant Gothic vision which defines the male as God, or "good," woman is made evil not through her own action but by philosophical default. Walpole's equation -- eternalized by the lexicologist, the literary critic, and the publishing industry -- has also eternalized the conflicts that drive (and torment) the Gothic hero in and out of literature. The psychological horrors suffered by the Gothicized male are unresolvable because -- finally -- there is no other story which makes sense to him besides those which perpetuate his "divinity," the thing consumed.

But the Logos may be stolen, as history has shown. Flannery O'Connor stole it, and that her theft is safely canonized indicates the possibility that it may be stolen over and over again. The Word, if nothing else, is free.

Like the Jesuit paleontologist Teilhard de Chardin, whose works (kept from publication by the Church till after his death) influenced her writings, O'Connor (insofar as her work was based on Catholic philosophy) believed in a perfectible universe. Now it is an unfinished picture, but

for her, as for Chardin, the hope of the world is already accomplished, and is -- to the distant vision -- apparent in the progress of a world under construction, a world psychically infused by a principle of intelligence who is not only benign but loving, that is made of the commonest things, of light and gravity and electrons in transit from being to being, through a process of becoming. Chardin referred to the process of evolution as the "masse du monde," the Mass of the World, the operation of the Word made Flesh, the Logos in real action, in the blood sacrifice that marks the path of true, selfless, charity toward a suffering world.

Like the sign above the animal cage, the Logos -- not just the sum product of all language but of all intention -- will bring together deadly enemies, will bring about the perfection it has prophesied. The salvation of the world will occur violently; the universe is violent, as the dying O'Connor well knew. It is not safe but it is certain, as it is certain that we are, as we sit in our chairs, hurtling through space at the speed of seven hundred thousand miles per hour: "The forces which confront each other all around us are not purely destructive; each of them includes some positive constituents. By virtue of these very constituents, they are unwittingly converging towards a common conception of the future. But in each of them the world is struggling to achieve itself, striving to turn toward the light. This is crisis of birth...not death. It indi-

cates essential affinities, not eternal opposition"(Chardin 54).

The points of antagonism in O'Connor's first book are not grotesqueries as much as they are mirror images of grotesqueries. The true word and the true action -- the stuff of human evolution and the sign of its perfectability -- are contained within the reversals of Wise Blood to reflect Chardin's version of the Ourobouros, Alpha and Omega: "Omega, in whom all things converge, is concurrently Alpha, from whom all radiates. (Chardin 82.)

Flannery O'Connor (like Teilhard de Chardin) wrote for no particular readership. She expressed what was on her mind without the guiding principle of a vested interest; she kept her eye and her mind on her view of things; and in some ways, her vision of Christianity suffered from St. Paul's troubled myopia, as may be seen in their shared sexual biases. But her addition to the Gothic experience is only partially theological; her great gift was laughter, her great virtue, courage. Her liminal position as a crippled, unmarried, classically educated Irish Catholic woman in the American South who faced death daily gave her work a strict, dry quality, but her wit and her nerve saved it from despair. Beneath her dreadful joke -- and she did consider the book a great piece of mischief -- there is a fundamental link between the gravity of Hazel's earthly existence (and her own) and the light of the world beyond.

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